Emotional Determinants of Support for the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan: A View from the Bridge

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Introduction

In an earlier paper (Fletcher et al., 2009), we documented that public support for the Afghanistan mission depends to a substantial degree upon the emotional responses of Canadians. More specifically, we found little support for the mission in the absence of a sense of pride. Due to data limitations, however, we were unable to probe further into the emotional foundations of public support for (and opposition to) the mission. In particular, survey questions in national polls do not permit investigation of a broad spectrum of public feelings towards the mission in Afghanistan nor exploration of the specific emotions upon which judgments towards war have been shown to turn (Huddy et al., 2007).

In the present paper, we attempt to bring into focus some of the negative aspects of Canadian emotional responses to the mission through a combination of qualitative field research and experimental analysis. Drawing upon Scott Gartner's work (2008a; 2011) on the effect of war-based imagery on support for the use of military force, we examine the influence of a particularly potent symbol—that of flag-draped coffins—on attitudes towards Canada's Afghan mission. Our findings suggest the distinctiveness of the Canadian case. Both conventional political wisdom and academic work in the American context support the idea of casualty intolerance among publics (Berinsky, 2009; Gelpi et al., 2009; Larson, 1996; Mueller, 1973); and in line with this understand-

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ing, images of flag-draped coffins lead to decreased support for war among Americans (Gartner, 2008a). On this last point in particular, our results diverge from previous studies.

Our analysis reveals an important cross-current in attitudes towards Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. Even while overall support for the mission has diminished (Fletcher et al., 2009), Canadians' responses to fallen soldiers are more complex than this downward trend would predict. Specifically, we find the dominant emotional response to casualties among Canadians to be a distinctive composite of sadness and pride, cast against a powerful sense of Canadian identity. Moreover, this emotional hybrid undercuts support for Canada's traditional peacekeeping role and, in so doing, lessens the negative effect of this latter position on support for the Afghan mission. This blending of emotions, while perhaps surprising, finds support in the broader literature on the role of emotions in public life; namely, it reflects Oatley, Keltner and Jenkins' (2006) emotional triad of assertion, attachment and affiliation. And here again, we see divergence from what has been found in the US (Huddy et al., 2007).

The public context of our study is the repatriation of Canada's fallen soldiers and the phenomenon known as the Highway of Heroes. As such, we begin with a description of how it came to be and the role it plays in our understanding of the public's response to casualties. We next turn to our experimental findings before concluding with a discussion of the broader implications of this study for comprehending the distinctiveness of particular emotional communities and the role of emotions in determining reactions to war.

Canadians Respond to Repatriations

The phenomenon known as the Highway of Heroes began in spring 2002 as a reportedly spontaneous gathering of around 30 people on a bridge in Port Hope, Ontario, to honour the first four fallen soldiers from the mission in Afghanistan (*CBC News Online*, 2005). As the numbers of repatriated soldiers increased, particularly from 2006 on,[1] growing crowds assembled on the overpasses along Highway 401 from the Canadian Forces Base (CBF) in Trenton to the coroner's office in downtown Toronto, the stretch of highway along which repatriation motorcades travel (*CanWest News Service*, 2009). Photojournalist Pete Fisher, who covered the first repatriation procession, was among those who played a central role in photographing the groups of ordinary citizens, veterans and emergency service personnel who came to stand witness to the repatriations. Of the experience, he wrote, "Every person who stands on a bridge will tell you it's a feeling like no other. As you wait, you talk with people who have been there before, who you've come to know. People smile, share feel-

Abstract. Canada's military engagement in Afghanistan continues to figure highly in the public consciousness, spurring debate on perceived progress and the public's willingness to bear casualties. Despite the many political considerations at play, there is an emotional core to the issue that is often overlooked. In an earlier paper we found public support for the Afghanistan mission to depend in large part on emotive responses, although our analysis was restricted by the limited number of emotional indicators in the data (Fletcher et al., 2009). In this paper, we investigate a broader range of emotional influences on attitudes toward the mission through the use of field research on the Highway of Heroes and experimental framing of casualty-based imagery with student samples. Our findings reveal that Canadians' emotional responses to the repatriation of fallen soldiers reflect a distinctive composite of sadness and pride; the consequence of which is to undercut support for Canada's traditional peacekeeping role, a position negatively related to support for the Afghan mission. When compared with studies conducted in the US (Gartner, 2008a, 2011; and Huddy et al., 2007) our findings suggest some ways in which Canadians and Americans form distinct emotional communities (Rosenwein, 2006) in reactions to war.

Résumé. L'engagement militaire du Canada en Afghanistan demeure un sujet important dans l'esprit du public en alimentant les nombreux débats entourant les progrès sur le terrain et l'acceptation des pertes militaires. Malgré les nombreux angles d'analyse utilisés pour investiguer ce sujet, il est rare que la dimension émotionnelle soit étudiée directement. Dans un article publié précédemment, nos résultats indiquèrent que l'appui populaire pour la mission canadienne en Afghanistan dépendait largement des réponses émotives associées à cette dernière (Fletcher, Bastedo et Hove, 2009). Toutefois, cette analyse se trouvait restreinte par le nombre limité d'indicateurs émotionnels disponibles. Cet article comble cette lacune en étudiant un ensemble élargi d'influences émotionnelles sur les attitudes envers la mission militaire afghane. Pour ce faire, nous avons effectué une recherche de terrain sur l'*Autoroute des héros* ainsi qu'une expérience en laboratoire sur un échantillon d'étudiants. Nos résultats révèlent que l'exposition à des images montrant des soldats canadiens tombés au combat provoque des réponses émotionnelles mêlant tristesse et fierté. L'effet de cette réaction serait d'affaiblir l'appui pour un rôle de maintien de la paix traditionnellement joué par le Canada et, par le fait même, de renforcer l'appui pour la mission afghane. Lorsque l'on compare nos résultats aux études effectuées à ce sujet aux États-Unis (Gartner, 2008a, 2011; and Huddy et al., 2007), nos conclusions suggèrent que les Canadiens et les Étatsuniens forment des communautés émotionnelles (Rosenwein, 2006) distinctes lorsqu'il est question de leurs réactions à la guerre.

ings, talk about how many times they've stood on various bridges. It's a mix of pride and sadness" (Fisher, 2007).

In June 2007, *Toronto Sun* columnist Joe Warmington described the gatherings as a "Highway of Heroes" phenomenon, and shortly thereafter the push began to have the route officially renamed (Fisher, 2007). The process by which the highway came to be renamed illustrates both the sense of community that arose around this grassroots phenomenon and the growing recognition amongst politicians and mainstream media of its salience. In mid-July 2007, the *Cobourg Daily Star* and *Port Hope Evening Guide* published an article by Pete Fisher calling for the repatriation route to be officially recognized as the Highway of Heroes, which appears to be one of the earliest references to the idea (Fisher, 2007). The story began to circulate online among the Canadian military community, leading to the creation of an online petition and Facebook groups

in support of the effort. Meanwhile, the Ontario government began consulting with the federal government and municipalities along the route to explore different avenues for renaming the highway. This move—along with the public support behind it—was covered by national media and, by the latter part of summer 2007, the online petition grew to some 60,000 signatories. On August 24, 2007, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that the 172-kilometer stretch of Highway 401 from Trenton to Toronto was to be officially renamed (*Office of the Ontario Premier*, 2007).

