Uplifting Manhood to Wonderful Heights? News Coverage of the Human Costs of Military Conflict from World War I to Gulf War Two

Scott L. Althaus,[a] Nathaniel Swigger,[b] Svitlana Chernykh,[c]
David J. Hendry,[d] Sergio C. Wals,[e] and Christopher Tiwald

[a] Department of Political Science and Department of Communication, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
[b] Department of Political Science, Ohio State University
[c] Postdoctoral Research Fellow, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
[d] Postdoctoral Research Associate, Center for the Study of American Politics, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University
[e] Department of Political Science and Institute for Ethnic Studies, University of Nebraska Lincoln

Abstract

Domestic political support is an important factor constraining the use of American military power around the world. Although the dynamics of war support are thought to reflect a cost-benefit calculus, with costs represented by numbers of friendly war deaths, no previous study has examined how information about friendly, enemy, and civilian casualties is routinely presented to domestic audiences. This paper establishes a baseline measure of historical casualty reporting by examining *New York Times* coverage of five major wars that occurred over the past century. Despite important between-war differences in the scale of casualties, the use of conscription, the type of warfare, and the use of censorship, the frequency of casualty reporting and the framing of casualty reports has remained fairly consistent over the past 100 years. Casualties are rarely mentioned in American war coverage. When casualties are reported, it is often in ways that minimize or downplay the human costs of war.

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The war-making capability of the United States has no peer in the contemporary era. Despite this unique ability to project power through military force, American military might is held in check both by the expected responses of other states and by domestic political considerations (e.g., Baum & Potter, 2008; Fearon, 1994; Moore & Tarar, 2010; Ostrom & Job, 1986). Foremost among these domestic political factors is the level of popular support for a military intervention. Levels of domestic war support affect the military options available to political leaders (e.g., Lorell & Kelley, 1985; Sobel, 2001) as well as how long those leaders can continue the fighting (e.g., Foyle & Belle, 2010; Goemans, 2010; Mattes & Morgan, 2004). Although many factors affect popular support for war (see Eichenberg, 2005; Klarevas, 2002), one of the most important may be the human costs of war.

Since the publication of John Mueller's (1970, 1971, 1973) innovative work on war and public opinion, it has become an article of faith among many scholars of international relations and public opinion that the willingness of citizens to support wars is shaped in some way by information about the human costs of war. A scholarly consensus has emerged that the dynamics of American war support appear to be driven by a sort of cost-benefit calculus (e.g., Eichenberg, 2005; Klarevas, 2002; Larson, 1996; Larson & Savych, 2005). The number of war deaths suffered by American forces plays an important—albeit contested—role at the heart of this calculus: some argue that war deaths have a direct and consistent effect on war support (e.g., Gartner, 2008; Mueller, 2005), some claim such effects are conditional on war success or other factors (e.g., Gelpi, Feaver, & Reifler, 2005, 2009), while some conclude that there is no casualty effect at all (e.g., Berinsky, 2007; Gaines, Kuklinski, Quirk, Peyton, & Verkuilen, 2007).

Empirically, we know that popular support for war tends to decrease as American war deaths increase (e.g., Eichenberg, Stoll, & Lebo, 2006; Gartner, 2008; Mueller, 1973). Theoretically, the war support literature often interprets this correlation as evidence that the American public perceives fewer benefits from war as its human costs mount. This presumed relationship is usually tested with aggregate data, using time-series models predicting war support as a function of the actual occurrence of American war deaths. However, ordinary Americans learn about casualties not from time-series datasets but from news coverage. And although a voluminous literature has examined the smallest details of covariation between aggregate support and aggregate casualties, little attention has been paid to the ways that news media report the casualties of war. This is an important omission, because the frequency with which casualties are reported and the ways they are framed should be important factors shaping the mass public's response to war deaths.

This paper presents the first content analysis of casualty coverage ever to compare the reporting and framing of news about friendly, enemy, and civilian casualties across several major wars in which American forces were involved. In addition to testing the war support literature's implicit assumptions about the frequency and framing of casualty coverage, this effort establishes baseline measures of historical casualty coverage that can be used to assess casualty reporting in other conflicts and countries. We find that *New York Times* coverage of World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Iraq War tended to give little attention to American casualties, and even less to enemy and civilian losses. More important, we find that when covered, these casualties are often presented in ways that minimize or downplay the human costs of war. These tendencies vary little from World War I through the Iraq War.

The title of this paper comes from a July 9, 1916 *New York Times* story on British troops fighting in the trenches that summarized the costs of war in a simple headline: "Manhood Uplifted to Wonderful Heights in the Battles Now Raging."[1] There was a tendency in World War I to dramatize combat and casualties in a way that emphasized glory, honor, and sacrifice for a noble cause. Over time, this emphasis on war as a manly exercise has declined. But while we no longer see news coverage rhapsodizing about the glories of combat, the tendency to minimize the human costs of war remains. Although the five wars compared in this analysis had different rationales, durations, levels of popular mobilization, scales of losses, and degrees of censorship, our findings show that this tendency to minimize the human costs of war changed little over the past century.

War Costs and War Support

John Mueller's influential (1973) *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (see also Mueller, 1970, 1971) proposed that public support for the Korean and Vietnam wars was largely a function of cumulative casualty rates: as casualties went up, support went down. Although a broader range of factors is now understood to shape public support for war, and while current scholarship suggests that recent rather than cumulative casualties are more important in shaping war support (Althaus, Bramlett, & Gimpel, 2012; Eichenberg, et al., 2006; Gartner, 2008; Gartner & Segura, 1998; Gartner, Segura, & Wilkening, 1997; although see Mueller, 2005), much scholarship following Mueller's book continues to see casualties as one of several important—but perhaps conditional—influences on the American public's resolve. A second wave of scholarship beginning in the 1990s focused on understanding variation in the initial support levels for military crises (e.g., Burk, 1999; Jentleson, 1992; Jentleson & Britton, 1998; Klarevas, 2002; Oneal, Lian, & Joyner, 1996). When combined with the earlier emphasis on casualty sensitivity, this new wave of research gave rise to what many describe as a "rational calculus" or "cost-benefit" view of war support (e.g., Berinsky, 2007; Eichenberg, 2005; Gelpi, 2010). War costs are typically defined as the number of deaths among friendly forces, undoubtedly the most visible costs of war for ordinary citizens (Lorell & Kelley, 1985). In this sense, notes Christopher Gelpi (Gelpi & Mueller, 2006: 139), the mass public's "casualty sensitivity may be thought of as price sensitivity to the human cost of war."

Although the public's perception of war costs occupies an important role within the academic debate over the nature of war support dynamics, no study has yet confirmed that the standard ways of measuring war costs in political science research validly operationalizes the ways that casualty information is actually communicated to citizens. War support studies using simple counts of recent or cumulative American deaths assume that each American death has a uniformly negative and cumulating effect on war support. These counts serve as a proxy for both the amount of information about war costs thought to be conveyed by news coverage and the way those war costs are framed in news coverage.

This conventional use of casualty counts assumes that the amount of information about war costs communicated by news coverage vary as a function of the actual number of casualties incurred. Although the casualty aversion literature typically focuses on American casualties, the same logic can be extended to enemy casualties and civilian noncombatant casualties. And while data limitations incline research on casualty sensitivity to focus on deaths, the same logic should apply to persons wounded, taken prisoner, or displaced. These assumptions in the casualty aversion literature can be formally expressed as two hypotheses about the relationship between news coverage and casualty counts:

- H1: The frequency with which friendly, enemy, and noncombatant casualties are mentioned in news coverage of war is positively correlated with the actual frequency of each type of casualty.
- H2: The frequency with which deaths, wounds, and displacements are mentioned in news coverage of war is positively correlated with the actual frequency of deaths, wounds, and displacements.

Although both hypotheses are implied by the literature on war costs, the general consensus among qualitative studies examining the history of war reporting suggests to the contrary that accurate casualty information rarely reaches the eyes and ears of audiences on the home front (e.g., Carruthers, 2000; Knightley, 2004; Moeller, 1989; Mott, 1962; Robinson, Goddard, Parry, Murray, & Taylor, 2010; Roeder, 1993; Zelizer, 2004). Only a few quantitative content analyses of casualty coverage have been undertaken, and they tend to support the conclusions of the qualitative studies. American, enemy, and civilian casualties were rarely mentioned on Vietnam-era television newscasts outside of the weekly "body count" update on American deaths that appeared every Thursday night (Bailey, 1976; Hallin, 1986; Patterson, 1984). During the 2003 invasion of Iraq only a fraction of stories on American and British television mentioned coalition, enemy, or civilian casualties (Aday, 2005; Aday, Livingston, & Hebert, 2005; Robinson, et al., 2010).

Studies of casualty coverage from later in the Iraq war suggest that the amount of television news attention given to both American and civilian casualties had increased (Aday, 2010), but that the cumulative number of American war deaths was rarely mentioned in television news reports (Cobb, 2007). Moreover, because national news reports tend to focus on a small number of dramatic casualty-generating events rather than the larger number of "routine" deaths that occur in ones or twos, the total number of American dead mentioned in American television news is usually smaller than the actual number of war-related deaths (Aday, 2010; Cobb, 2007). These quantitative studies have two important limitations: most focus on just a single conflict, typically either Vietnam or Iraq, and none have examined casualty coverage prior to the Vietnam War. Our analysis was therefore designed to provide a definitive assessment of whether news mentions of casualties follow actual casualty rates for five major wars over the past 100 years.

