

News Media Use and Perceptions of Global Threat

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Abstract: This article explores the antecedents of individuals' perceptions of global threat, which previous research has shown have an impact on people's policy preferences. We focus on three predictors of global threat perceptions: media exposure, global knowledge, and global experience. Using the 2004 Survey of Attitudes and Global Engagement, we discover that media exposure best explains global threat perceptions but that its impact is largely conditional on the characteristics of the individual and on the type of threat.

News Media Use and Perceptions of Global Threat

For most Americans, knowledge about and perceptions of the rest of the world come from the mass media (Nacos, Shapiro, and Isernia 2000; Kull and Destler 1999; Wittkopf and McCormick 1999). Often the images disseminated by the media are ones that depict the world beyond U.S. borders as a threatening place. People who watch the news on television or read a newspaper are bombarded with stories about terrorism in the Middle East, environmental disasters in Africa, military coups in South America or nationalist parties gaining political power in Europe. It makes sense, then, that people with high media consumption would view the world as a threatening place.

It has been shown that perceptions of external threat have a clear impact on the public's foreign and domestic policy preferences. People who feel threatened by terrorism are more willing to give up their civil liberties in exchange for security (Davis and Silver 2004; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Wood 1995). Those who feel more threat are more willing to spend government resources on homeland security (Kushner 2005). And Huddy et al. (2005) demonstrate that people who perceived the threat of future terrorism in the U.S. to be high following the September 11 attacks were more supportive of President Bush and interventionist military policies. Given the impact of threat perceptions on the public's policy preferences, examining the role of the media in priming those perceptions is a worthy endeavor. This article explores the relationship between media use and perceptions of global threat, finding that rather than having a strong direct impact, the effects of the media are largely conditional.

The Media's Influence

The literature is replete with studies that show the mass media exert a strong influence on public opinion, and television in particular has been called "an education without peer" (Iyengar

and Kinder 1987, 2; see also Iyengar 1991). Studies have shown that people rely on the media as a source of information about politics (Chaffee and Kanihan 1997), that the media shape their views about the political process (Pinkleton, Austin and Fortman 1998), and that the media have an impact on policy preferences (Iyengar 1991; Sotirovic 1997). It has been shown that the influence of the media upon individual attitudes is also related to levels of prior information (Zaller 1992). The mass media's influence is likely an even stronger influence on people's preferences in the area of foreign policy given the public's low level of knowledge of foreign affairs.

Cultivation theories argue that individuals adjust their perception of reality to fit the image of the world around them derived from media consumption. For example, heavy television viewers may perceive the real world as more similar to the world portrayed on television (i.e., violent and dangerous) than light television viewers. This line of work stems from Gerbner's original studies on the topic in the 1970s (e.g., Gerbner and Gross 1976; Gerbner, et al. 1979). On the media end, a growing body of research has pointed to the U.S. news media's focus on violence and conflict in coverage of other countries (Hawkins 2002; Hess 1996; Lacy, Chang and Lau 1989; Wilhoit and Weaver 1981, 1983). Moreover, it has been shown that editors of small- to medium-sized newspapers disproportionately choose to print Associated Press stories about combat and violence, and "[T]he unfortunate result, perhaps, is that the world may seem to readers to be more violent than it actually is..." (Horvit 2003, 33). If the preceding observations hold, then we might expect a growing sense among the public that the world is a dangerous and threatening place.

Empirical support for cultivation theory has been mixed. In general, studies conducted in the U.S. have found larger impacts of media exposure than studies conducted elsewhere

(Kolbeins 2004; Pingree and Hawkins 1981). Moreover, studies that have examined specific parts of television viewing such as crime dramas (Holbrook and Hill 2005; Dowler 2003; Holbert, Shah and Kwak 2004) or local news broadcasts (Romer, Jamieson and Aday 2003; Gross and Aday 2003) have identified stronger media effects than studies focused on television viewing in general. Effects have been identified among specific populations (Kang, Anderson and Pfau 1996). Hughes (1980), however, finds no empirical support for cultivation theory in data drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS). The question we address below is; can we detect media influences consistent with this literature when we examine individual perceptions of the international environment?

The Media, Threat Perception, and the International Environment

Much of the research relating media use to threat perception focuses on one particular threat: the threat of crime. Several cultivation studies have examined whether heavy television viewers perceive the real world as more similar to the world portrayed on television (i.e., violent and dangerous) than light television viewers. The link between media consumption and the perception of threats at the global level is much less developed, although some work speaking to this relationship does exist.