In the years since, people continue to be drawn to the Highway of Heroes to pay their respects to Canada's fallen soldiers (*CanWest News Service*, 2010). While no reliable estimates of the numbers of attendees exist, our own counts confirm that many overpasses attract over a hundred people (particularly on weekends and when multiple soldiers are repatriated on the same day). A conservative estimate would be in the order of 3000 people per repatriation.[2] Many people attend on multiple occasions and learn of the dates, timing and most heavily attended bridges through legions and veterans' groups, a Facebook group of nearly 70,000 members and other online forums. On-duty police, firefighters and paramedics also attend when possible, flashing the lights of their emergency vehicles as the repatriation processions pass. The tradition is further characterized by flags draped over the bridges, and shows of support—regular honks and waves—from drivers and passengers traveling beneath the overpasses. The events tend to have a quiet emotion to them; people express sadness over the loss, yet also respect for the soldiers and their role in the world.

The Harper Government Bans Media Coverage of the Repatriations

In spring 2006, amid the growing movement of people on overpasses along the Highway of Heroes, the federal government announced a ban on media coverage of the repatriation ceremonies at CFB Trenton.[3] This came on April 25, 2006, immediately following the deaths of four soldiers from a roadside bombing (along with three additional casualties the preceding month). News media reported government officials as confirming the blackout to be permanent policy (*CTV.ca News Staff*, 2006). Presumably, the government was responding to the increasing frequency with which casualties were returning home[4] and to the knowledge that public support for the mission in Afghanistan was evenly split, having been in decline since 2004 (Fletcher et al., 2009). Prime Minister Harper defended the media ban as being respectful of the privacy of the soldiers' families (*CBC News*, 2006). Opposition critics charged that in an

attempt to silence negative reactions to casualties, he was following the tactics of George W. Bush, who had also instituted a policy of disallowing media coverage of returning military caskets (Struck, 2006). As for the military families caught in the middle of this debate, reaction appears to have been mixed. Some sided with the government that the ceremonies at CFB Trenton should not be covered by the media; others felt that the Canadian public should be privy to the costs of war (*CBC News*, 2006). In late May 2006, the debate was tipped in favour of this latter position. In his eulogy for his daughter, the father of Nichola Goddard, the first female military casualty, said that she had died "to protect our freedoms, not to restrict them" (*CanWest News Service*, 2006). This statement made waves in the national media, and Prime Minister Harper reversed the ban some days later, leaving it to the families to choose whether media would be present at the repatriation ceremonies.[5]

The seeming misalignment between the government's media ban and the Highway of Heroes' phenomenon raises the question of whether official policy around the articulation of the Afghan mission was out of step with the sentiments of the Canadian public.[6] That exposure to flag-draped coffins does not necessarily lead to a crumbling of support for the war in Afghanistan is indeed a counter-intuitive outcome, but one at the heart of understanding Canadians' emotional responses to the mission.

The View from the Bridges

Between September 2009 and June 2010, we experienced first hand the complex sentiments that surround the Highway of Heroes and Canada's returning casualties. During this time, we attended all the repatriations that occurred and conducted informal interviews on overpasses from Toronto to Trenton, as well as outside the coroner's office.[7] We began by observing the occasions to gauge how best to approach attendees in keeping with the solemnity of the situation. For the most part, people were willing to speak with us, and we typically interviewed four to twelve people each time. All told we conducted 125 interviews with most lasting approximately five minutes.[8] Although informally structured, we worked with a set repertoire of questions, asking attendees how many times they had attended the repatriations, why they first came, what they felt in attending repatriations and whether they felt any differently about the mission as a result of attending. Interviews were typically done as the crowds assembled before the repatriation procession arrived, since the gatherings tend to dissipate quite quickly afterwards as people quietly wrestle with their thoughts and emotions.

Contrary to expectations, our interviews do not reveal that attendees of the Highway of Heroes are all supportive of the mission in Afghan-

istan, though the vast majority certainly do support the Canadian troops. Most clearly say they do not conflate their sentiments towards the men and women serving in Afghanistan, with their judgments on the political dimensions of the mission. As one interviewee stated, "The bridge is not political."[9] Nevertheless, there appear to be three predominant camps: those who have always supported the Canadian mission in Afghanistan; those who are opposed to the mission but support the troops and respect their sacrifices; and those who at one time opposed the mission but have come to support it (or become less opposed) as a result of attending the Highway of Heroes. The existence of this last group suggests that there is something in the emotional experience of attending the overpasses that may produce a shift in one's position on Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

Although a fair number of those interviewed have connections to the Canadian Forces, through family or friends, others spoke of having been drawn to the overpasses after seeing the crowds gathered. Overwhelmingly, the reason given for attending was to show respect for the soldiers, their families and their loss. "It's the least we can do," we heard on more than one occasion. One young woman articulated the sentiment, "If they can die for me, I can stand here in the cold for them." This sense of respect for the soldiers is evident even among interviewees who expressed that they would "prefer" the Canadian forces to be in a peacekeeping role or not in Afghanistan at all. And for some, their initial opposition to the mission or desire for Canada to be peacekeeping seemed mediated by something else: an acceptance that Canada "shouldn't just leave" Afghanistan even if peacekeeping "isn't possible anymore" or the war "isn't winnable."

A related theme pertains to the perception of "good work" being done by Canadian soldiers, particularly with respect to reconstruction and women's rights. The view of Canadian forces helping to rebuild Afghanistan tends to be articulated by those interviewees supportive of the mission, but this is not exclusively the case. Some attendees who express reservations or harken to Canada's peacekeeping past also speak of their admiration for the soldiers' work in Afghanistan. Presumably, this sentiment is linked to attendees' respect for the soldiers' willingness to carry out their duty even while putting themselves at risk. It again suggests that among some interviewees, one's stance on Canada's official policy in Afghanistan and one's view of the work being done by individual soldiers do not neatly align nor remain static.

The emotional thread most tightly woven through our interviews is one that also reflects the seemingly incongruous responses elicited by the Highway of Heroes. When asked how they felt when attending the overpasses, many interviewees spoke of their feelings of sadness. But just as prevalent are those interviewees who expressed a mixture of sad-

ness and pride. "Sad for the families; proud to be Canadian," is how one women put it. On another occasion a man described his feelings as "enormously sad, but proud." For many, this hybrid of pride and sadness stems from the "camaraderie" and "fellowship" of being on the bridges in support of a fellow Canadian and being supported *in turn* by other Canadians who take a moment to wave out their car windows when driving past. One interviewee described this duality as a "very Canadian" response, and this perhaps gets at its core: the sadness prompted by a sense of shared humanity, and the pride arising from a shared Canadian identity.