A second set of hypotheses can be derived from the casualty aversion literature about the ways that American war deaths are expected to be framed in news coverage. Recent studies confirm that the context in which casualties are communicated to American audiences is just as important for understanding the public's assessment of war costs as the fact that losses have occurred. Casualty reports containing images of American dead affect public support more than textual descriptions only (Gartner, 2011; Pfau et al., 2006; Pfau et al., 2008). Americans also seem more sensitive to war deaths when casualty rates are rising rather than when they are falling (Gartner, 2008; Gartner, et al., 1997), and when casualty rates are borne unequally by different segments of society (Kriner & Shen, forthcoming). More generally, the conventional use of casualty counts as proxies for war cost information implies that news coverage tends to frame friendly deaths negatively.

None of these studies elaborates on this common assumption, but three likely forms of negative casualty framing can be readily identified. First, news coverage could present friendly casualties within stories that criticize the American cause. Second, news coverage could personalize casualties as individuals rather than as abstract numerical references. Journalists understand instinctively that a single vivid example sometimes can have greater impact than presenting abstract statistics. Economists have shown that people often place dollar values on a public good without regard to how many would be affected by the decision to provide it, something known in the contingent valuation literature as "insensitivity to scope" (e.g., Carson, 1997; Carson & Mitchell, 1993; Kahneman, Ritov, & Schkade, 1999). Psychological research on the "identifiable victim effect" (Schelling, 1968; Small & Loewenstein, 2003) concludes that statistical representations of human losses from genocide or other human catastrophes generally fail to engage affective systems that elicit sympathy toward victims (e.g., Kogut & Ritov, 2005, 2007; Slovic, 2007). Because moral concern tends to be heightened only when those losses are framed around identifiable individuals, this literature concludes that when it comes to human losses, "the more who die, the less we care" (Slovic, 2010). Translating these findings into the context of casualty coverage, stories emphasizing details about individual casualties should be more emotionally evocative than stories that merely mention levels or numbers of casualties. Such personalizing should be especially likely in local coverage of fallen "hometown heroes" (e.g., Gartner, 2004; Kriner & Shen, 2010). Third, American losses could be presented in isolation from mentions of enemy losses. A recent experimental study found that the effect of American deaths on perceptions of war success was conditioned by whether those deaths were presented in the context of enemy losses (Boettcher & Cobb, 2006). When presented in isolation, news of American deaths lowered perceptions of a battle's apparent success. But when presented along with information about the number of enemy forces killed in the battle, experimental subjects were more likely to perceive the battle as a success despite American losses. The authors concluded that presenting American deaths in isolation from enemy losses was a more negative way to frame casualties than presenting them in the context of enemy losses.

Although these three types of negative framing do not exhaust the possibilities, they provide clear ways to operationalize the conventional expectation that friendly deaths are routinely presented to American citizens in negative ways:

- H3: Friendly deaths tend to appear in stories that criticize the war effort.

- H4: Friendly deaths tend to be personalized as individuals.
- H5: Friendly deaths tend to be presented in isolation from mentions of enemy casualties.

In short, no previous study has systematically compared the reporting of war casualties across the entire duration of any major war. Nor has any study yet compared news coverage of casualties across major wars in ways that could clarify how casualty coverage has changed over time. These are critical omissions in light of findings that within wars, public support should be influenced both by the availability of casualty information and by how that casualty information is presented in the news. Across wars, the relationship between the public's response to previous conflicts and support for involvement in subsequent conflicts is affected by how the population internalizes the costs of war (the so-called "war weariness hypothesis," see Blainey, 1973). Our study contributes to understanding the dynamics of public support across wars by documenting continuity and change in the manner in which casualty information is transmitted to the American public.

Data Sources for Newspaper Coverage and Casualty Trends

Newspaper Content

We analyzed every war-related story in randomly sampled days of *New York Times* coverage from World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Iraq War. Only a few American newspapers are available in electronic form going back as far as World War I, and among those in the ProQuest Historical Newspapers series only the *Times* also had a published index that could be used to determine authoritatively which stories were war-related. The *Times* is also useful because it is widely considered the paper of record in the United States, and it sets the agenda of other news outlets within the American media establishment (e.g., Danielian & Reese, 1989; Golan, 2006). While the journalistic standards used at the paper may lead *Times*' coverage to be slightly less colorful than other outlets,[2] the main dynamics that drive the selection and content of war-related news coverage have tended to be consistent across American newspapers. This gives us confidence that an analysis of casualty coverage in the *Times* provides useful insights on the broader patterns of casualty coverage in the American media system more generally. Finally, unlike most newspapers, other studies have analyzed different aspects of *Times* reporting over similarly long periods of history (e.g., Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997; Cohen, 2008). These studies provide clear guidelines for how to interpret *Times* content over periods in which American social, political, and economic institutions underwent significant change

We used a stratified random sampling procedure to select days for inclusion in the analysis. Because newspaper content varies systematically by day of the week, we followed standard sampling procedures for daily newspapers (Riffe, Aust, & Lacy, 1993; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998: 97-101) and randomly sampled constructed weeks of coverage for each year of a war. But in order to track changes in coverage over the course of a war, we stratified these constructed weeks by elapsed months within each war. Because we were interested in tracking the development of news coverage both within and across wars, our choice to sample roughly every 60th day of each war produced larger subsamples for longer wars. We coded every war story within each day using full-text, scanned images of news stories obtained from ProQuest's Historical Database of the *New York Times*.[3] All war-related content was included in the analysis, including editorials and opinion columns but excluding letters to the editor. Data reported in this paper[4] include 10 days of news coverage containing 160 war-related stories from the period of American involvement in World War I (April 2, 1917 to November 11, 1918), 20 days containing 737 war-related stories from the period of American involvement in World War II (December 7, 1941 to September 2, 1945), 18 days containing 214 stories from the Korean War (June 25, 1950 to July 25, 1953), 49 days containing 509 stories from the Vietnam War (considered to have begun with the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, passed on August 7, 1964, and to have ended on March 29, 1973, the day the last American combat troops left South Vietnam), and 28 days containing 357 war-related stories from the Iraq War (March 19, 2003 through September 30, 2006, the date

we began collecting data for this project). This procedure identified a total of 1,977 war stories published in the 125 days sampled for the present analysis.[5]

Our definition of casualties encompassed all references in news stories to deaths and wounds as well as to forces taken prisoner and civilians displaced by the fighting. Within each war-related story, coders recorded every mention of casualties sustained by friendly forces, enemy forces, and civilian noncombatants, no matter how vague or indirect. Stories coded as mentioning casualties were not necessarily stories "about" casualties, though many were. For example, one of the articles coded as mentioning American deaths during Second World War told the poignant tale of a soldier who wanted to remind American civilians to honor the dead:

> BOSTON, Oct. 11 (AP)—Morris Litsky, 32, of New York's East Side, a stumpy-legged Jewish soldier with a sense of humor and an even bigger heart, has appealed to Americans, in the name of his dead comrades, to learn to be "a little kinder, a little more gentle and to love thy neighbor." In a letter made public by one of his officers, Litsky, who exhausted himself trying to keep up with Ranger comrades in the Normandy invasion, said that was what American soldiers were fighting for."[6]

The story continues to briefly mention details of Litsky's combat experience before reproducing several paragraphs verbatim from Litsky's letter. Although this story is "about" American war deaths, none of Litsky's dead comrades are named, nor are they numbered or otherwise described.

Mentions of casualties captured by our coders therefore range from long numerical reports of casualties from recent battles to brief, offhand remarks about "our losses." For example, one of the stories from the Korean War reported on a speech by American general Mark Clark praising his fighting troops for upholding the United Nations charter. The article contains only a single passing reference in the fourth paragraph to "those who have given their lives to make this possible."[7] Despite the brevity and vagueness of this reference, the story was nonetheless coded as mentioning American war dead.

Because of the alliances that the United States made in each of these wars, we considered friendly casualties as losses incurred either by American forces or by the forces of its allies. For instance, coders were instructed to count reports of British casualties during World War II or South Vietnamese government forces during the Vietnam War as mentions of friendly casualties. In practice, however, despite casting a broad net we found that most mentions of friendly casualties made during periods of American involvement referred to U.S. casualties alone, and that few stories mentioned casualties of allied nations without also mentioning American losses. In the interest of parsimony we consistently refer to friendly casualties as American casualties throughout the analysis that follows. The reader should note that this term sometimes encompasses the casualties of U.S. allies as well.