Other studies have gone further, trying to link exposure to such media content to people's policy preferences. Gerbner et al. (1978) suggested that Americans who are heavy television viewers tend to be more supportive of US participation in international affairs. This finding was confirmed by Hughes (1980), although the magnitude of the effects that he found was much smaller. Although they did not directly analyze the role of the media in shaping foreign policy attitudes, Kull and Ramsay (2001) showed that the American public has been far less reactive to reported military casualties than is often assumed. There is general agreement that there is a

dearth of empirical work on the “way that changes in the media’s framing of the international environment has been reflected in new patterns of change and stability in public opinion towards international affairs” (Everts 2001, 12; see also Nacos, Shapiro, and Isernia 2000).

There has also been renewed interest in the link between media consumption and threat perception at the international level, probably as a consequence of rising concerns about international terrorism. One study that examined media effects at the individual level found that exposing people to 12 minutes of television footage of terrorist activity increased their levels of anxiety (Slone 2000). Although this study points to the importance of the news media in raising fears about the larger world, how far these results generalize remains a question. First, the study was conducted in Israel, where terrorism is a much more common occurrence than in most countries. Second, the external validity of the study’s results are questionable when the experiment, which exposed subjects to 12 minutes of stories about terrorism, is placed in a larger context in which subjects are continually exposed to the stimuli the experiment seeks to test. Slone’s findings are interesting but raise more questions than they answer.

Huddy et al. (2003) pointed to a link between media coverage of terrorism and perceptions of future risk. Kushner (2005) found that increased levels of media consumption interact with higher levels of threat perception to produce greater support for interventionist military policies. In particular, television viewing appears to have a heavy impact on moving policy preferences, which she ascribes to the sustained imagery of that medium. However, while the interaction between media use and threat perception is highly suggestive, the author acknowledges that the causality remains murky; do those who feel more threatened seek out media coverage, or does media use generate perception of threat?

Casting doubt on the relationship between the media and threat perceptions is survey-based research by Rubin and his colleagues (2003). They found that exposure to television coverage of terrorism and other terrorism-related stories failed to explain people's fear of terrorism or fear for their personal safety. Media use was unimportant as a predictor. Rather it was the viewers' background characteristics, specifically gender and locus of control (whether people feel they have control over their own lives), that best explained feelings of fear and safety.

The impact of demographic factors (education, gender, income, race) was demonstrated by Huddy et al. (2005). They contended that the influence of these on threat perception coexists with that of people's personal experiences (such as living in the Northeast and knowing someone who went missing in the September 11 terrorist attacks). Huddy et al. (2002) suggested that individuals greatly exaggerate the probability of personal risk from terrorism, which leads them to alter their own (perceived) exposure to the threat. They also tend to evaluate national level consequences of terrorism in proportion to their assessment of the risks of an attack on the United States; they fail, however, to convert perceptions of personal risk into judgments about outcomes at the national level.

Hypotheses

This article seeks to further our understanding of the link between media use and threat perception in two ways. First, we seek to examine threat perception as a sociotropic construct, rather than the more egoistic variant. Building on the work of Huddy et al (2005, 2002), as well as previous work on the dimensionality of foreign policy opinion (Chittick et al. 1995; Wittkopf 1993; Holsti 1996), we explore the determinants of perception of threat at the global, rather than individual, level. Second, we expand the conception of threat to include a wider range of

variables, such as natural disasters and global warming. We argue that the perception of threat may be conditional on the type of the threat, and that the role of the media in generating threat perceptions must be understood in this light. We will return to this point below.

From the literature reviewed above, we derive four hypotheses, which we will test. The first, which follows from the logic of cultivation theory, is **H1: Increased media consumption is associated with increased global threat perception, controlling for demographic and background characteristics.**

As Zaller (1992) has cautioned, however, perhaps simple exposure to media—being in the presence of a media message—is the wrong place to look. Rather, it may be the knowledge one has gained about the rest of the world (perhaps received through media use) that best explains threat perceptions. A person who watches television and sees footage of the aftermath of a bombing may perceive threat, but one who sees that same footage but is armed with contextual knowledge (e.g., such bombings are relatively rare, these bombings are specifically targeted) may not have his or her sense of threat moved. In short, knowledge is power—it may provide people with a sense of context that reduces perceptions of threat. This leads us to **H2: Increased knowledge of the world is associated with increased global threat perception, controlling for demographic and background characteristics.**