What we take from these interviews is threefold. First, a kind of updating appears to take place for some attendees, such that their initial opposition to the mission in lessened as they come to think differently of what it means for the Canadian Forces to be engaged in Afghanistan. Perhaps simply, the respect they afford the soldiers begins to alter their previous positions. Secondly, the experience of attending a repatriation is defined by a particular composite emotional response: an amalgam of sadness and pride. That individuals can feel both positive and negative emotions towards an issue is not in itself surprising (Oatley, 2004: 94), but the sad–proud combination we so often heard expressed suggests that the public's emotional response to casualties is more complex and perhaps more consequential than conventional wisdom would indicate. To fully appreciate the consequence of the response is to recognize the third motif that emerges from our interviews. For the majority of attendees, the emotions that arise on the Highway of Heroes are coloured by a strong sense of Canadian identity, from the flags that emblazon the overpasses, to the reflections on what it means to be Canadian both abroad and at home.

In the main elements of this emotional response—pride, sadness and a feeling of "Canadianness" —we find overlap with Oatley, Keltner and Jenkins' (2006) emotional repertoire of assertion (pride in overcoming a challenge), attachment (sadness in response to loss) and affiliation (social bonding and belonging). And insofar as this triad represents the "primary means by which human relationships are structured," it is little wonder that the Highway of Heroes elicits such powerful emotive responses (Oatley, 2004: 81). As Stephen Marche writes in a recent *Maclean's* piece, "Journeys of the fallen will soon come to an end. But long after the ritual has passed away, the memories of its unprecedented sadness and the ferocity of its pride will keep resonating" (2010).

An Experimental Approach

We now turn to investigate the emotional basis of support for the Afghanistan mission through an experimental approach. We conducted two exper-

iments as part of a two-wave survey, each roughly 20 minutes in length. Both waves included parallel questions about support for the mission (see appendix A for question wordings).[10] Immediately preceding these questions, individuals were shown a randomly selected image regarding the war in Afghanistan (see appendix B).[11] The participants in the survey–experiment are undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory research methods course during the 2009–2010 academic session.[12]

Each wave of the survey consisted of three sections. In the first wave, the lead section asked a number of questions about voting and political engagement. The second section contained questions about the Canadian mission to Afghanistan. And the third asked about attitudes toward Canada and the US.[13] At the head of each section two images were placed, each measuring approximately two by three inches and photocopied in black and white.[14]

Questions regarding Afghanistan were introduced by a photo of a Canadian soldier in combat gear in the familiar rugged terrain of Afghanistan. This image was accompanied by one of three photographs selected on a random basis. The first of the experimentally varied photos shows a Canadian soldier standing at attention and saluting a Canadian flag. It was selected to evoke a sense of martial pride and is used as the control condition for this experiment. The second image shows a Canadian soldier crouching and giving a small packet to a young Afghan boy. It was selected to convey a sense of humanitarian aid. The third experimental image is of soldiers carrying Canadian flag-draped coffins onto a transport plane. It was selected to evoke a sense of loss of life among Canadian troops. At the time of the first wave of study Canadian casualties stood at either 129 or 130, as there was a death on each of the days preceding administrations of the survey. Both local and national news carried coverage of these events on the days immediately surrounding the administration of the survey–experiment.

Approximately two months later, with the Canadian casualty count at 133, the same group of students were again presented with a survey consisting of three sections. The first section again asked questions about voting and vote preferences; the second about environmental policy and the third about the Afghanistan mission. In this second wave the questions about Afghanistan were again preceded by two photographs. The first is of a soldier on armed patrol in Afghanistan, clearly identifiable as Canadian by a prominent maple leaf flag insignia on his shoulder. This photo was accompanied by one of two images selected on a random basis. The first experimental photo shows a group of about a dozen soldiers sitting on rough terrain in Afghanistan underneath a Canadian flag. It was selected to evoke a sense of camaraderie and is used as the control condition in the second experiment. The experimental condition is defined by a photograph of a line of soldiers standing at attention as a

Canadian flag-draped coffin is carried away from the observer toward a Hercules transport plane. This time the photo is taken from the rear so the faces of the soldiers bearing the coffin are not visible. Again the image was selected to evoke a sense of the fallen soldier.

Drawing upon Gartner (2008a; 2011), the experiments are designed to test how the image of flag-draped coffins—a potent example of casualty-based imagery—affects support for the mission in Afghanistan.[15] In the first wave, this image is juxtaposed with two other prominent symbols of Canadian military intervention: one depicting humanitarian intervention, and the other a kind of militaristic patriotism. Loosely according with Gartner's dichotomy of loss-based versus heroic imagery, each of the three photos also acts as a visual representation of the typology of public attitudes offered by Gelpi and colleagues (2009); they propose that support for the use of force is comprised of underlying security and humanitarianism dimensions, while also hinging on casualty tolerance.[16] Moreover, they argue that specific "frames alert respondents as to which attitudes to draw upon in forming support" for a mission (Gelpi et al., 2009: 106). Although their study is not directly concerned with imagery, it does leave open the possibility that security-based, humanitarian or casualty-based attitudinal dimensions may be triggered or heightened by visual cues, something we test here.

Findings

Our findings are presented in three parts. First, we unpack the basic results of our two experiments. They show that exposure to images of flag-draped coffins leads to *greater* support for the mission. Next, we investigate some of the mechanism by which this effect occurs by pursuing the idea of a hybrid emotional response of sadness and pride which we uncovered in our qualitative work. Finally, we place our results in the broader context of efforts of other scholars to explore some of the emotional underpinnings of support for war. For this we consider our findings vis-à-vis the elements of anger and anxiety.

Experimental Effects

In order to examine the results of our experiments we employ structural equation modeling using AMOS17. This approach allows us to present the details of both measurement and predictive analysis as shown in Figure 1.[17]

Moreover, we can estimate the fit of the model to the data as measured by correspondence between the parameters estimated by the model and those produced by the data as a whole. The two measures of model fit used here are chi-square and root mean square error approximation