Coders also looked for cues in war stories about the moral stances of allied and enemy forces that suggested whether American involvement in a war was justified or not. Separate codes for the moral stance attributed to allied and enemy forces helped us identify cues about the relative appropriateness of American involvement in a war. We combined these codes into a composite measure of the relative moral standing of the American cause. As we use the terms in this paper, "positive" moral tone includes both stories that praise the moral stance of allied nations and stories that criticize the moral stance of enemy nations, while "negative" moral tone includes both stories that criticize the allied cause as well as stories that praise the enemy's cause. [8]

Five coders carried out the content analysis after extensive training and reliability testing. A final reliability test using 161 stories was conducted prior to the start of data collection process, and this test confirmed that coders were applying the protocol with acceptable levels of agreement and chance-corrected intercoder reliability. Average pairwise agreement across coders ranged from 90% to 99%, and minimum

pairwise agreement ranged from 87% to 99% for the variables used in this analysis. Besides measuring rates of agreement, we also calculated intercoder reliability statistics, which represent the percentage agreement above what can be expected by chance (further details on intercoder reliability are available in the online appendix). All content variables used in this analysis have acceptable levels of intercoder reliability, achieving at least a .70 level of reliability with either Brennan and Prediger's (1981) kappa or Krippendorff's (2004) alpha, as appropriate.

The Disconnect Between Reality and News Accounts

The amount of newspaper attention given to major wars has remained fairly stable over time even though the number of newspaper stories per issue has tended to go down over the past 100 years (Barnhurst, n.d.; Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001). In our sample, the *New York Times* published an average of 12 war-related articles per day during the wars in Iraq, Vietnam, Korea, and the period of American involvement in World War I. In contrast, the *Times* averaged 37 war stories per day during the period of American involvement in World War II.

To assess how news coverage presented the human costs of war, it is necessary to establish the relative occurrence of deaths, wounds, and imprisonments for American forces engaged in the wars under analysis, since information about all three types of casualties are communicated to the American public. Table 1 shows that the United States suffered more deaths, wounds, and prisoners taken in World War II than it did in the other four wars combined. To put these losses in scale, the number of Americans who died in Iraq through late 2006 (the time marking the end of our content analysis sample frame for the Iraq war) was equivalent to less than one percent of deaths from World War II, less than three percent of American deaths from World War I, five percent of deaths from Vietnam, and eight percent of deaths from Korea. Vietnam is second only to World War II for the number of wounds incurred by U.S. personnel, but otherwise the relative ranking of wars from most to least costly in terms of American casualties runs World War II, World War I, Vietnam, Korea, and Iraq.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

This ranking of wars by the human costs borne among American forces has no obvious relationship to the amount of news coverage given to American losses by the *New York Times* (for an extended analysis of this point in the context of American deaths alone, see Althaus et al., 2011). To the contrary, Figure 1 shows that news coverage of American casualties has remained fairly stable across wars. Averaging across the five wars, American deaths were mentioned in only 11% of war-related stories, American wounded were mentioned in 8%, and American prisoners were mentioned in just 4% of war-related stories. The patterns over time are remarkably stable save for the Iraq War, when war stories were almost twice as likely to mention American deaths as during the Vietnam War.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The paucity of casualty mentions is not because American deaths were rare occurrences in these wars. To the contrary, dividing the total number of deaths from each war by the war's duration yields a daily average death toll of 198 Americans in World War I, 297 in World War II, 33 in the Korean War, and 18 deaths per day in Vietnam. Only in Iraq was the daily death toll of two Americans per day on average low enough to consider such deaths as relatively uncommon events.

It is important to note that our coding scheme captures even passing mentions and oblique references to casualties. In this sense, the totals shown in Figure 1 overstate the amount of newspaper attention to the human costs of war. If the totals in Figure 1 were recalculated to count only the fraction of stories that were mostly "about" American losses, the limited attention to human costs of war would look even more extreme. Whereas about 11% of war-related stories on average made at least a passing reference to American deaths,

only 2% reported numerical details of war deaths in a way that gave substantial attention to the scale or rate of American losses.[9] There is one other way that these totals overstate the amount of news attention to American deaths: casualty mentions like these rarely garner front-page attention. Of the 211 stories across all five wars that make at least passing reference to American deaths, only 11% (n = 23) appeared on the paper's front page. Of the 41 stories giving substantial attention to the scale or rate of American losses, only six appeared on the front page. Not only are American deaths rarely mentioned, but when they are, the stories are rarely highlighted for special attention.[10] We conclude that most references to American deaths in the *New York Times* were both incidental and inconspicuous.

Relatively little coverage is given to American casualties, but they are covered. The *Times* also reports casualties incurred by enemy forces and civilian noncombatants, and this coverage varied to some extent across wars. Unfortunately, authoritative data about casualties incurred by enemy forces and civilians caught in the crossfire are unavailable: the casualty records of losing sides are often incomplete or never officially confirmed, and the scale of civilian losses in wartime are difficult to estimate.[11] Because of this, there is no definitive way to compare reported casualties to actual losses suffered by enemy forces and civilian populations. Figure 2 aims instead to compare the relative amount of news attention given to different categories of human losses. Instead of looking at percentages—which will always be small, as so few *Times* stories mentioned casualties of any sort—variance in casualty coverage is here shown as the average number of stories per day that mention different types of casualties incurred by Americans, enemy forces, and civilians.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The top graph in Figure 2 reports the average daily number of newspaper stories that mention different types of American casualties. American deaths were mentioned more often during both of the world wars than in coverage from Korea and Vietnam. But American deaths were most likely to be mentioned in Iraq coverage. These differences across wars are collectively significant, F (4, 120) = 3.6, $p < .01$, but post-hoc contrasts show that only the differences between Iraq and the wars in Korea and Vietnam are individually significant. Yet even as American deaths are more likely to be mentioned in news stories today, injuries sustained by American forces are less likely to be noted today than in wars past, F (4, 120) = 5.5, $p < .001$. More stories from the two world wars mentioned American wounded than from any of the three later wars, but the only significant differences are between World War II and the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq. In contrast, attention to friendly forces held prisoner peaked in World War I before declining in World War II and holding stable thereafter, F (4, 120) = 3.8, $p < .01$. Post-hoc tests showed that World War I had significantly more coverage of U.S. prisoners than Vietnam and Iraq, and marginally more prisoner coverage than World War II.

Comparing the top graph in Figure 2 to the casualty data in Table 1 confirms that the amount of daily newspaper attention given to American casualties is unrelated to the actual numbers of American casualties sustained in these wars. This has at least two implications of particular relevance for the casualty aversion literature. First, wars with more casualties do not produce more casualty coverage. Because the overall frequency of casualty mentions has remained fairly stable across wars in *Times* coverage, this means that American casualties are getting proportionally more attention today than in the past: smaller numbers of recent casualties are generating roughly the same amount of news mentions as larger numbers of casualties from the world wars. Second, coverage of casualties focuses more on deaths than on wounds. Although the number of wounded is far greater than the number of dead in each of these wars, news coverage of the four earlier wars gave roughly equal attention to the dead and wounded. In contrast, news coverage given to American casualties in Iraq focused mainly on deaths rather than wounds, even though the wounded outnumbered the dead by more than seven to one over the period considered here. In short, these findings underscore that the news attention given to American casualties is no mirror of events on the battlefield (Althaus, et al., 2011).

Figure 2 also reveals important changes in the amount of news attention given by the *Times* to enemy and civilian casualties. Attention to casualties inflicted on enemy forces has diminished over the past century. In the two world wars and in the Korean War, mentions of enemy casualties in *Times* coverage were about as frequent as mentions of American casualties. But beginning in Vietnam and continuing through Iraq, coverage of enemy losses became increasingly uncommon.[12] In Iraq coverage, 68% of sampled days contained no mention of enemy deaths. In contrast, during World War II only 5% of sampled days contained no references to enemy deaths.

The third graph in Figure 2 shows that the *Times* tended to give less attention to civilian casualties than to combatant casualties during the 20th century. Iraq had substantially more coverage of civilian deaths than Korea or Vietnam, but about the same amount as in both of the world wars. The same general pattern holds for coverage of injuries to noncombatants.[13] Aside from World War II, civilian refugees fleeing the fighting have rarely received much news attention. During World War II, war news from 70% of sampled days had at least one mention of civilian refugees, compared to just 29% from Iraq, 20% from Vietnam, 17% from Korea, and 10% of sampled days from World War I. In short, dead and wounded civilians received a small amount of daily attention in *Times* coverage of Iraq and the two world wars, but were typically overlooked in coverage from Korea and Vietnam. Displaced civilians have been neglected in every war except for World War II. Even in World War II, however, only two percent of stories about the conflict drew attention to the problem of civilian refugees.

Although not shown in Figures 1 and 2, we also examined whether the daily percentage of stories mentioning casualties changed over the course of these wars. When all 125 days of sampled news coverage across all five wars are pooled together, there is only one significant correlation between any type of casualty mention and the number of elapsed weeks in a war: the daily percentage of stories mentioning American deaths tends to go down slightly over time ($r = –.19$, $p < .05$). This is entirely an artifact of reporting trends during Vietnam ($r = –.32$, $p < .05$) and Iraq ($r = –.44$, $p < .02$), as none of the other wars shows a significant correlation for this relationship. Aside from this lone case of diminishing news attention to American deaths over the course of a war, no other type of casualty—deaths, wounds, prisoners or displacements; across friendly, enemy, or civilian groups—had a consistently significant correlation with the number of elapsed weeks at war.[14]

Public support for war is often thought to be based on perceptions of costs, benefits and likelihood of success. However, recent studies have shown that average citizens are unable to accurately assess war costs (Baum & Groeling, 2010; Berinsky, 2007, 2009; Cobb, 2007; Gaines, et al., 2007; Myers & Hayes, 2010). Our findings thus far offer one reason why: information about casualties is difficult to come by in the American public sphere.