Alternately, people's experiences may help to explain perceptions of threat. In cultivation research that examines the impact of the media on attitudes, authors often suggest an alternative hypothesis: that personal experiences are more important than media use in explaining people's threat perceptions. Thus, people may fear crime not because they watch a lot of violence on television, but because their neighborhood is truly a dangerous place (Gross and Aday 2003). Similarly, experiencing the threat of crime, both directly and indirectly, may be

more important than media reports about actual crime rates in determining threat perception (Tyler 1984). This leads to **H3: Experience of the world is associated with decreased levels of global threat perception.**

In addition, our data allow us to add a fourth hypothesis, **H4: The effects of media consumption, knowledge, and experience upon perceptions of threat at the global level are contingent upon the nature of the threat.**

Data and Measurement

Our analysis is based on the Study of Attitudes and Global Engagement, a comparative study conducted in Japan and the United States in the fall of 2004. To test the hypotheses outlined above, we draw on the data collected in the United States. The U.S. survey was a mail survey of 970 U.S. residents, 18 years of age or older. The sample of listed households, stratified by region, was generated by Geneys Inc. The survey was mailed to 2,650 residents of the United States with 970 respondents completing and returning questionnaires, resulting in a completion rate of 41.2%. The study was conducted by the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University.

The survey was 12 pages in length and included questions on personal, state, and international risk and perceived threats, national security, patriotism, foreign policy attitudes, media use and global engagement. The items and their wording are provided in the appendix, and a copy of the full questionnaire is available online at www.wsu.edu/sage.

In exploring the source of global threat perceptions, we must operationalize several key concepts:

Global threat. The dependent variable in our analysis is perception of global threat, which is tapped by an index created from respondents' answers to six questions. Respondents

were asked to rate on a four-point scale how much of a threat the following are to world stability: global economic crisis, major wars, global warming, population growth, religious fanaticism, and weapons of mass destruction. Answers were summed to create a scale that ranges from 0 to 18.

Table I reports zero-order correlations among the variables comprising the threat index. All six individual threats are positively related to each other with correlations ranging from .14 (between population growth and weapons of mass destruction) to .50 (between global warming and population growth).

[Table I Here]

To test the validity of the global threat scale, we performed an unrotated principal components factor analysis, which revealed that all 6 threats loaded on the same factor, though some admittedly did so better than others. This principal factor had an eigenvalue of 2.44. The second factor identified had a much lower eigenvalue of 1.09. Table II shows the factor loadings of each threat on the first two components. These range from .52 to .71 on the first component and from -.52 to .58 on the second component.

[Table II here]

Media exposure. We measure media use through six questions that ask respondents how many days in the past week they engaged in the following: watching national television news, watching local television news, watching cable news, reading news on the internet, reading a newspaper and listening to news on the radio. We summed the number of days that respondents used each medium, creating a total media exposure index that ranges from 0 to 42. Mean exposure is 19.9 with a standard deviation of 8.2.

Global knowledge. Three questions were combined to create an index of global knowledge. Respondents were asked to choose between a number of options that purported to be

the location of the United Nations headquarters, to name the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and to identify the Secretary General of the United Nations. Scores on the index range from 0 to 3, with respondents receiving 1 point for each correct answer and 0 points for each incorrect or “don’t know” answer. About five percent of respondents gave no correct answers, 17 percent answered one correctly, 27 percent answered two correctly, and just over half of the respondents gave correct answers to all three.

Global experience. We created an index tapping global experience based on answers to three questions, which included an indicator of whether the respondent holds a current passport, an indicator of whether the respondent has been outside the U.S. for more than 5 weeks in the past 5 years, and an indicator of whether the respondent has a friend or acquaintance who speaks a language other than English. We summed each 0-1 indicator to create an index ranging from 0 to 3. The mean level of global experience was 1.3 with a standard deviation of 1.