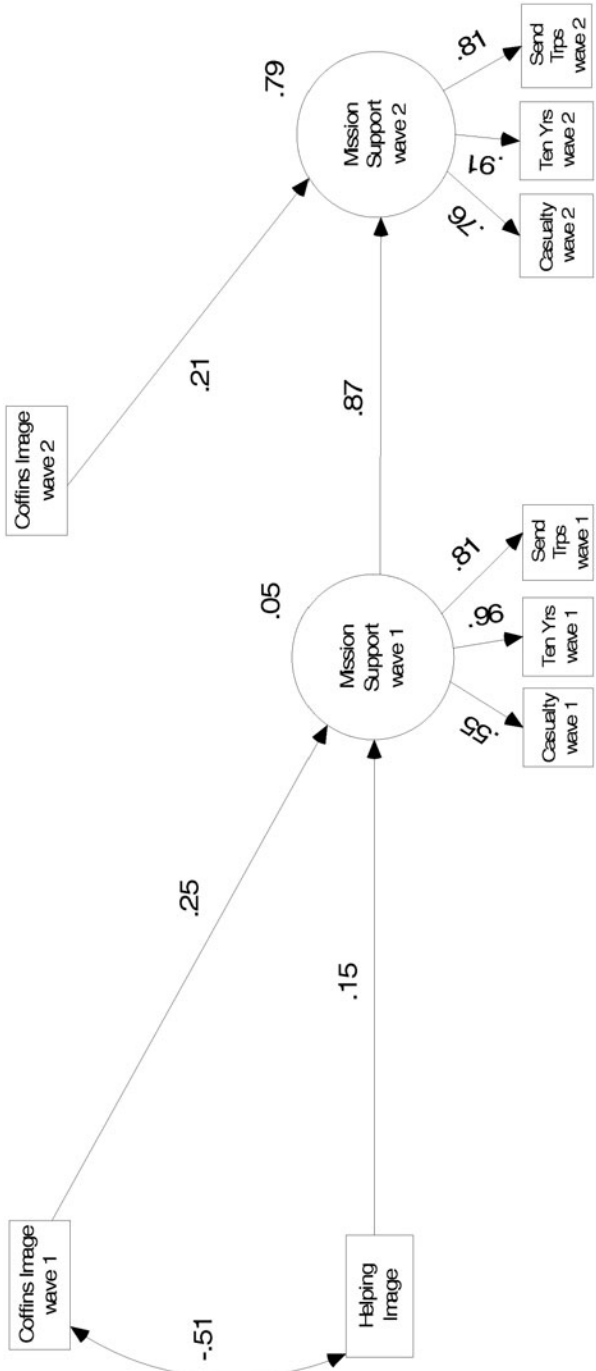


FIGURE 1
Effect of Experimental Image Manipulation on Support for the Afghan Mission
Chi sq = 20.755; df = 22; p = .536; rmsea = .000 (.000 – .058)

(rmsea).[18] Support for the Afghan mission is measured using three indicators of support for the decision to send troops to Afghanistan, willingness to support the mission for an additional ten years and casualty tolerance. The primary findings of interest are effects at each wave summarizing the influence of viewing the flag-draped coffins image upon support for the mission.[19]

In the first wave (shown on the left), the positive standardized coefficients suggest that, relative to the control condition, both the coffins image and that of a Canadian soldier helping a young boy *increase* support for the mission. Together they account for roughly 5 per cent of the variation in the latent measure of support for the Afghanistan mission. However the respective unstandardized coefficients (and standard errors) are .142 (.064) and .086 (.061), so only exposure to the coffins image produces a significant effect ($p = .019$ for the coffins versus $p = .144$ for the helping soldier).

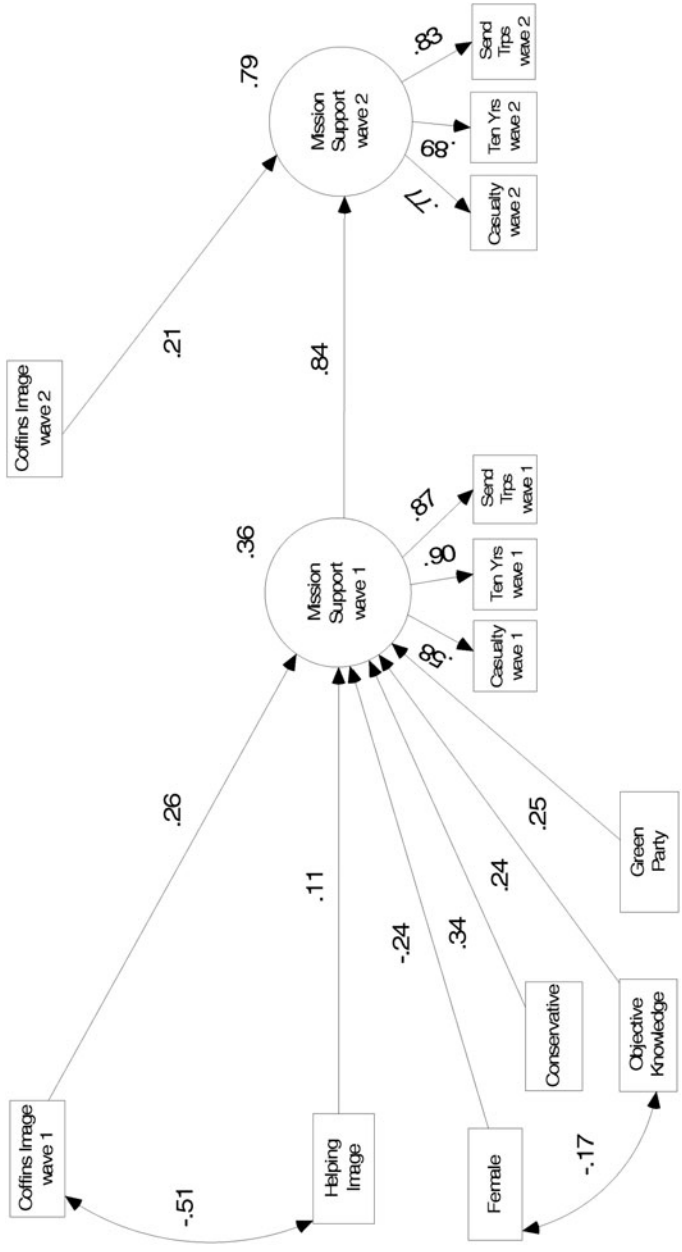
The second experiment employed a separate randomization and different experimental and control images with the same participants. In this case there is a single experimental and control condition. Again, as seen on the right-hand side of Figure 1, exposure to an image of flag-draped coffins leads to *greater* support for the mission in Canada. The unstandardized coefficient is nearly three times its standard error (.103 (.038)) and is thus conventionally regarded as statistically significant ($p = .007$). Moreover, this holds true even when taking into account the substantial impact of support for the mission as measured in the first wave using the very same indicators as in the second. Alone, mission support in the first wave accounts for 76 per cent of the variation, so conservatively speaking the experimental manipulation adds roughly 3 per cent to the explained variation in support for the mission.[20]

Also worth mentioning are the links that do not appear in the model. First, there is no association between the image seen by respondent in the first wave and that in the second wave. This is, of course, only what one would expect from an independent random assignment to condition, but it is nevertheless important to confirm. Moreover, there is no direct effect of the image viewed during the first wave of the study on support for the mission in the second wave. All of its influence is indirect through increased support for the mission in wave one (estimated as $.25 \times .87 = .21$).

Figure 2 confirms that the experimental effects discussed thus far are not washed out by the addition of other known predictors of support for the mission in Afghanistan (Fletcher et al., 2009).