How Casualties Are Presented to the Public

Not only is information about wartime casualties scarce, but when reported, this information is often framed in ways that minimize or valorize the human costs of war. Our analysis of the framing of casualty stories over the past 100 years suggests that American war deaths are rarely personalized, rarely portrayed as an unreasonable cost, and often presented in the redeeming context of enemy deaths. These tendencies vary somewhat across wars, but there are few distinctive trends in the evolution of casualty framing over time.

War Deaths Are Rarely Personalized

On the occasions when human loss of life was mentioned in war coverage, those mentions rarely identified the dead as individuals. Of the 1,977 war-related stories contained in 125 sampled days of news coverage across five wars, the name of a dead American was mentioned in only 73 stories, the name of a dead civilian in 10, and the name of a dead enemy in just five. Figure 3 shows the percentage of war stories mentioning dead Americans, enemies, or civilians that identified the name of an individual casualty.

When reported, civilian and enemy deaths were consistently depersonalized over the past 100 years. An average of just 12% of references to dead civilians and 4% of dead enemy combatants were identified by name. Furthermore, Figure 3 shows that dead civilians and enemy combatants are just as unlikely to be identified today as during the First World War, as there is no statistically discernible trend in this tendency over time.[15] This is unsurprising, as neither of these groups would be as potentially newsworthy to American audiences as American casualties. Yet even in the Iraq War, which had more mentions of civilian deaths than either Korea or Vietnam (Figure 2), dead civilians were no more likely to be personalized than in wars past.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

Named American deaths follow a similar pattern. Dead Americans are somewhat more likely than dead enemy combatants or civilians to be presented to the American public as identifiable individuals, but most of the time American deaths are presented anonymously. On average across the five wars, only 35% of stories that mentioned American deaths also provided the name of a dead American. There is a statistically discernible difference between wars in this tendency (F [4, 206] = 2.4, p = .05) that comes from the higher levels of personalization in Iraq than in Vietnam, but casualty coverage is so rare that there is no statistical difference in the degree to which American deaths were depersonalized among the four earlier wars. However, Figure 3 overstates the degree to which American losses are personalized as individuals, because many of these individual references are not in news stories at all. In each of the five wars, when American deaths were individually named, those references often appeared in nondescript "Names of the Dead" entries presenting lists of American losses without context or commentary, like this brief page 16 *Times* story from October 4, 1968, reproduced here in full:

> **Vietnam Casualties**
>
> Washington, Oct. 3 (AP)—The Defense Department today listed the names of the following servicemen from the New York area as having been killed in Vietnam:
>
> *Army*
>
> ALICEA, Robert, Pfc., Brooklyn.
>
> BROEKHUIZEN, Allen P. Pfc., Fulton, N.Y.
>
> BYRNES, Robert J., S. Sgt., Southold, N.Y.
>
> QUICK, Isham I., S. Sgt., Brooklyn.
>
> TROTTER, Richard B., S. Sgt., Grand Island, N.Y.
>
> *Marine Corps*
>
> MILEY, Reuben Jr. Lance Cpl, Brooklyn.
>
> RUSCITO, John A., Pfc., North Babylon, N.Y.

Of the news items reported in Figure 3 as identifying dead Americans, nearly half (48%) were of this sort. Previous research on the identifiable victim effect shows that groups of named victims are perceived less sympathetically than a single named victim (e.g., Kogut & Ritov, 2005; Slovic, 2007), suggesting that such "Names of the Dead" lists are unlikely to stir strong emotional reactions in readers. Omitting mentions of individual deaths that appear in such lists produces a rather different pattern than that shown in Figure 3: only 29% of journalistic news reports mentioning American dead in World War I identified an individual casualty, compared to 24% in World War II, 7% in Korea, 17% in Vietnam, and 27% in Iraq. In this

comparison there are no statistically significant differences among the wars in the tendency to personalize Americans deaths, F (4, 170) = 1.0, p = .40.

These non-list news stories identifying American dead tended to fall into either of two categories: stories in which unusual circumstances of the casualty's death made it notable for some reason, or "fallen hero" stories. Many of the named deaths that appear outside of "Names of the Dead" lists are mentioned because of unusual circumstances in which the death occurred. One example is a 1918 *Times* story with the rousing title "American Flier Died Fighting."[16] In this story, the heroic circumstances surrounding the pilot's death may have warranted a special mention, as the story itself was a blow-by-blow description of the aerial combat in which the flier was killed. Likewise, a 1942 story titled "Japanese Gunfire Rakes Life Rafts: Submarine Crews Machine-Gun Survivors of U.S. Freighter in Pacific"[17] mentions in passing the name of an American sailor who "was killed when machine-gun bullets struck him in the back" after a Japanese submarine opened fire on American sailors in the water. Like the 1918 story, this article focuses on detailed accounts of what happened in the encounter where the person died rather than on the death itself. Exceptional combat actions are not the only reason for such mentions. A brief 1965 story mentions one death by name because it was the first Vietnam casualty from the state of Connecticut.[18] The story, buried on page 50, is reproduced here in its entirety: "NORTH CANAAN, Conn., July 10 (UPI)—Staff Sgt. Paul J. Bruno, 28 year [sic] old, an Army infantry adviser, has been killed in action, the first Connecticut serviceman to die in combat in Vietnam. His parents Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bruno, were notified of their son's death yesterday."

Aside from stories mentioning unusual deaths or notable aspects of a particular death, the other main group of named American dead appearing outside of casualty lists involves "fallen hero" stories. For example, of the six Korean War stories in our sample that mentioned dead Americans by name, five were "Names of the Dead" lists. The sixth was a six-paragraph story from 1952 detailing a ceremony in which Congressional Medals of Honor were presented to the grieving fathers of two men killed in action.[19] No details of the circumstances meriting the awards are given other than that the two men "won their places in the top ranks of American heroes by sacrificing their lives in one-man charges against murderous odds." These "fallen hero" stories often appear as local coverage given to hometown casualties from the immediate area surrounding New York City, where the *Times* is located. For example, one local story published by the *Times'* Metropolitan Desk during the 2003 invasion of Iraq celebrated the community spirit that greeted the loss of a named soldier from New York City:

> Three days after Marine Staff Sgt. Riayan Tejeda joined the nation's list of Iraq war deaths, an improvised memorial grew yesterday in front of the graffiti-strewn facade of the Washington Heights building where he was raised. In what has long been one of Manhattan's tougher neighborhoods, it was a scene normally associated with homicide: bouquets of dyed carnations piled amid empty champagne bottles. But as a memorial to Sergeant Tejeda, a 26-year-old native of the Dominican Republic, it reflected the pride and grief felt across the nation for fallen soldiers, and the anguish of immigrants fighting for their adopted home.[20]

Another of the non-list stories from Iraq to mention a casualty's name opened with a similarly somber but patriotic focus:

> The dress blue uniforms of the Fire Department spilled down one half of the steps outside St. Benedict's Roman Catholic Church in the Bronx yesterday. The dress greens of the National Guard spilled down the other. The mixture of these two proud traditions reflected the service of Christian Engeldrum. A father of two proud children, with another on the way, Sergeant Engeldrum, who was killed last month while serving in Iraq, was a firefighter with Ladder Company 61 in Co-op City in the Bronx and a sergeant in the New York National Guard. At his funeral yesterday, in the Throgs Neck neighborhood, there was talk of patriotism, heroism and duty to one's country.[21]

Although it is no longer the norm for national news stories to gush about "Manhood Uplifted to Wonderful Heights" as was done in the First World War, these examples of local coverage read strikingly like the purple prose of 100 years ago. And yet, as Figure 3 reminds us, these examples are the exception: the human costs of war are hardly more personalized in *Times* coverage today than during the Battle of Belleau Wood.

War Deaths Are Rarely Portrayed as an Unreasonable Cost

Moral boosterism has been a feature of casualty coverage going back to the First World War. As Figure 4 shows, in each of the five wars a majority of stories mentioning dead Americans, enemies, or civilians has been couched in neutral terms relative to the cause of the United States. But when moral commentary is present, in each of the three wars prior to Vietnam a story mentioning war deaths was more likely to be praising than criticizing the American position. This was especially so during the Korean War, when a third of stories mentioning American deaths also praised the justice of the American cause. This outlier may stem from the Cold War backdrop of that conflict, which cast the American forces as paladins of freedom arrayed against trumpeting hoards of godless Communists. But even with Korean coverage, the majority of casualty stories contained no moral evaluations at all. Beginning in Vietnam and continuing in Iraq, the few stories mentioning war deaths that also took a position on the American cause were likely to be balanced between critical and supportive coverage.[22] The one exception in these recent wars is found in Vietnam-era stories mentioning civilian deaths, which were much more likely to criticize America's stance in the war than to praise American involvement.

INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE

Statistical analysis of these trends shows a significant difference between wars in the amount of moral praise of the American cause in stories that mention American deaths (F [4, 206] = 3.3, $p < .05$), but post-hoc contrasts confirm that only the Korean War stands out as statistically distinctive in this regard. Within stories mentioning American dead, levels of moral boosterism during Vietnam and Iraq were not significantly different from those during the First and Second World Wars. Likewise, there has been no statistically significant increase over time in the percentage of stories mentioning American deaths that also criticize the American cause or praise its enemies, F (4, 206) = 0.9, $p = .45$. There is a significant difference between wars when it comes to praising the American cause in stories that mention enemy dead (F [4, 128] = 3.3, $p < .05$), but post-hoc contrasts show that this is owing to the exceptional level of patriotic fervor in First World War stories. None of the later four wars is statistically distinctive from one another in this regard. However, the Iraq War stands out from the other four wars for its higher level of moral criticism of the American position within stories mentioning enemy dead, F (4, 128) = 3.1, $p < .05$. Moral judgments in stories mentioning civilian dead are statistically indistinguishable among wars when it comes to praising the justice of the American cause (F [4, 78] = 1.2, $p = .30$), and only Vietnam stands out from the rest for its relatively high levels of moral criticism toward the U.S. within stories mentioning civilian dead, F (4, 78) = 4.8, $p < .01$.

In short, stories that present war deaths of any sort rarely do so while questioning the cause of war or the morality of the conflict. The majority of *Times* stories mentioning the human costs of wars have always been neutral with respect to the American cause. In statistical terms, stories presenting war deaths from the Iraq War tended to be just as supportive of the American cause as comparable coverage during the First World War.

American Deaths Are Often Presented in the Context of Enemy Deaths

During the Second World War, the bloodiest fight in the Pacific Theater involving American forces was the 1945 battle of Okinawa. More than 11,000 Americans were killed and 34,000 wounded during three months of fighting. Yet when the *New York Times* ran a five-column, page-one banner headline announcing

the victory, it presented those losses in a context that implicitly justified them by comparing them to higher enemy losses: "OKINAWA IS OURS AFTER 82 DAYS; 45,029 U.S. CASUALTIES, FOE'S 94,401."[23] The headline suggests that although American losses were bad, enemy losses were much worse, and American forces gave better than they got.

Recent research has confirmed that Americans are likely to perceive friendly losses as justified and worth the cost when presented in the context of enemy losses (Boettcher & Cobb, 2006). However, no previous study has assessed the frequency with which American and enemy casualty reports occur in the same news stories. We find that when all wars are considered together, 22.7% of stories mentioning American dead also mention enemy dead. Figure 5 shows the breakdown by war of the frequency with which references to American dead appeared in stories that mentioned enemy dead. There is a significant difference in this tendency across wars (F [4, 206] = 7.4, $p < .001$), owing entirely to the prevalence of such coverage during Vietnam. When the Vietnam War is omitted there are no statistically significant differences among the remaining wars, F (3, 144) = 1.2, $p = .31$.

INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE

From World War I through Korea, American losses were presented along with enemy deaths in an average of 18% of the stories that mentioned American deaths at all. But that proportion more than doubled during Vietnam to 44% of stories mentioning American deaths. On this dimension, casualty coverage during the Vietnam War was the most sympathetic presentation of war costs in modern American history. This presents something of a puzzle for a long line of literature, following Mueller, that suggests the corrosive effects of US losses during Vietnam were equivalent to (e.g., Mueller, 1973) or even larger than (e.g., Sidman & Norpoth, 2012) the same effect found in other major wars.

If Vietnam had the most sympathetic framing of American losses, then Iraq had the least sympathetic framing of American dead. During the Iraq War, only 8.6% of stories mentioning American deaths presented those deaths in the context of enemy losses. This increased tendency for Iraq coverage to portray American losses in isolation from enemy losses stems partly from the prevalence of mentioning American losses in "Names of the Dead" lists during the Iraq War, and partly from the tendency reported in Figure 1 for American deaths to be more frequently mentioned in war-related stories during the Iraq War than in previous wars. Figure 2 showed that Iraq coverage was no more likely to mention enemy dead than had been the case in Vietnam or Korea, so the relatively small overlap between mentions of American and enemy dead in Iraq War coverage stems from the increased attention given to friendly losses during this conflict.

Conclusion

The cutting edge of scholarship on public support for war has begun to turn from conventional correlational approaches using aggregate trend data to more sophisticated, individual-level models and theories (e.g., Baum & Groeling, 2010; Berinsky, 2007; Berinsky & Druckman, 2007; Boettcher & Cobb, 2006; Gartner, 2011). Understanding how individuals think about wars requires attention not only to psychological moderators and key attitudes but also to the ways that wars are communicated to citizens. Some political scientists seek out casualty information directly from the Department of Defense, but few outside the academy are likely to follow their lead. Instead, information about the costs and benefits of war reaches most people through the news.

In this paper we have demonstrated that wartime news coverage rarely mentions the human costs of war. When casualty information is presented, it rarely shows up in contexts that draw attention to the negative aspects of wartime losses. Recent work drawing from individual-level survey data has suggested that Americans have little clear knowledge of casualty levels in ongoing wars (e.g., Berinsky, 2007; Berinsky, 2009; Boettcher & Cobb, 2006; Cobb, 2007; although see Gaines, et al., 2007). This study helps explain why.

Our analysis yielded two sets of findings about the frequency with which human costs of war were mentioned and how those costs were framed in *New York Times* coverage spanning five major wars. First, *Times* coverage gave proportionately little attention to the human cost of America's wars. Few war stories made any mention of American casualties, fewer still of enemy or civilian losses. Second, when casualties were mentioned, it was typically in a matter-of-fact manner that rarely highlighted the negative aspects of war costs. Casualties of war appearing in *Times* coverage tended to be anonymous. American casualties were more likely to be identified by name than enemy or civilian casualties, but many of these references came from simple lists presenting the latest names of the dead rather than from stories reporting news about a war. Mentions of the dead also tend to be presented without commentary about the worthiness of the American cause. When such commentary was presented in the context of war casualties, support for the American cause was more likely to be communicated than criticism. Finally, American deaths were often reported in the context of enemy losses, particularly during the Vietnam War, which has been shown in experimental research to minimize the impact of casualty information on support for war (Boettcher & Cobb, 2006).

In short, none of the five hypotheses derived from the casualty aversion literature was consistently supported in our analysis. These general patterns of news coverage given to war casualties held fairly consistently across the five wars, even though these conflicts varied in duration, in the scale of human losses, in the censorship systems used to filter war information (e.g., Carruthers, 2000; Knightley, 2004), and in the strategic communication efforts made by American political leaders (e.g., Casey, 2001, 2005; Coe, 2013; Ponder, 1998; Roeder, 1993). The relative similarity of tendencies in casualty coverage across wars therefore suggests that the news making process itself may be ultimately responsible for structuring how information about the human costs of war reaches ordinary Americans (Althaus, et al., 2011). Mainstream news media tend to structure their war coverage around whatever topics are being actively discussed by government officials (e.g., Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2007; Entman, 2003; Hallin, 1986; Mermin, 1999; Robinson, et al., 2010; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Since political and military leaders engaged in war understandably avoid drawing attention to the human costs of military conflict, the limited amount of news attention to casualties might reflect their relative silence on this subject. And since domestic audiences have little desire for bad news when it comes to their nation's wars, journalists may have little incentive to play up the down side of war (e.g., Knightley, 2004; Robinson, et al., 2010).

There are two important limitations with the analysis that deserve mention. First, the "constructed week" sampling approach used to identify war-related stories sampled only 125 days of coverage across five wars. Although these days represent a random draw of coverage from within each war, it is possible—especially in the case of shorter wars like World War I and Korea—that the sampled days of coverage were unusually silent on casualties. We take comfort in the observation that longer wars with more sampled days produce essentially the same findings as shorter wars, but this limitation should be addressed in future scholarship that looks at patterns of casualty coverage within particular wars. Second, because we have no parallel set of public opinion data with which to assess how casualty coverage might have shaped popular support for these wars, no firm conclusions can be drawn from these findings about how the mass public might (or might not) respond to the limited amount of casualty information that is conveyed through mainstream news channels. It is possible that the American public does respond to this limited amount of casualty information, and in ways that matter for the dynamics of popular support for war. If so, then the literature on war support will need to clarify how and why this might be, given how scarce casualty information seems to be in mainstream media coverage.

These findings nonetheless raise questions about conventional theoretical approaches to modelling the dynamics of war support. Our study adds to mounting empirical evidence (e.g., Berinsky, 2007; Boettcher & Cobb, 2006; Gaines, et al., 2007; Gartner, 2008) that simple counts of recent or cumulative American deaths may be inappropriate proxies for the war costs that are actually perceived and weighed by ordinary citizens. The literature on casualty aversion has for too long taken the public's knowledge of war for granted without

accounting for what and how the public learns about the fighting. Our analysis confirms that basic facts about American, enemy and civilian losses are rarely conveyed to ordinary Americans by major news media. When coverage to war casualties is given, that meager amount of attention consistently minimizes the human costs of fighting. In light of recent work showing that exposure to local news of casualties has larger short-term effects on war support than exposure to national news of casualties (Althaus, et al., 2012), these findings question the empirical value of operationalizing war costs as aggregate counts at all. More generally, these findings underscore how important it is for conflict scholars to begin taking account of the ways that war information is communicated to citizens, as well as the gaps in that information flow. Because far-away wars are mediated experiences for most Americans, these findings show that conflict scholars interested in a fuller sense of how Americans make up their minds about war must take up the task of documenting how war information is presented through mainstream news, as well as what gets reported and what gets left out.