We include several other control variables in our model predicting perceptions of global threat. These include background factors such as the respondent’s age, gender (Davis and Silver (2004) speculate that males are less likely to admit feelings of threat than women); and the respondent’s level of education, which Huddy, et al. (2005) demonstrate is inversely related to perceived terrorist threats. We also included an indicator whether the respondent has served in the military overseas, believing such people are likely to have been directly exposed to global threats. Because threat perception may depend on who is in the White House (e.g., I feel safer (less safe) knowing George Bush and his team are in charge of foreign policy), we controlled for the respondent’s political ideology and partisanship. We also include an indicator of materialist/post-materialist values¹, grounded in the voluminous literature linking materialism to

¹ Our measure of materialism/post-materialism is based on the basic four-item values battery developed by Inglehart (1971) and used extensively in cross-national survey research. Survey length precluded the use of the extensive

the *scarcity* hypothesis. Given that materialist values are rooted in concerns about economic well-being and physical security, we reasoned that those with such characteristics might, *ceteris paribus*, perceive higher levels of threat in the world. Finally, because people's overall *worldviews*² may affect their perceptions of threat, we include in our model a measure of what we call a "Hobbesian worldview". Respondents were asked which of the following statements most closely represented their view: "Given human nature, wars are inevitable" or "Wars can be avoided through more cooperation and understanding." Fifty-seven percent of respondents chose the answer that indicates a more flexible understanding of agency, while forty-three percent were more Hobbesian in their view of the relationship between human nature and war.

Results

We use ordinary least squares regression to predict the index of global threat perception. The estimates obtained from this initial analysis (Table III) do not strongly endorse any of our theories, but there is evidence, albeit somewhat weak, in support of the media exposure theory. The coefficient on the total media exposure variable flirts with statistical significance ($p=.100$), and the sign is also in the expected direction: Greater exposure is associated with greater threat perception.

[Table III here]

The knowledge hypothesis is unsupported by our model estimates. The index of global knowledge is not significantly related to global threat. Likewise, having more global experience

twelve-item version, although research has shown that "there is considerable evidence that the four-item battery is a valid measure" (Abramson and Inglehart 1995, 10; see also Inglehart and Abramson 1999; Inglehart 1997). The SAGE data yield a return of 16% in the materialist category, 15% in the postmaterialist and 69% as mixed. For comparison, the equivalent figures from the 1992 NES were 16%, 18%, and 65% respectively.

² The concept of the worldview is one that has been used to explore fundamental attitudes about human agency and the role of the deity in the causation of everyday events (see Evans 1997). In this article, we refer to the opposition of a sense of fatalism and a positive view of human agency in the generation of conflict. Hobbes argued that the very essence of politics lay in the inevitable human predisposition to violence (the famous "warre of man against all man"); further, the international system could only be one where wars are an inevitable aspect of interactions among nations.

fails to predict global threat. Among our control variables, the only statistically significant predictors of global threat perceptions at the .05 level are gender, ideology and one's partisanship—it is the conservative, Republican man who sees fewer threats than the liberal, Democratic woman. The materialist/post-materialist variable just eludes significance at the .05 level, but the sign indicates that those with post-material value sets perceive higher levels of global threat. While this is contrary to our initial expectations, we will return to this point below. In sum, our initial analysis provides some tentative support for the media hypothesis. We move on now to consider the potential interactive effects of media exposure.

Table IV shows the results of a model predicting perceived threat that is estimated for two separate groups: those with low global knowledge (scores from 0-2) and those with high global knowledge (a score of 3).

[Table IV here]

The data indicate that the effects of media exposure do depend on one's level of global knowledge, but not in the way we expected. Among respondents with low levels of global knowledge, total media exposure had no impact on perceptions of threat. But among those knowledgeable about the world, increased media exposure increased perceptions of global threat. One possible explanation for these findings is that some minimum level of knowledge is required to make sense of the news. The person with low global knowledge may be tuning out media messages about other countries, and thus the messages have no impact. But the person high in knowledge is able to understand the story, and thus can realize the true extent of the threat.

Examining respondents by their levels of global experience results in an opposite finding. Here results are consistent with our original expectations: increased media exposure increases

perceptions of global threat among those with low levels of global experience (a score of 0 or 1). But media exposure has no impact on threat perceptions among those with a lot of global experience (a score of 2 or 3). It seems global experience works contrary to global knowledge in mediating the effects of media exposure.

[Table V here]

To this point, we have found some weak support for the direct impact of media exposure on global threat perceptions, and we have found stronger support for media's conditional impact on these feelings of threat. We wondered, however, if media's impact might vary depending on the specific threat examined.