Controlling for gender and partisanship does not alter the experimental effects observed in the two waves of study. And although the difference in chi-square values for the two models suggests that the addition of these predictors significantly reduces the fit of the model to the data

FIGURE 2
Effect of Experimental Image Manipulation on Support for the Afghan Mission
Chi sq = 72.344; df = 58; p = .097; rmsea = .037 (.000 – .062)



(Δchi square = 51.5 with 36 df; p =.045), it still provides a good approximation of the data, as indicated by the rmsea value. Moreover, we see that women are less supportive of the mission, while Conservatives are more so.[21] And those who know more about Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan, as measured by providing a reasonably accurate estimate of the number of casualties to date, show greater support, as do those who voted for the Green party.[22] There is also a significant association with being female and having less knowledge about the mission.[23]

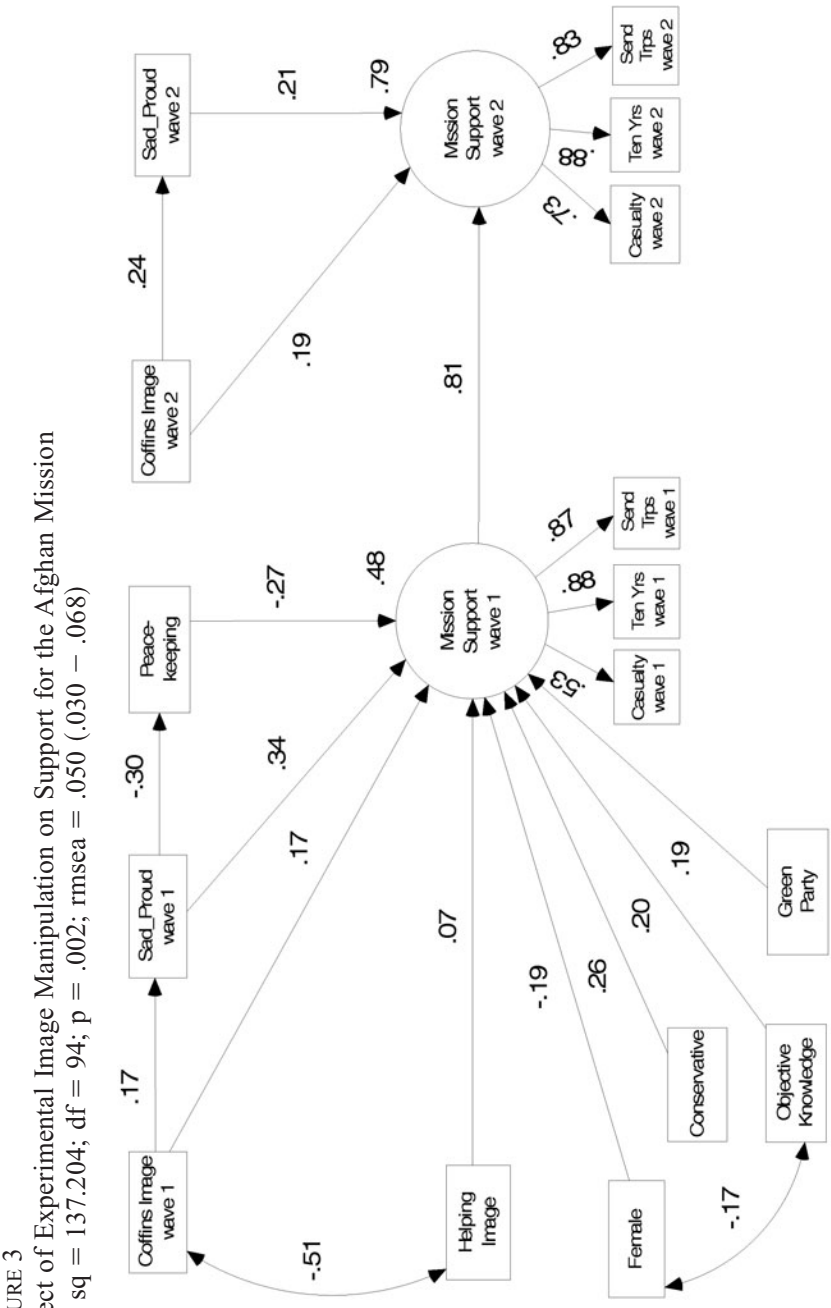
Investigating the Mechanism

In order to investigate the mechanism by which the effect of the coffins image on support for the mission occurs, we took advantage of a number of questions asked in the survey–experiment about respondents' feelings towards the mission. In each wave these questions were asked after the experimental photo manipulation and the three basic questions used to measure mission support. Respondents were asked to rate their emotional responses to the Afghanistan mission using a rating scale from 0 to 10 (see appendix A).

Our approach to this analysis is based upon our qualitative interviews on the Highway of Heroes. As suggested by our interviews, standing with others as the cortege passes below evokes in participants an emotional hybrid of sadness and pride.[24] As shown in Figure 3, we find support for this idea in both waves of the survey–experiment.

In the first wave, those who viewed the flag-draped coffins image were significantly more likely to report feeling the amalgam of sadness and pride. But this composite emotive element is only part of the story. There is an immediately political dimension as well: the sad–proud hybrid undercuts support for the post-Pearsonian image of the proper role of the Canadian Forces as peacekeepers rather than a combat-ready force. And, as we found in representative samples of the Canadian public (Fletcher et al., 2009), favouring a peacekeeping rather than a combat role for Canadian troops is inversely related to support for the Afghan mission. These effects are depicted in the upper-centre portion of Figure 3. Adding them to the model further significantly reduces its fit to the data (Δchi-square 44.6 with 20 df; p = .004). Nevertheless, the overall fit of the model remains a good approximation of the data as indicated by the rmsea value. Viewing the flag-draped coffins image in the first wave of the survey–experiment leads to a composite of sadness and pride, which in turn undercuts support for peacekeeping, thereby reducing its negative impact on support for the mission.[25] The overall indirect effect of the coffins image is thus positive as a consequence of the two negative coefficients involved. And compared with the results in the previous model, the direct effect of viewing the image on support for the mission is correspondingly reduced

FIGURE 3
Effect of Experimental Image Manipulation on Support for the Afghan Mission
Chi sq = 137.204; df = 94; p = .002; rmsea = .050 (.030 – .068)



by about a third of its magnitude. The explained variance in support for the mission increases by about one-third or 12 percentage points from 36 per cent to 48 per cent.

Unfortunately, there are no direct measures of either sadness or peacekeeping in the second wave of the study, though there is a measure of pride. Nevertheless, at the very end of the second-wave survey respondents were asked to briefly describe their thoughts and feelings about each of the photographs they had previously seen in the first wave. Our intention was to gain insight into the mechanism by which the image of flag-draped coffins influences mission support, but we can also use these open-ended responses to gauge the emotional reactions of respondents in the wake of the second experimental manipulation. As it turns out, the most frequent response to the flag-draped coffins photo was of sadness and loss, though for many respondents it evoked thoughts and feelings of opposition to the mission. We used this information to code whether or not respondents mentioned sadness and combined this measure with a direct measure of pride assessed through a rating scale. Together they form a measure of the amalgam of sadness and pride for the second wave of the survey–experiment.[26] As is seen in Figure 3, viewing the second coffins image once again led respondents to feelings of sadness and pride which in turn leads to support for the mission.[27] Unfortunately, in the second wave we did not assess support for peacekeeping versus combat readiness. Nevertheless, there is evidence of the crucial link between the experimental manipulation and the occurrence of the sad–proud emotional hybrid.