Until then, these findings lead us to conclude that the conventional expectations of the casualty aversion literature are simply invalid. No linkage mechanism connecting casualty information with ordinary citizens has been proposed in that literature other than mainstream news coverage, although interpersonal communication may play a secondary role in disseminating casualty information {Althaus, 2012 #2441;Gartner, 2008 #1910}. Our detailed analysis of news coverage given to casualties finds no support at all for the conventional assumption among casualty aversion studies that detailed and accurate information about wartime casualties must routinely be conveyed through the news media to American citizens. Ours is not the first study to advance such a claim, but the historical breadth and analytical richness of our content analysis dataset is without precedent in the war support literature. The additional comprehensive evidence from our study leads us to conclude that the case is now closed. Whether casualty aversion scholars can develop a new or alternative theory to connect ordinary citizens with news of American war deaths remains to be seen, but barring such a revelation, conventional understandings of the casualty aversion hypothesis are squarely at odds with what is currently known about news coverage of war costs.

Beyond providing a definitive test of the key assumptions underlying the casualty aversion hypothesis, this study's other important contribution is to provide a needed benchmark for comparing patterns of casualty coverage in other media outlets, conflicts and countries. The *Times* is just one of many important sources of casualty information for American audiences, and these five conflicts are not typical of the smaller military actions that have become more common in the post-Vietnam era. Further research is needed on the appearance of casualty information in broadcast and Internet news sources, as well as in Web blogs and social media postings. More fully documenting the flow of casualty information in different places and times will help scholarly research better understand how war costs are communicated to and received by domestic audiences.

[1] Gibbs, Philip. "British Eagerly Seek Out the Foe: Manhood Uplifted to Wonderful Heights in the Battles Now Raging—Maddened by War Frenzy—'Where Do We Go Next?' Asked Yorkshireman, Already Under Fire in Captured Trench." *New York Times* July 9, 1916, p. 1.

[2] For example, unlike other American newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Times* almost never used ethnic slurs in print. While other papers may have used terms like 'Kraut' and 'Jap' (or worse) during World War II, the *Times* consistently refrained from such derogatory language to refer to American enemies.

[3] Full-text stories from Nexis-Lexis were used to code *Times* coverage from the Iraq War, as the ProQuest holdings ended in late 2003 at the time the coding for this project was conducted.

[4] Our sampling frame covered the entire duration of both world wars, but this paper considers only the later periods of those wars in which the United States was an active combatant.

[5] Our complete data set (including the periods of both world wars prior to American entry) contains 2,671 war stories published in 154 sampled days.

[6] "Soldier in Hospital Asks for Dead Buddies That We Who Live Learn Living Kindness." *New York Times* October 12, 1944, p. A7.

[7] "Clark Honors Troops: Pays Tribute to Men in Korea in U.N. Day Message." *New York Times* October 24, 1952, p. A3.

[8] Coders judged whether each news story implied that the actions or moral stance of enemy forces was "truly evil," "wrong or misguided," "neutral," "right or appropriate," or "truly good." The same judgment was made about the actions or moral stance of the US and its allies. Since judgments about the motives of combatants were difficult to distinguish from judgments about the moral consequences of combatants' actions, these variables capture both types of evaluations. Any story in which the US was characterized with a positive moral evaluation, or an enemy was characterized with a negative moral evaluation, was considered as offering a positive evaluation of the US moral stance. Any story that criticized the US moral stance or praised the moral stance of an enemy was considered as offering a negative evaluation.

[9] The 2% figure excludes mentions of war deaths in "Names of the Dead" lists, so that only news reports are considered. To count as having a substantive focus on the rate or scale of American deaths, a news report had to include a numerical count of American deaths that addressed any of the following criteria: number killed since the start of a war, campaign, or ongoing battle; number killed in a year, month, week, or some other time period longer than a single day; or the number of Americans killed across different campaigns, battles, or periods of the war.

[10] Only 6% of the stories mentioning American deaths were editorials, columns, or op-ed pieces. Here and in the analyses that follow, we found no significant or substantive differences in findings when casualty references in editorials, columns, and op-ed pieces were omitted. We therefore report results that include all sampled stories in the analysis.

[11] There are no reliable estimates of the number of enemy and civilian losses across these wars despite credible efforts to document the complete human toll of war Clodfelter, M. (2002). *Warfare and armed conflicts: A statistical reference to casualty and other figures, 1500-2000* (2nd ed.). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Ellis, J. (1993). *World War II: A statistical survey*. New York: Facts on File. White, M. (n.d.). Source list and detailed death tolls for the man-made megadeaths of the twentieth century. Retrieved August 17, 2008, from http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstats.htm. Record-keeping fell apart among America's enemies due to the scale of death and eventual regime collapses during the First and Second World Wars. No authoritative account of enemy or civilian casualties has been released by the governments of North Korea or China for the Korean War, or by the government of Vietnam. Estimates of civilian and enemy combatant casualties are hotly contested in the case of Iraq Fischer, H. (2008). Iraqi civilian deaths estimates. In R. N. Dralonge (Ed.), *Economics and geopolitics of the Middle*

East (pp. 87-100). New York: Nova Science Publishers, Marker, D. A. (2008). Methodological review of "Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: A cross-sectional cluster sample survey". *Public Opinion Quarterly, 72*(2), 345-363, Roberts, L., Lafta, R., Garfield, R., Khudhairi, J., & Burnham, G. (2004). Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: Cluster sample survey. *The Lancet, 364*(9448), 1857-1864, Spagat, M., Mack, A., Cooper, T., & Kreutz, J. (2009). Estimating War Deaths: An Arena of Contestation. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 53*(6), 934-950.. For these reasons, we are unable to compare patterns of news coverage given to enemy and civilian casualties against authoritative records of losses suffered by these groups.

[12] Oneway ANOVAs confirm significant between-war differences in daily numbers of stories mentioning enemy deaths (F [4, 120] = 12.0, $p < .001$), enemy wounded (F [4, 120] = 25.6, $p < .001$), and enemy prisoners (F [4, 120] = 12.0, $p < .001$). Post-hoc contrasts confirm that World War II had significantly more coverage of enemy dead and wounded than all other wars, and that both world wars had significantly more coverage of enemy prisoners than was found in any of the later wars save Korea, where there was no significant difference in levels of enemy prisoner coverage relative to those in World War II.

[13] Oneway ANOVAs confirm significant between-war differences in daily numbers of stories mentioning civilian deaths (F [4, 120] = 6.7, $p < .001$), civilian wounded (F [4, 120] = 4.5, $p < .01$), and civilian refugees (F [4, 120] = 5.1, $p < .001$). Post-hoc contrasts confirm that Iraq had significantly more coverage of civilian dead and wounded than either Korea or Vietnam. World War II had more coverage of civilian dead than Korea, more coverage of civilian wounded than either Korea or Vietnam, and more coverage of civilian refugees in any of the other wars.

[14] At the level of individual stories rather than entire days of coverage, the correlation between war duration and mentions of American deaths fell to –.07 ($p < .01$). At the story level, only one other correlation with war duration approached even marginal levels of significance across any other casualty combination: coverage of enemy wounded declines slightly as wars progress ($r = –.04$; $p = .09$).

[15] Oneway ANOVAs show no significant between-war differences in the percentage of stories mentioning enemy or civilian deaths that also identify the names of enemy (F [4, 128] = 1.7, $p = .16$) or civilian casualties (F [4, 78] = 0.1, $p = .97$).

[16] “American Flier Died Fighting: Potter Fell Flaming Into Sea Under Attack from Seven German Planes—Companion Escaped.” *New York Times* May 23, 1918, p. A7.

[17] “Japanese Gunfire Rakes Life Rafts: Submarine Crews Machine-Gun Survivors of U.S. Freighter in Pacific.” *New York Times* August 5, 1942, p. A9.

[18] “Connecticut Man a Casualty.” *New York Times* July 11, 1965, p. A50.

[19] “Receives His Son’s Medal for Heroism.” *New York Times* March 13, 1952, p. A6.

[20] Lueck, Thomas J. “American Casualty: Neighborhood of Dominicans Grieves Loss Of Its ‘Hero’.” *New York Times* April 15, 2003, p. B9.

[21] Feuer, Alan. “Two Proud Traditions Honor a Firefighter Killed in Iraq.” *New York Times* December 10, 2004, p. B3.

[22] In contrast, British news coverage of coalition and civilian casualties during the invasion of Iraq tended to be relatively more critical of the American-led military effort Robinson, P., Goddard, P., Parry, K., Murray, C., & Taylor, P. M. (2010). *Pockets of resistance: British news media, war and theory in the 2003 invasion of Iraq*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press..

[23] “OKINAWA IS OURS AFTER 82 DAYS; 45,029 U.S. CASUALTIES, FOE'S 94,401; GEN. STILLWELL HEADS 10TH ARMY” *New York Times* June 22, 1945, p. A1.