Disaggregating Threats

Thus far, we have failed to demonstrate any remarkable impact of media consumption, knowledge, and global experience upon perceptions of global threat. However, we have not yet accounted for the possibility that not all threats may be equal in their potential to affect individuals and thus condition their response. As Inglehart notes, "there is a fundamental difference between growing up with an awareness that survival is precarious, and growing up with the feeling that one's survival can be taken for granted" (1997, 31). The core of the materialist/postmaterialist argument is the *scarcity* hypothesis, namely that familiarity with and experience of scarcity (whether of resources or physical security) will tend to anchor people in a materialist worldview. In contrast, freedom from such constraints permits individuals to acquire a postmaterial value set, where the main preoccupation becomes a concern for the quality of life. Yet the latter does not free individuals from perceptions of threat; Beck (1992) and Giddens and Pierson (1998), among others, have written perceptively of the new forms of risk inherent in postmodern society. Without directly mentioning threat, Inglehart acknowledges that "... people

probably worry as much as ever, but they worry about different things: there are profound differences in the behavior and worldviews of people who feel insecure about their personal survival and people who worry about global warming” (1997, 37).

Is it possible, we ask, that respondents with different value sets might react to media stimuli differentially based upon the content of the coverage? Let us take a hypothetical example. Jane Doe from Akron is fifty-seven years old, while John Doe (no relation) from Cupertino is just two year younger at fifty-five. However, Jane’s husband was killed in 1970 in Vietnam, leaving her alone with two young children. She has always struggled to make ends meet, particularly since she was forced into the full-time workforce with few skills right at the onset of the stagflation years of the 1970s. John, on the other hand, graduated from MIT and went to work in the high tech industry. He made the very lucrative move to Silicon Valley in the late 1970s, and is now married with a stay-at-home wife and three children. It turns out that when given the choice between the four items on the standard postmaterialism battery, Jane thinks that the top priority should be fighting rising prices, followed by maintaining order in the nation. John on the other hand, sees giving people more say in government decisions and protecting freedom of speech as of more immediate concern to him.

How do our two (hypothetical) citizens react to ABC’s news coverage on the evening of September 29, 2005? Jane Doe, eating her dinner after a long day at work, has her attention drawn to the news of yet more attacks on, and deaths of, American soldiers in Ramadi, Iraq. Her perceptions of the import of the event are heightened by her own experience of loss. She remembers hearing the President – or was it one of his staff, she can’t remember – say that the war in Iraq was vital to the national security of the United States, which has been threatened by terrorists. John Doe is relaxing at home over a glass of wine in Cupertino, and pays little

attention to the same item. However, his attention is arrested by the report on the melting of the Arctic ice cap due to global warming; he worries that the dire predictions about the impact of global warming on climate change might deprive his children of the pleasures of skiing in their older years.

Returning to Table II, we presented the results of the unrotated principal components factor analysis for our six global threat items. Although all 6 threat items loaded positively on the first component, on the second component, three of them showed positive polarity (population growth, global warming, and religious fanaticism) while three were negative (economic crisis, major war, weapons of mass destruction). To see if two different types of threats might emerge, we rotated the results of the earlier factor analysis, and we report the new results in Table VI.

[Table VI here]

The three threats that one might describe as characteristic of modernity—global economic crisis, a major war, and weapons of mass destruction—loaded on the first dimension, and three threats that are symptomatic of postmodernity—global warming, population growth and religious fanaticism³—loaded on the second. This conforms to our theoretically-derived expectations that the nature of the perceived threat exhibits a clear distinction between what we may term *modern* and *postmodern* challenges.⁴ We therefore created two additive indices, one

³ It may be objected that most observers equate postmodernity with a secular drift, and that religious fanaticism does not fit with this observation. However, we postulate that as secularism becomes the prevailing norm in postmodern society, anti-establishment political action motivated by deep religious conviction becomes seen as a threat to that norm. It may be that the exceptional character of religion in the United States, as compared to other postmodern societies, accounts for the slightly weaker loading on the postmodern threat factor.

⁴ The rotated results suggest that the two factors are unrelated and do not covary. It is important to remember that this makes no claim about the relationship between materialism and postmaterialism as individual-level value sets; rather, it suggests that individuals make a distinction in the manner that they evaluate problems emblematic of modernity and postmodernity respectively.

comprising the former and the second capturing the latter, and estimated a separate model predicting each (Table VII).