The Broader Emotional Basis of Support for the Mission in Afghanistan

Undoubtedly the amalgam of sadness and pride is not the only emotion experienced upon standing on an overpass during a repatriation ceremony nor even when viewing, however briefly, a photo of flag-draped coffins in the context of the survey–experiment. In an effort to more adequately specify the model of our experimental findings and the mechanism by which they operate, we now endeavour to bring a broader understanding of the emotional context of support for the mission into view. As such, our focus shifts to some extent away from the experimental results and why they work. In doing so, we will show that the composite emotional response that we have identified adds substantially to the understanding of the emotional underpinnings of support for the mission available through the literature. In this regard, we draw upon the work of Huddy and colleagues (2007) who show that among Americans, anger and anxiety play an important role in support and opposition for the war in Iraq.

At this stage, the advantages of using a graphic form of presentation begin to be overwhelmed by the complexity of the underlying statistical model. Thus we now move to a tabular display of our results despite the inevitable loss of information regarding the various direct and indirect paths that can be more readily appreciated in a path model. This is more than offset, however, by the additional variables that can be included in the display, not the least of which are the constituent elements of our sad–proud hybrid.

These results are, nevertheless, based upon a structural equation model, allowing us to assess its overall fit to the data though chi-square and rmsea. As with the previous model, there is a significant difference between the relationships summarized in the model and those evident in the covariance matrix produced by the data. This is evident in the chi-square statistic with its degrees of freedom and summarized in the significant p value. Despite failing to meet this rigorous standard, the model does provide a good-to-adequate approximation of the data as indicated respectively by the rmsea statistic and the upper limit of its confidence interval. Moreover, the predictors included in the model explain 68 per cent of the variation in support for the mission in the first wave of the study and 84 per cent in the second. The difference is due, of course, to the inclusion of support for the mission in wave one as a predictor of support for the mission in wave two.

Looking at the results on the left of Table 1 it is evident that the experimental manipulation has a substantial effect on support for the mission. So too does the sad–proud emotional composite, though both of its constituent elements are insignificant.[28] In the first wave of our survey–experiment we used single-item indicators of anger and anxiety in the model. This proves to be something of an advantage in that the influence of anger on support for the mission depends crucially upon the target of this emotion. This is ascertained using open-ended questions to probe with whom or about what a respondent is angry. When anger is directed toward a government, as it was for most respondents, the effect of the emotion is to decrease support for the mission. However, anger directed at the Taliban has the opposite effect, to increase support for the mission.[29] As it turns out these two effects essentially offset one another, leaving the overall effect of anger relatively limited. By contrast, the effect of anxiety is insignificant and shows no evidence of having a particular focus in the open-ended responses. Support for peacekeeping has its anticipated inverse influence upon support for the mission. Interestingly, gender's effects are primarily indirect, via the emotions. Specifically, women report greater sadness and less pride and anger than men. Knowledge as well as Conservative and Green voting preferences are also associated with greater support for the mission.

TABLE 1
Chi sq = 620.1 w 346 df; p = .000; rmsea = .066 (.057 − .074)

Panel A
Standardized Direct and Total Effects on Support for the Afghanistan Mission

	Wave #1			Wave #2	
	Direct Effects	Total Effects		Direct Effects	Total Effects
			Supportw1	.766	.766
Coffinsw1	.281	.243	Coffins w2	.183	.206
Sadw1	−.155[ns]	−.037	Sadw2	.119[ns]	.190
Proudw1	.130[ns]	.486	Proudw2	−.072[ns]	.086
SadProudw1	.354	.412	SadProudw2	.240[ms]	.229
Angryw1	−.371	−.284	Angryw2	−.052[ns]	−.052
Angry@Taliban	.325	.407			
Anxiousw1	.047[ns]	.047	Anxiousw2	−.140[ns]	−.140
PaxKeep	−.130[ms]	−.130		—	−.121
Female	−.052[ns]	−.256		—	−.205
Knowledge	.190	.190		—	.146
Conservative	.156	.156		—	.120
Green	.152	.152		—	.117
R^2 = .681			R^2 = .840		

[ns] = p > .10; [ms] = p > .05

Panel B
Standardized Factor Loadings for Measures of Anger and Anxiety (per Huddy et al., 2007), wave 2

	Angryw2		Anxiousw2
Angry	.804	Afraid	.811
Hostile	.763	Scared	.791
Disgusted	.611	Nervous	.632

Chi-square = 18.7 with 8 df; p =.016; rmsea = .086 (.035 − .137)

Turning to the right-hand side of Table 1 we see the factors influencing support for the Afghan mission in the second wave of our survey experiment. Naturally, the largest effect is that of support for the mission in the previous wave study. Nevertheless, consistent with what we have seen in earlier models, exposure to the photograph of a flag-draped coffin has a positive effect on support for the mission, as does the sad–proud emotional hybrid.[30] Its constituent elements, however, are again insignificant. The effects of gender, knowledge and party preference are all indirect via the previously measured support for the mission

In the second wave of the survey–experiment we specifically drew upon the work of Huddy and colleagues (2007) to include the multiple

indicators of anger and anxiety which they use to explain support among Americans for the war in Iraq. The factor loadings for these indictors appear in the lower panel of Table 1. While they adequately load on their latent variables, the psychometric characteristics of the underlying model are problematic as indicated by the fit measures.[31] Moreover, the correlation among the two factors is extremely high ($> .9$) suggesting, at the very least, that they have common causes which warrant exploration. More immediately of concern, neither adds appreciably to the explained variance of mission support.[32] These findings suggest the distinctiveness of the Canadian case not only because the emotional hybrid of sadness and pride remains the major determinant of support, but also insofar as the leading predictors used elsewhere are of less predictive value here.

Conclusion

In a recent *MacLean's* magazine, Stephen Marche (2010) identifies the Highway of Heroes as "the primary ritual in Canadian life for comprehending the cost of the conflict" (27). Consistent with this, it acts as an essential touchstone for our investigation. Our interviews along it reveal much about the public response to Canada's fallen soldiers. They tell us first that attendees do not consider their actions to be politically driven; they hold separate their sentiments towards the men and women serving in Afghanistan and their judgments on the political dimensions of the mission. Nevertheless, in addition to those who either support or oppose the mission, there are those who report coming to support the mission (or at least becoming less opposed) as a result of standing on the overpasses. This underscores the power of the emotional experience. And as the European psychologist Tania Zittoun (2006) reminds us, such powerful experiences can forge "emotional composites or new links between aspects of one's experience" (187).

The essential emotive element that emerges from our interviews is a composite of sadness and pride. This potent emotional hybrid is expressed so clearly along the Highway of Heroes that it suggests the Canadian public's emotional response to the casualties of the Afghan mission is more complex and perhaps more consequential than conventional wisdom would indicate. The Highway of Heroes has become in Marche's words "an essential demonstration of Canadianness" (2010: 27). As such, it is now part of the fabric of our Canadian emotional community (Rosenwein, 2002; 2006).