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Table 1.
American War Casualties by Conflict

	WW 1 (1917-8)	WW 2 (1941-5)	Korea (1950-3)	Vietnam (1964-73)	Iraq (2003-6*)
Total Deaths and Wounds	320,518	1,076,245	139,858	361,864	24,582
Wounds (Not Mortal)	204,002	670,846	103,284	303,644	21,521
Deaths	116,516	405,399	36,574	58,220	3,061
Killed in Action	53,402	291,557	33,739	47,434	2,444
Other Deaths	63,114	113,842	2,835	10,786	617
Prisoners Returned Alive	3,973	116,129	4,418	661	8
Total Deaths, Wounds, and Prisoners Returned	324,491	1,192,374	144,276	362,525	24,590

* Iraq casualties are for the period from March 2003 through October 2006, corresponding to the sample frame for the *New York Times* data reported here.

Note: Death and wound data for Iraq are compiled from Department of Defense notices by icasualties.org. Death and wound data for earlier wars are from the Department of Defense (2008), with Vietnam data including nonhospitalized wounds, in accordance with wound data from the earlier wars. Prisoner data are from Klein, Wells, and Somers (Klein, Wells, & Somers, 2005) and include Iraq prisoners only through the end of 2004.

Figure 1.
Percentage of War Stories Mentioning U.S. Dead, Wounded, or Prisoners

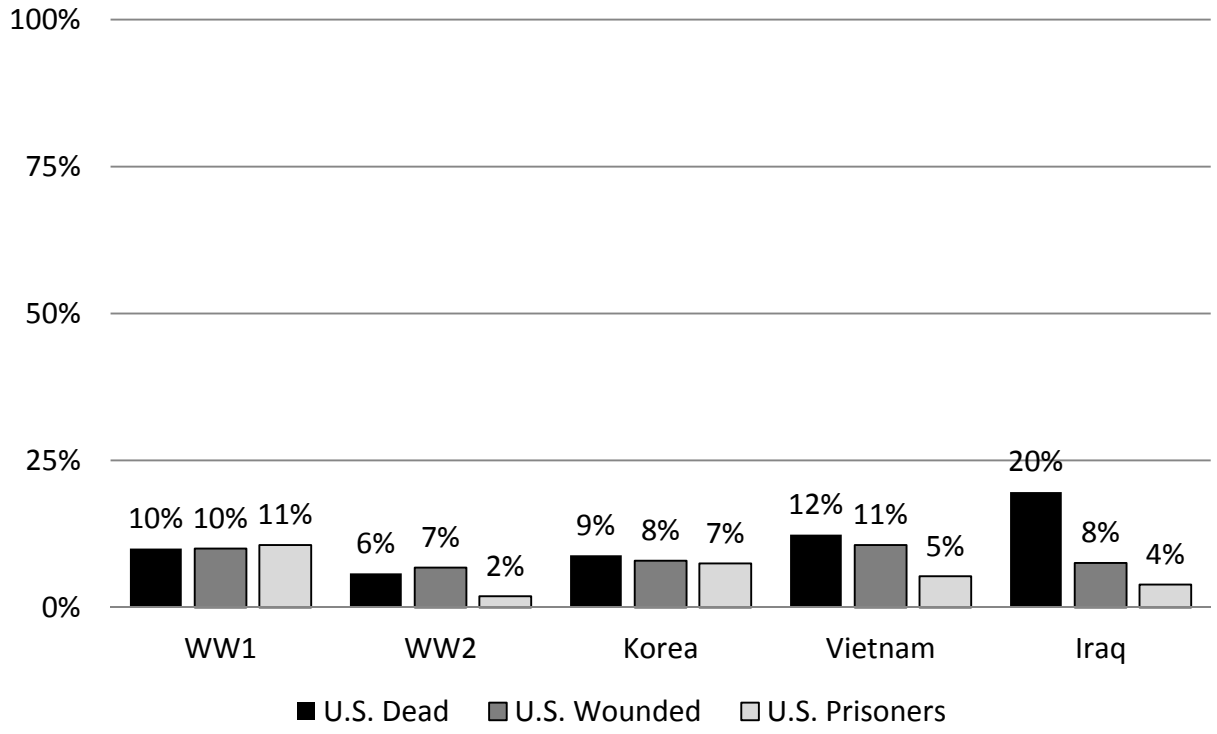


Figure 2.
Average Number of War Stories Per Day Mentioning Casualties

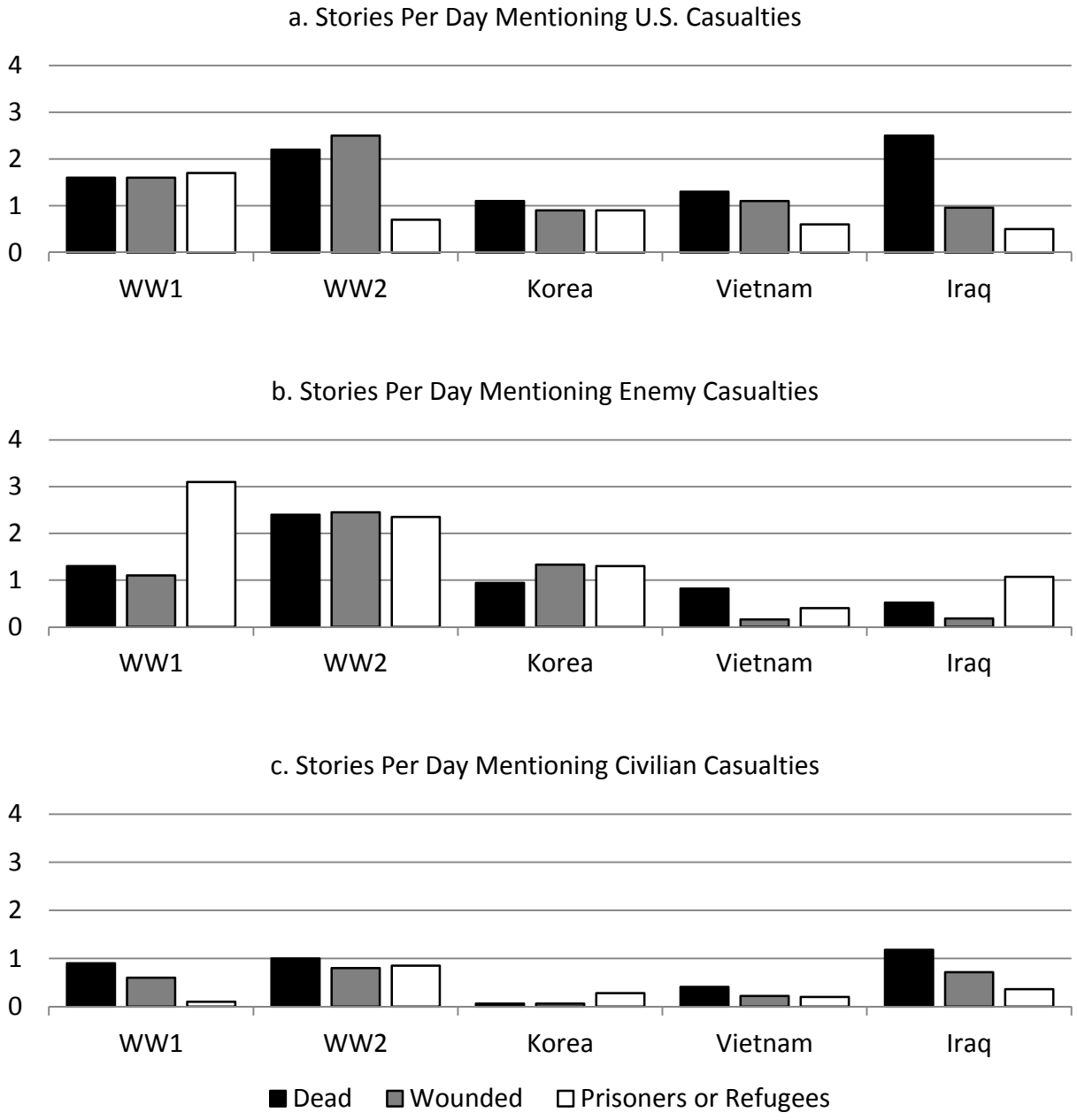
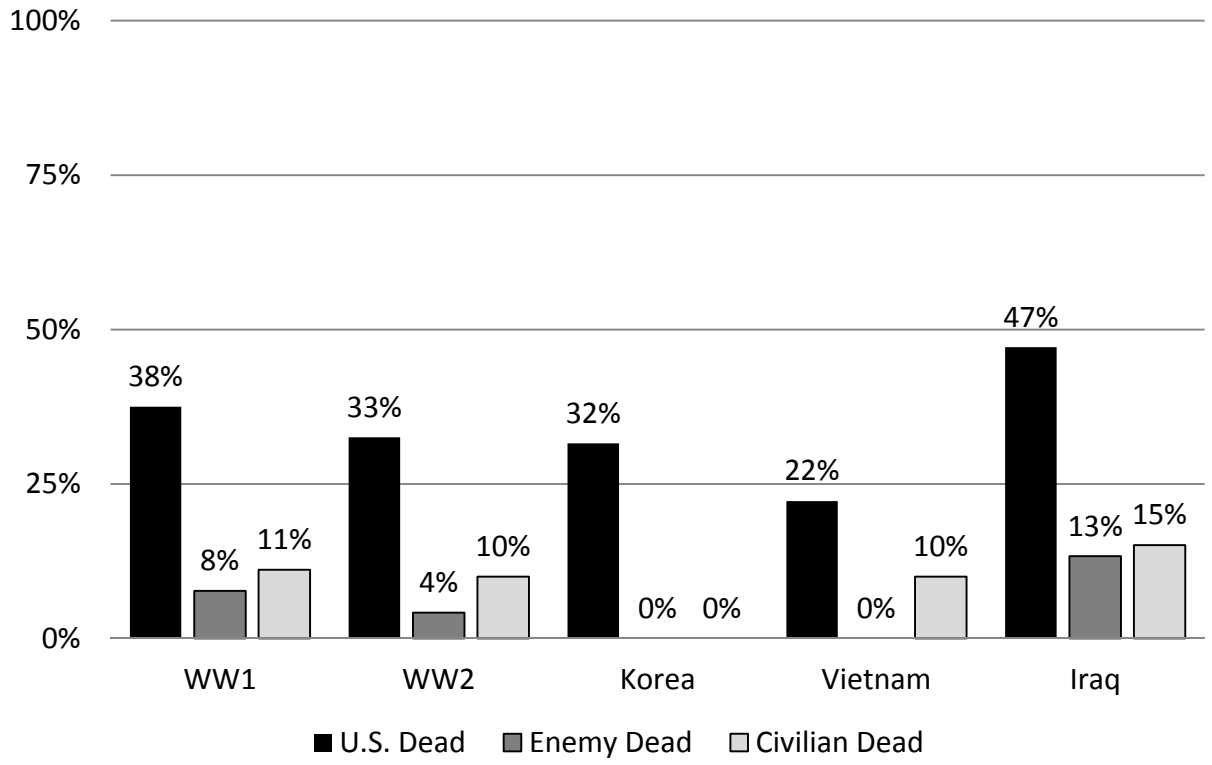


