


SPECIAL ISSUE ON MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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American Journal of Media Psychology (ISSN 1940-929X print; 1940-9303 online) is a peer-reviewed scientific journal that seeks theoretical and empirical manuscripts and book reviews that advance an understanding of media effects and processes on individuals in society. Submissions should have a psychological focus, which means the level of analysis should focus on individuals and their interaction with or relationship to mass media content and institutions. All theoretical and methodological perspectives are welcomed. All manuscripts undergo blind peer review. JGMC is published online and in hard copy form. The online version is open access, which means it is available at no charge to the public. Visit www.MarquetteJournals.org to view the contents of this journal and others. Subscriptions are available for hard copy versions. Visit the MarquetteJournals.org Web site for additional information.

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I am privileged to have been selected to serve as founding editor of the American Journal of Media Psychology (AJMP). I welcome you to the first issue that addresses a very important and timely topic: that of the role that the media play in the process of public diplomacy. This journal’s particular mission is to focus on “individuals and their interaction with or relationship to mass media content and institutions.” Thus, the articles in this special issue look at how individuals' perceptions of other countries and of international events are influenced by their exposure to related media content.

There was a time when much of public diplomacy occurred amongst diplomats and at times also targeted opinion leaders of various countries. Today, international public diplomacy entails explicit and implicit messages sent by a government in one country to members of a general public in another country for the purpose of shaping their attitudes toward some aspect of the sending country. What processes can best describe attitude formation and/or attitude change as it relates to public diplomacy in a global media environment? What role, if any, do the international media networks (news and entertainment, traditional and web-based) play in this context?

The impact of media exposure on international attitudes had been a rather neglected topic by researchers across the social sciences until September 11, 2001. Historically, interest in this topic from a social science perspective had peaked in the 1960s and significantly diminished afterwards. The aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States witnessed a renewed interest in examining the factors that might affect international attitude formation. Among these factors is media exposure.

The importance of investigating the role that media exposure has on international attitude formation became very evident to me personally as I was analyzing a multinational survey conducted in 2002 by the Pew Center for the People and the Press and made available to researchers for further study. Known as the Pew Global Attitudes Project, the data set is based on surveys of people living in many countries, it covers many topics but focuses especially on how people abroad perceive the United States (Pew Research Center, Michael Elasmar (Ph.D. Michigan State University) is associate professor of communication research and director of the Communication Research Center at Boston University (elasmar@bu.edu). He is founding editor of the American Journal of Media Psychology.
My analysis of this data set focused on understanding the factors that influence Muslim respondents’ likelihood to support the U.S.-led war on terror (Elasmar, 2007). Studying Muslim respondents in Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria and Senegal my analysis revealed a striking consistency across these countries irrespective of their cultural or geographical differences: the greater the probability that Muslims overseas were exposed to American entertainment media content the more probable was their support of the U.S.-led war on terror. The more Muslims believed that the United States ignores their interests when formulating its foreign policies, the less likely they were to support the U.S.-led war on terror. The consistency of this finding across seven countries that otherwise vary along many dimensions, suggests that the schema associated with Muslims’ decision to support or oppose the U.S.-led war on terror consists of competing cognitive components pertaining either directly or indirectly to the United States:

1. Positive beliefs about the United States, unrelated to foreign policy, most likely derived from their consumption of U.S. entertainment media; and
2. Negative beliefs about the United States stemming from their interpretation that the process of U.S. foreign policy ignores their interests.

(The Pew Global Attitudes Project bears no responsibility for the analyses and interpretations of the data presented in my own investigation). My findings have direct implications for theory building in the domain of international public opinion and for generating practical recommendations for the practice of U.S. public diplomacy. Similarly, investigations conducted by other researchers in this area can and will contribute to building theories and planning public diplomacy strategies.

It is my hope that the articles presented in this issue of AJMP will inspire other researchers to study the processes that can best describe attitude formation and/or change as it relates to public diplomacy in a global media environment. It is only by conducting further investigations that a solid base of knowledge will emerge and fill the gap that currently exists in this domain of study.

REFERENCES

ANTI-AMERICANISM AS A COMMUNICATION PROBLEM? FOREIGN MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD THE UNITED STATES IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Erik Nisbet and James Shanahan

In response to a rise in anti-American sentiment in the Middle East and other regions of the world, the United States has embarked on revitalizing its public diplomacy efforts targeting foreign publics through a range of mass media initiatives. The basic premise of these initiatives conceptualizes anti-Americanism as a “communication problem” exacerbated by negative portrayals of the United States and its policies in foreign mass media, especially television news. This paper evaluates this premise in both the Middle East and Europe by examining the content of prominent European and Pan-Arab television news stations for three months in 2005 and employing survey data from the same time period to test the association between exposure to these same channels and anti-American sentiment. Though the content analysis demonstrated that both European and Arab TV news were highly critical of the United States, there were important differences in which aspects of the United States they each critiqued. In addition, the survey data suggests that negative portrayals of the United States in European and Arab TV news are associated with higher levels of anti-American sentiment among foreign publics. The implications for U.S. public diplomacy and media strategy are discussed.

Keywords: public diplomacy, Middle East, Europe, public opinion, anti-Americanism

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The September 11th terrorist attacks, the resulting “War on Terrorism” and the continuing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have led scholars and policymakers to focus on the problem of virulent anti-Americanism within the Muslim world. However, negative evaluations of the United States have been confined neither to Arab nor Muslim countries. Since 2003 high levels of anti-American sentiment have crystallized in other regions of the world such as Western Europe.