The results of our survey–experiments further unpack these phenomena. At first blush, our central finding—that support for the mission is significantly greater among those who view an image of flag-draped coffins—is surprising. In fact, the effect is precisely opposite to what is

found in the very work that inspired our own. Working in the US, Gartner (2008a; 2011) finds images of flag-draped coffins to be a potent stimulus of *opposition* to American involvement in Iraq and other conflicts. In Canada we find images of flag-draped coffins to stimulate *support*. And we replicate the finding with a separate randomization using different photographic images.

Though our results may be surprising, they are not without precedent. Using textual rather than photographic stimuli, Boettcher and Cobb (2009) find that framing war casualties as a sacrifice markedly increases support for war among certain publics. Thus images of flag-draped coffins may represent different emotive frames in Canada and the US.[33] Moreover, the broader validity of our findings is suggested by an independent study conducted by Peter Loewen and Daniel Rubenson (2010). They suggest that after a soldier from one's own riding is among the casualties of the Afghanistan mission, constituents were more likely to vote for the incumbent Conservative party. Loewen and Rubenson support this using both aggregate voting data and individual level survey data. Their work indicates that our experimental findings very likely generalize to the broader Canadian public.

To investigate the mechanism by which exposure to flag-draped coffin images increases support for the mission in Afghanistan, we analyzed a number of questions about respondents' feelings about the mission included in our survey–experiment. Consistent with our qualitative interviews, we found that an emotional hybrid of sadness and pride, as estimated using a multiplicative term in our equations, significantly increases support for the mission. But this emotive element is only part of the story. There is a political angle as well. In analyzing our data we found that the amalgam of sadness and pride has real political consequences. In particular, this emotional composite undercuts support for the Canada's traditional peacekeeping role, thus lessening the negative influence of this latter position on support for the mission in Afghanistan. These results stand up after applying conventional statistical controls for demographic factors known to be related to support for the mission, including gender and partisanship, as well as controls for other emotional factors such as anger and anxiety.

Our core finding also has implications at a broader theoretical level. We find that a composite emotion has effects that are markedly different from and more consequential than those of its constituent elements. In our view such compounds cannot be readily accommodated within common valence models of emotion which typically focus on a positive–negative dimensional array. Rather, such hybrids can better be accounted for within a multidimensional (or multi-systems) model of emotion (Dalgliesh et al., 2009: 363). For similar reasons, we think the notion of hybrids represents a considerable departure from the evolving theory of affective

intelligence common among political scientists (Neuman et al., 2007). Further, our findings raise some doubt as to whether the findings of Huddy and colleagues (2007), regarding the role of anger and anxiety in support for war will travel well outside the American emotional community.

Our results also speak to one of the most prominent theoretical fissures concerning public opinion towards military action. On one side, some argue for the centrality of "successes and failures on the battlefield" in shaping public attitudes towards war; others contend that elite "cues" are more influential determinants, as publics look to prominent political actors to guide their positions on the use of force (Berinsky, 2007: 975). In important ways, our findings bridge this debate. We find that Canadians do respond powerfully to casualties and that the meaning they attribute to these "events" is shaped by broader social and political cues. However, while the "elite cues" theory tends to look primarily to partisan political actors, our findings suggest a wider range of players. In both the field research and experimental stimuli used in our study, the Canadian military—rather than any partisan actor—provides a central frame through which to interpret the repatriation of fallen soldiers.[34] Notwithstanding such subtleties, we see our work as aligned with Berinsky's appeal for greater comprehension of how domestic politics structure the ways in which citizens perceive war-related events (2007: 995).

We are also acutely aware of the specificity of our experimental findings in both place and time. Indeed, we have noted that something quite different has been found in the US. And we understand that emotional communities are dynamic. As such, both the emotions involved and political consequence may change as circumstances evolve. Should the death toll among Canadian soldiers rise precipitously, for example, or reach some tipping point, we fully suspect that Canadians' emotional responses could change and even begin to mirror those of Americans.

Nevertheless, the political relevance of our findings is heightened in light of the attempt by the Canadian government in spring 2006 to ban media coverage of the repatriation ceremonies at CFB Trenton, a move which suggests a government perhaps out of step with the emotive sentiments of the Canadian public. Despite what politicians might think, exposure to flag-draped coffins does not lead to a crumbling of support for the mission in Afghanistan. The finding is of increased support, and it lies at the heart of Canadians' emotional responses to the mission. And while our analysis is cast against a broader decline in public support for Canada's military engagement in Afghanistan,[35] it points to a cross-current largely absent from Canadian public discourse. The public's emotional response to Canadian casualties in Afghanistan erodes support for the peacekeeping role of the Canadian forces. In the absence of emotionally resonant political leadership this may well become a legacy of Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

Notes

1 Between 2002 and 2005, eight soldiers were killed in Afghanistan. The numbers increase dramatically in 2006, as the Canadian military moves into Kandahar province. Canada suffers 36 military casualties in 2006; 30 in 2007; 32 in 2008; and 32 in 2009.

2 There are 59 overpasses along the repatriation route.

3 The media ban was accompanied by the decision not to lower the flags on Parliament Hill and other government buildings to half-mast in marking of military deaths. Provincial premiers quickly announced that they would not abide by this decision.

4 In the two months of March and April 2006, nearly as many soldiers died (7) as in the four preceding years (8).

5 After the ban was lifted, the media reported that internal documents from the Department of National Defence suggested that senior military officials had been opposed to the policy and had found ways to frustrate it, such as moving equipment from the airport tarmac so that media personnel standing outside the base had unobstructed views of the repatriation ceremonies (*Canadian Press*, 2006). See also Hillier (2009).

6 See Fletcher and colleagues (2009) for a discussion of how government messaging on the mission in late 2006 and mid-2007 lacked emotional resonance. It was accepted by the Canadian public at a cognitive level but failed to bolster support for the mission unless Canadians felt prideful of our role in Afghanistan.

7 This research was conducted under the approval of the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Toronto under Protocol References #24314 (August 11, 2009) and #24753 (December 18, 2009).

8 There are, of course, limits to what we can infer from having interviewed self-selected attendees of repatriation processions which occur only in Ontario.

9 All quotations are taken from interview notes written just after returning from the repatriation ceremonies.

10 These items originate in national surveys which were used to analyze public support for the mission in Fletcher and colleagues (2009).

11 Our experimental approach was inspired by discussions with Scott Gartner at the University of California, Davis, during the spring of 2009.

12 In total, 127 students completed surveys in the first wave, and 68 did so in the second wave. Although undergraduate students may differ from other adults in their attitudes toward foreign policy and military force, the two groups react similarly to casualty trends (Gartner, 2008b).

13 These questions are not used in this analysis as they are unrelated to those pertaining to Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.

14 The section on voting was introduced by a drawing of an Elections Canada ballot box and a map of Canada. The closing section on Canada–US relations was preceded by a photograph of the Canadian and American flags draped together in an artful fashion and a map of North America.