[Table VII here]

Our global knowledge hypothesis was the only one supported by the results of the model predicting people's perceptions of threats associated with modernity (economic crisis, major war, weapons of mass destruction). As knowledge of the world increases, threat perception decreases. Media use and global experience have no impact on perceptions of this type of threat. Neither do prior value orientations; both postmaterialism and worldview have no discernible effect upon perceptions of these threats. Of further note, there is no systematic variation by ideology, although the gender effect is still evident; *ceteris paribus*, women report feeling more vulnerable to the threats of modernity than men

The story, however, is a bit different for perceptions of those threats we have termed postmodern. Here, consistent with our theorizing, increased media use is associated with increased threat perception. Global knowledge and experience have no impact on the extent to which these threats are perceived, but postmaterialism and worldview do. Materialists and people who exhibit what we refer to as the Hobbesian worldview (i.e., that, given human nature, wars are inevitable) are less likely to detect threat in the challenges of postmodernity. This confirms our contention that perception of threat is conditional on both the type of threat under examination and prior orientations. Those who have value sets consistent with the conditions of postmodernity are clearly more attuned to the kinds of global threat associated with it. And, highly consistent with the literature on postmaterialism, the gender effect discernible in the evaluation of the threats of modernity disappears when looking at postmodern threats under the influence of the control variables. Finally, ideology and party identification enter into the

picture; conservatives and Republican identifiers appear less vulnerable to the perception of postmodern threats than others.

This information is summarized in Table VIII. We find that there is little impact of our explanatory variables on perceptions of threat that emanate from the condition of modernity, although we do find a modest reduction of threat perception among males and those more knowledgeable about world affairs.

[Table VIII here]

However, when we separate out newer forms of threat that theorists have associated with postmodernity (Beck 1999, 1992, Giddens and Pierson 1998), the picture becomes more complex. As we expected, media exposure matters. The more that individuals are exposed to the media, the greater their perception of threat from global warming, population growth, and religious fanaticism. This is especially true of those with postmaterial value sets, and those who do not see war as an essential part of the human condition. Yet ideological conservatism and attachment to the Republican party would seem to shield individuals from a heightened sense of threat from these phenomena, while men seem just as prone to women to evaluate the potential for threat.

Conclusion

We began with the straightforward premise that media exposure may sharpen perceptions of threat in the world today. That proposition proved tenuous without a careful refining of the nature of threat and threat perception. The theory that high media exposure leads to viewing the world as threatening receives much more support once we begin to discriminate between groups and between modern and postmodern threat. Thus media effects are not universal. They appear to be most prominent among those high in global knowledge, low in global experience and for

postmodern processes such as global warming, population growth, and religious fanaticism. The mass media, then, are part of the story in our attempt to explain where threat perceptions come from, but they are not the complete story. Political values and orientations are also important in explaining threat perceptions, although unevenly across different the different types of threat that we have identified. That said, much variation across individuals in levels of global threat perception remains unexplained.

Returning to the four postulates introduced at the beginning of this article, we believe that the fourth explanation of the relationship between media exposure and threat perception receives the most support from our analyses. Media exposure, political knowledge, and experience all interact in rather complex ways. For those with high levels of knowledge, more exposure to media seems to sharpen perceptions of threat, suggesting that political knowledge may act as a lens through which subsequent information may be interpreted. In contrast, those who have had little or no experience of the world outside their home country seem more swayed by exposure to media than others, intimating that experience trumps reporting in determining how threats are evaluated. And once we consider the distinctiveness of those threats, we find that the effects of a specific subgroup, the risks inherent in postmodernity, appear to be more conducive to filtration through media exposure. One tantalizing possibility that we aim to further explore (and which is implied in the theory of the risk society) is that the sense of vulnerability to postmodern threats requires a sociotropic disposition, while the materialist threats that we have identified are by definition more tangible at the individual level.

Of course, most studies have limitations, and this one is no different. For one, we have assumed that the content of coverage across media is alike. That is, all news organizations, regardless of size or format, portray the world as threatening. Certainly, there is existing

evidence to suggest that coverage of foreign affairs, in general, focuses on violence and other negative events. Yet it is possible that newspapers, for instance, may provide more positive coverage than, say, cable news networks. This deserves further investigation. Relatedly, we have assumed that the *effects* of coverage—even if it is the same coverage—are the same, regardless of format. Yet one might explore whether exposure to different types of media might have different effects on perceptions of threat. It is possible, even, that some forms of media serve to heighten perceptions of threat while other forms of media are reassuring. For instance, dramatic television images may create a greater sense of threat, but less sensational, more detailed newspaper accounts may put a threat into perspective and may reduce threat perceptions.

These limitations notwithstanding, our study points up the importance of the news media in shaping the public agenda, and ultimately, we suspect, the political agenda as well.