Figure 3.
Percentage of War Stories Mentioning Each Type of Death in Which Individual Dead are Identified



Note: This figure considers only stories that mention each type of casualty.

Figure 4.
Moral Judgments Relative to the US Cause in War Stories Mentioning Deaths

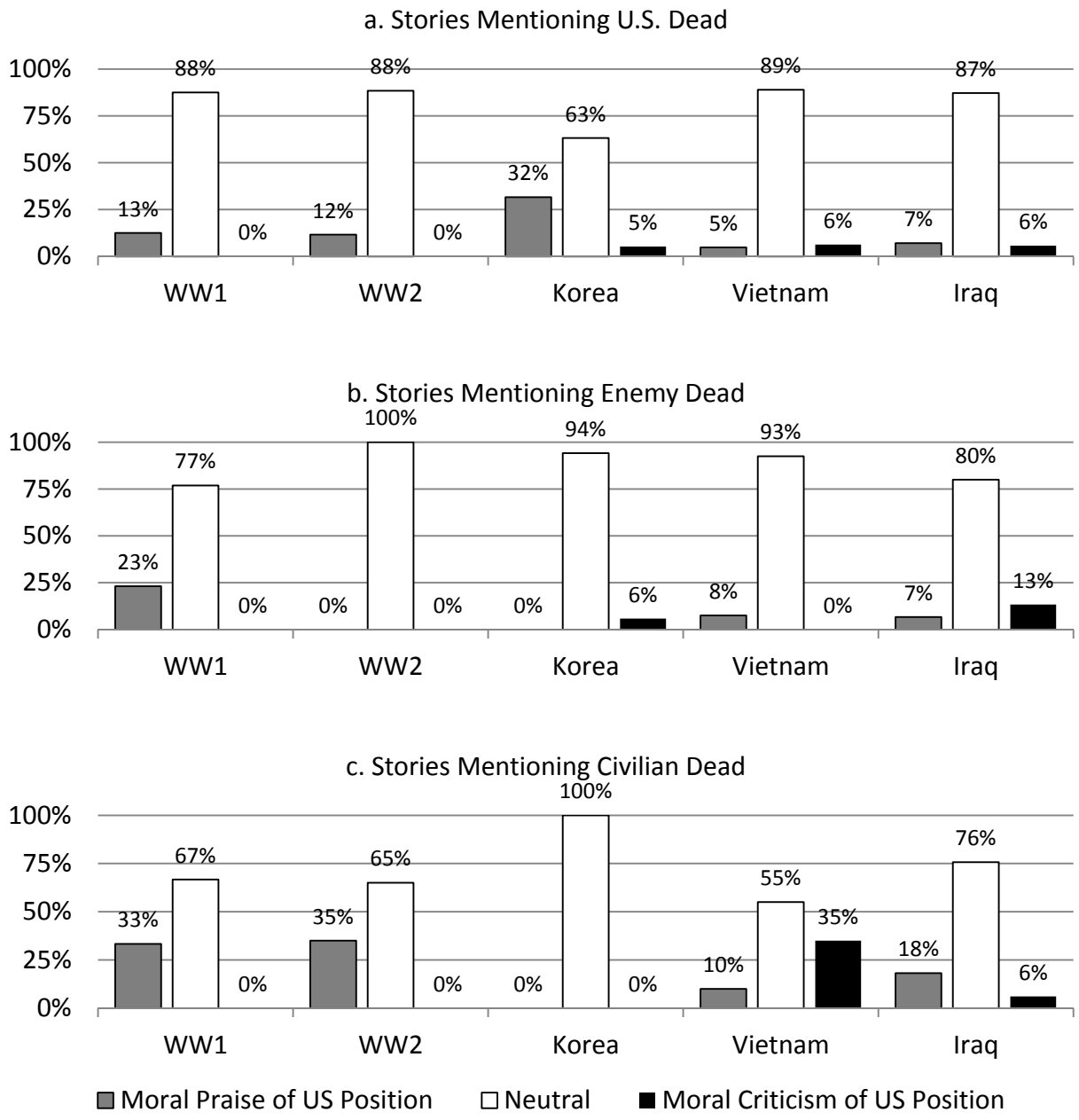
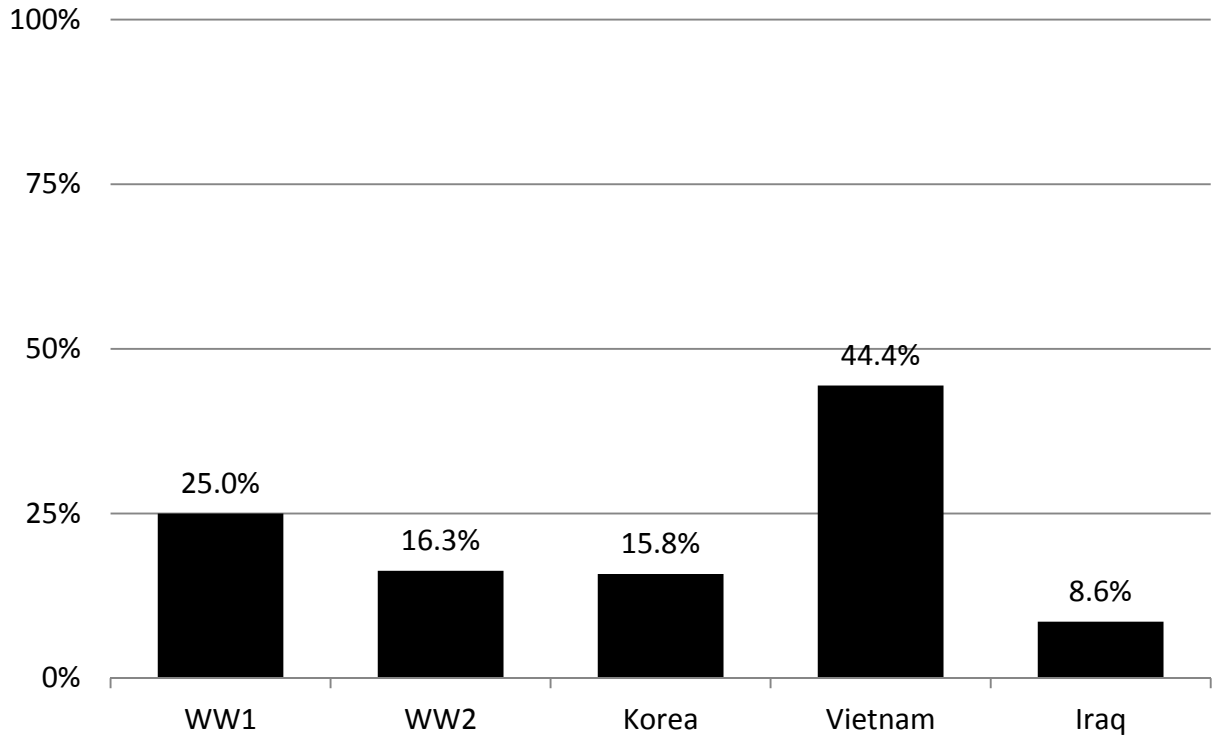


Figure 5.
Percentage of Stories Mentioning US Deaths that Also Mention Enemy Deaths



Note: Sixteen stories from sampled days mentioned American deaths in World War 1, compared to 43 in World War 2, 19 in Korea, 63 in Vietnam, and 70 in Iraq.