15 Although inspired by Gartner's work (2008a; 2011), the images used here are of flag-draped coffins being carried by soldiers and of other soldiers saluting the procession (see appendix B). Gartner's is of six flag-draped coffins with nothing else in the frame.

16 The security and humanitarianism dimensions of mission support draw on Jentleson's (1992) work concerning the perceived primary policy objective (PPO) of military intervention, upon which the public bases its support for the operation and casualty tolerance.

17 Rectangles represent manipulated variables while circles represent latent variables constructed of multiple observed indicators which are shown as squares. Effects are shown as coefficients on the arrows and can be interpreted as regression weights or

as factor loadings in the case of indicators for the latent variables. Standardized coefficients are used to facilitate comparisons within the models. To reduce clutter, error terms have been eliminated from the figures, as have correlations between error terms for the three repeated indicators of the dependent variable.

18 The insignificance of chi-square ($p = .536$) indicates that there is no significant difference between the model and the data. Similarly the rmsea value shows that the imprecision of the coefficients shown in the model is zero with a confidence interval extending to .058. Current interpretative standards suggest that values less than .06 indicate a good fit while values up to .08 suggest an adequate fit (see Byrne, 2010: 80).

19 We will say little here about the measurement characteristics of the dependent variable other than that while all three indicators are adequate at both waves, tolerance for casualties is a significantly better measure of the latent variable in the latter wave of the study.

20 Estimating the effect of the image in the second wave without controlling for support for the mission at the first wave would yield a higher estimate of explained variance, about 9 per cent.

21 Liberal and NDP supporters do not significantly differ in any respect relating to the model and are thus combined to form the reference category.

22 This finding may be due to the small sample size of Green supporters among experimental subjects.

23 One thing that appears in the analysis (but for the sake of clarity is not shown in the figures) is that women were less likely than men to see the coffins image in the second wave of study. Nevertheless, the effects of the experimental manipulation remain significant for women at both waves of the study. For men, the effect is less pronounced in the first wave than it is in the second. The opportunity for thorough subgroup analysis is limited, however, due to the relatively small number of cases available (and the reduced power of the analysis) resulting from halving the sample.

24 We understand sadness and pride to be a hybrid or composite of emotions, not indicators of a common latent construct. Accordingly, we calculate neither factor loadings nor a reliability coefficient for the sad–proud combination. Instead it is treated as a multiplicative term. To maintain expository clarity in our path diagrams, the constituent terms for this multiplicative hybrid are not at this point included in the analysis. Consistent with best analytic practice (Brambor and Clark, 2006) they will be included in the tabular data display in the next section, where the present findings are placed within the context of other psychological variables known to be associated with support for war. The results are not substantially altered.

25 The three respective unstandardized coefficients with standard errors and p-values are: 10.2 (5.3) $p = .056$; $-.005$ (.002) $p = .000$; -160 (.046) $p = .000$.

26 This measure is a product of dummy variables indicating the presence of sadness and pride. Sadness is scored as present when a respondent explicitly mentions it in reflecting in the second wave of the study upon the coffin photograph reproduced from the first wave. For pride, roughly the top one-third of ratings are scored as proud, others are scored as not proud (ratings 0–6 = 0 and 7–10 = 1). Alternative codings all produce positive coefficients for the paths in and out of their resulting sad–proud measure.

27 The unstandardized coefficients (standard errors) and levels of significance are: .172 (.094) $p = .068$ and .091 (.040) $p = .023$.

28 The unstandardized coefficients are: .150 (.040), $p = .000$; .0033 (.0017), $p = .047$; $-.013$ (.009), $p = .141$; .10 (.012), $p = .430$.

29 This parallels Huddy and colleague's finding (2007:219–20) that effects of anger but not anxiety vary across target. And parenthetically this may explain why anger has little net effect in explaining the mechanism of the experimental effect in the first

wave. In the second wave most of the respondents who identified a target for their anger mentioned either the Canadian or the US government; only a few identified the Taliban. This as well as the multiple indicator approach limits the analysis of targets in the second wave.

30 The unstandardized coefficients are: .087 (.037), p = .019; .158 (.084), p = .061.

31 Accordingly, their inclusion reduces the fit of the larger model to the data.

32 In a simplified model in which only anxiety and anger are entered as predictors for mission support the effect of anxiety is significant and negative while that of anger is essentially zero.

33 This divergence likely finds its roots in the two countries' distinct experiences of war over the last century.

34 However, in line with the more common interpretation of the "elite cues" theory, which places primary emphasis on conflict among partisan elites, we might note that the federal parties in Canada overwhelmingly express respect and loss when fallen soldiers are repatriated, even while their official stances on the mission in Afghanistan are at odds.

35 Recent polling in December 2010 shows 56 per cent of Canadians in opposition to the combat mission in Afghanistan. The same poll shows the public to be split on the decision to keep some Canadian Forces in Afghanistan in a training capacity until 2014; 48 per cent of Canadians support the decision, while 44 per cent oppose it (Angus Reid, 2010).

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Appendix A: Question Wordings

Mission Support (both waves)

Send Troops

Overall, would say you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose the decision to send troops to Afghanistan?

Ten Years

Canada's former Chief of Defence Staff, General Hillier, has said that it may take up to 10 years or more to make real progress in Afghanistan. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose Canada being in Afghanistan for that length of time?

Casualties

Some say that such casualties are the price that must be paid by countries like Canada to help bring stability and peace to Afghanistan. Others say they are too high a price to pay. Which is closer to your point of view?

Objective Knowledge

How many Canadian soldiers do you think have been killed in Afghanistan since the Canadian mission began there?

Peacekeeping

Some people say that Canada's role in international conflicts should be limited to peacekeeping and humanitarian missions—that is, we should not be actively engaged in combat situations. Others say that this is unrealistic and that our armed forces have to be prepared to participate in active, armed combat duty. Which one of these two views best represents your own?

Emotions (only those items used in the present analysis are shown here)

On a scale running from 0 through 10 where 10 means you strongly feel this way and 0 means you do not at all feel this way, would you say that the mission in Afghanistan makes you feel ...

Wave 1

a. Proud
At whom or about what? _____

b. Angry
At whom or about what? _____

d. Sad
About what? _____

Wave 2 (order of questions was varied randomly)

c. Disgusted

d. Hostile

f. Scared

g. Nervous

h. Afraid

j. Angry

k. Proud

Following Huddy and colleagues (2007) items c, d and j were used to build an index of anger, and items f, g and h were used to create a measure of anxiety.

Control Variables

Party Support (asked in wave 1 prior to experimental manipulation)

If you voted in the 2008 Federal election, for which party did you vote?

What is your gender? (asked in wave 1 after experimental manipulation)

Appendix B: Experimental Photos

Wave 1 Salute Photo (Control)

Helping Photo

Coffins Photo

Wave 2 Experimental Photos

Group Photo (Control)

Coffins Photo

Filler Photos

Wave 1

Wave 2