Table I: Correlations Among Threats

	Econ. Crisis	Major War	WMDs	Population Growth	Religious Fanaticism	Global Warming
Econ. Crisis	1.00					
Major War	0.48	1.00				
WMDs	0.27	0.43	1.00			
Global Warming	0.37	0.28	0.18	1.00		
Pop. Growth	0.28	0.20	0.14	0.50	1.00	
Rel. Fanaticism	0.24	0.14	0.26	0.19	0.34	1.00

Table II: Individual Threat Factor Loadings

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Econ. Crisis	0.71	-0.17
Major War	0.68	-0.50
WMDs	0.58	-0.52
Global Warming	0.67	0.39
Population Growth	0.64	0.58
Religious Fanaticism	0.52	0.25

Table III: OLS Predictors of Global Threat Perceptions

	Coef.	S.E.	p-value
Total Exposure	0.026	0.016	0.100
Global Knowledge	-0.239	0.158	0.131
Global Experience	0.100	0.141	0.477
Postmaterialism	0.409	0.223	0.067
Worldview	-0.257	0.265	0.332
Conservatism	-0.215	0.071	0.002
Age	0.005	0.009	0.554
Education	0.031	0.110	0.775
Male	-0.727	0.269	0.007
Democrat	0.098	0.330	0.767
Republican	-0.892	0.306	0.004
Military Service	-0.217	0.378	0.566
Constant	12.660	0.795	0.000

N=716, R-squared=.10

Table IV: OLS Predictors of Global Threat by Knowledge

	Low Global Knowledge			High Global Knowledge		
	Coef.	S.E.	p-value	Coef.	S.E.	p-value
Total Exposure	0.004	0.024	0.879	0.038	0.019	0.046
Global Experience	0.153	0.216	0.480	0.044	0.180	0.807
Postmaterialism	0.804	0.351	0.022	-0.045	0.273	0.870
Worldview	-0.482	0.403	0.232	-0.187	0.335	0.578
Conservatism	-0.144	0.119	0.225	-0.299	0.085	0.001
Age	-0.001	0.013	0.926	0.007	0.011	0.535
Education	-0.075	0.165	0.648	0.094	0.138	0.496
Male	-0.776	0.393	0.049	-0.820	0.348	0.019
Democrat	0.745	0.519	0.152	-0.689	0.403	0.088
Republican	-0.032	0.487	0.948	-1.705	0.372	0.000
Military Service	-0.039	0.711	0.956	-0.085	0.418	0.839
Constant	12.556	1.205	0.000	12.781	1.110	0.000
N	338			409		
R-squared	.06			.17		

Table V: OLS Predictors of Global Threat by Global Experience

	Low Global Knowledge			High Global Knowledge		
	Coef.	S.E.	p-value	Coef.	S.E.	p-value
Total Exposure	0.040	0.021	0.061	-0.002	0.023	0.917
Global Knowledge	-0.206	0.204	0.314	-0.250	0.252	0.321
Postmaterialism	0.234	0.297	0.430	0.692	0.349	0.048
Worldview	-0.277	0.347	0.425	-0.277	0.416	0.506
Conservatism	-0.120	0.094	0.205	-0.355	0.109	0.001
Age	0.004	0.011	0.741	0.009	0.014	0.539
Education	0.015	0.142	0.918	0.032	0.180	0.859
Male	-0.813	0.345	0.019	-0.711	0.443	0.110
Democrat	0.218	0.453	0.630	-0.135	0.496	0.786
Republican	-1.225	0.405	0.003	-0.361	0.475	0.447
Military Service	-0.867	0.663	0.192	0.162	0.469	0.730
Constant	12.300	1.061	0.000	13.587	1.237	0.000
N	408			310		
R-squared	.10			.12		

Table VI: Individual Threat Factor Loadings

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Econ. Crisis	0.63	0.38
Major War	0.84	0.12
WMDs	0.77	0.03
Global Warming	0.21	0.75
Population Growth	0.05	0.86
Religious Fanaticism	0.20	0.55

Table VII: OLS Predictors of Modern and Postmodern Threats

	Threats of Modernity			Threats of Postmodernity		
	Coef.	S.E.	p-value	Coef.	S.E.	p-value
Total Exposure	0.005	0.009	0.533	0.020	0.010	0.041
Global Knowledge	-0.189	0.089	0.034	-0.044	0.098	0.653
Global Experience	0.009	0.079	0.912	0.075	0.087	0.391
Worldview	0.015	0.126	0.907	0.402	0.138	0.004
Postmaterialism	0.079	0.149	0.596	-0.353	0.164	0.032
Conservatism	-0.041	0.040	0.302	-0.175	0.044	0.000
Age	-0.003	0.005	0.487	0.008	0.005	0.127
Education	0.040	0.062	0.517	0.013	0.068	0.853
Male	-0.564	0.152	0.000	-0.141	0.166	0.399
Democrat	0.070	0.186	0.705	0.074	0.205	0.718
Republican	-0.259	0.173	0.135	-0.645	0.190	0.001
Military Service	-0.250	0.213	0.240	0.061	0.235	0.795
Constant	7.160	0.448	0.000	5.432	0.492	0.000
N	737			720		
R-squared	.06			.13		

Table VIII: Summary of model effects

Explanatory Factors	Challenges of Modernity	Challenges of post-modernity
Stimuli: <i>Media exposure</i> <i>Knowledge of global politics</i>	<i>Decreases threat</i>	<i>Increases threat</i>
Values: <i>Postmaterialism</i> <i>Hobbesian worldview</i>		<i>Increases threat</i> <i>Decreases threat</i>
Political Orientations: <i>Conservatism</i> <i>Republican PID</i>		<i>Decreases threat</i> <i>Decreases threat</i>
Socio-economic status: <i>Male</i>	<i>Decreases threat</i>	

Appendix: SAGE Questionnaire

Q4. Please indicate *how much of a threat* you believe the following are to world stability. A large threat. Somewhat of a threat. A small threat. Not a threat.

- Global economic crisis
- Major wars
- Global warming
- Population growth
- Religious fanaticism
- Weapons of mass destruction

Q13. Given human nature, which one of the following statements most closely represents your view of war?

- "Wars are inevitable."
- "Wars can be avoided through more cooperation and understanding."

Q14. Would you say that any of the political parties in the U.S. represent your views reasonably well?

- Yes
- No

Q14A. Which party best represents your views? _____

Q15. In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and ten means the right? (*Please circle.*)

LEFT RIGHT

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

Q16. How many days in the past week did you watch the national network news (ABC, CBS, NBC) on TV?

_____ Days last week

Q17. How many days in the past week did you watch local TV news shows such as "Eyewitness News" or "Action News"?

_____ Days last week

Q18. How many days in the past week did you watch news on cable TV (CNN, FOX News, MSNBC)?

_____ Days last week

Q19. How many days in the past week did you read a daily newspaper?

_____ Days last week

Q20. How many days in the past week did you read news on the internet?

_____ Days last week

Q21. How many days in the past week did you listen to news on the radio?

_____ Days last week

Q25. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

- Just about always
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Hardly ever

Q35. Which two of the following are the *most* effective ways the United States can deal with international terrorism? (*Please indicate both your first and second choice.*)

	1 st choice	2 nd choice
Military intervention in other countries	_____	_____
Economic intervention in other countries	_____	_____
Creating new alliances using diplomacy	_____	_____
Working through the United Nations	_____	_____

The next three questions ask you about political leaders and international issues. Many people are unsure of the correct answers. Please just answer these questions off the top of your head.

Q36. The headquarters of the United Nations is in which country?

- Belgium
- United States
- France
- Austria
- Don't Know

Q37. The Prime Minister of Great Britain is....?

- Paul Martin
- Gordon Brown
- Tony Blair
- Peter Soulsby
- Don't Know

Q38. The Secretary General of the United Nations is....?

- Jacques Chirac
- Kofi Annan
- Butros Butros Ghali
- Marek Belka
- Don't Know

Q40. Have you ever lived, worked, studied, or served in the U.S. military in another country (please check all that apply)?

- Lived in another country
- Worked in another country
- Studied in another country
- U.S. military service in another country
- None of the above

Q41. Do you have a current passport?

- Yes
- No

Q42. How long have you been outside the United States in the last five years (please provide your best estimate)?

- Not outside country in last 5 years
- 1-10 days
- More than 10 days but less than 5 weeks
- More than 5 weeks, but less than 6 months
- More than 6 months, but less than 2 years
- More than 2 years

Q47. What is your age?

_____ Years

Q48. What is your gender?

Female
Male

Q49. What was the last year of school you completed?

Eighth grade or less
Some high school
High school graduate
Some college
College graduate
Post graduate

Q50. Are you currently...?

Married
Widowed
Divorced
Separated
Never married
Partnered, not married

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