In response to this rise of anti-Americanism among foreign publics, the United States has embarked on revitalizing its public diplomacy efforts targeting both foreign opinion leaders and the general public through such efforts as cultural exchanges, public relations, and U.S.-government sponsored broadcasting. The underlying logic of public diplomacy is that promoting positive views of American values and policies among foreign publics will impact foreign governments’ policies and “create a climate of opinion in which American policies can be successfully formulated, executed, and accepted” (Adelman, 1981, p. 927). This conception formulates and frames the problem of anti-Americanism as problem of strategic communication and perception rather than one exclusively of policy and action.

This study attempts to tackle and evaluate this proposition in the area of media influence on audience perceptions of the United States. First, we examine content indicators of media portrayals of the United States in seven foreign TV news outlets during a three-month period in 2005. Based on the frequency of negative considerations about the United States in this television content, and employing the accessibility model of opinion formation, we develop a set of hypotheses on how exposure to specific European and Arab TV news channels may be associated with anti-American sentiment. We test these hypotheses by analyzing a series of cross-national public opinion surveys that were conducted within the time period of the content analysis.

**WHY DOES ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT MATTER?**

Why does foreign public opinion matter? What is the possible impact of high levels of anti-American sentiment on U.S. foreign policy? Kohut and Stokes (2006) argue that the spread of polling and mass media globalization has empowered public opinion to be a significant factor in international diplomacy and foreign policy decision-making around the world. They assert that as the sole remaining “superpower,” the “United States, and its power and policies, have engaged global public opinion” in an unprecedented manner (Kohut and Stokes, 2006, p. 4). Consequently in Kohut and Stokes’ view, anti-American opinion may motivate or influence foreign governments not to cooperate with United States interests, policies, and goals, or even in some cases actively oppose them. This view of anti-American sentiment is consistent with a range of scholarship that has shown how public opinion may influence the foreign policy of democratic and authoritarian regimes alike through either

Beyond any short-term policy impact, anti-American sentiment may have a long-term impact by diminishing the United States’ “soft power,” or the ability for the United States to persuade, and more importantly attract states, organizations, and individuals to share its values, ideas, goals, and interests (Nye, 2004a). Keohane and Katzenstein (2006) echo this view when they propose that America’s soft power may be eroded as continued antipathy toward U.S. policies and actions may lead to hardened negative predispositions among foreign publics and elites, and therefore they will be increasingly more unlikely “to be persuaded by the United States of the existence of common interests” (p. 303).

**ANTI-AMERICANISM AS A COMMUNICATION PROBLEM?**

What are the causes of anti-American sentiment? Little agreement exists between policy-makers, scholars, and pundits as each have put forth dozens of possible causes and explanations for anti-American attitudes among foreign publics that go beyond straightforward dissatisfaction over U.S. foreign policy choices and conflicts about national interests. However, broadly speaking, explanations of anti-Americanism can be classified into three general categories: a) a clash of culture, values, or identity; b) global and/or regional patterns of social, economic, and political development; c) influence of foreign media, or “media effect.”

It is this last proposition that conceives of anti-American sentiment as a communication problem, focused on supposed media influence on foreign audiences, that has spurred a great deal of policy debate regarding U.S. public diplomacy efforts, especially in the area of broadcasting, and is the focus of this study. Proponents of this perspective claim that anti-American sentiment stems from foreign media like al-Jazeera, whose news programming they argue has consistent bias against the United States encapsulated in its pro-Arab and pro-Muslim perspectives (Lynch, 2006a; Miles, 2005; Zayani, 2005). Others argue that foreign political elites and/or religious/nationalist movements have established a system of misrepresentation in media, public discourse, and education that purposefully surrounds foreign citizens with “anti-American messages and extreme distortions of U.S. policies to a degree that has made it difficult to avoid absorbing these views” (Clawson and Rubin, 2004, p. 135).

Shortly after the September 11th attacks, politicians and pundits from across the political spectrum framed the reasons for anti-American sentiment, especially in the Muslim world, not as a question of incorrect policy, but rather incorrect perceptions of U.S. policy by Muslims and others. For example, in an October press conference President Bush stated, “I’m amazed that there is such misunderstanding of what our country is about that people would hate us...I know how good we are.” Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, a prominent U.S. diplomat under President Clinton also asked, “how can a man in a cave [referring to Bin
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Anti-Americanism as a Communication Problem?

Laden] out communicate the world’s leading communication society,” arguing for drastic changes to U.S. strategic communication efforts (Holbrooke, October 2001).

This new focus on strategic communication and perceived misperceptions among foreign publics led to the resurgence of public diplomacy as a possible foreign policy tool. Public diplomacy is commonly defined as the “direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking, and ultimately, that of their governments” that attempts to promote American values to foreigners and helps “create a climate of opinion in which American policies can be successfully formulated, executed, and accepted” (Adelman, 1981, p.927; Gilboa 2000, p. 291).

Throughout the Cold War, the Voice of America and other broadcasters such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Worldnet Television functioned as prominent components of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. Other elements of U.S. public diplomacy included exchange and cultural programs such as the Fulbright program, and the publishing of various informational magazines and print materials. However, with the end of the Cold War, many policymakers saw a reduced need for such efforts. As a consequence, in 1999, the main American public diplomacy agency, the United States Information Agency (USIA), was merged into the U.S. State Department with its available funding, resources, and activities severely curtailed (Kaiser, 2001; Lippman, 1999).

However, the September 11th attacks and the new “War on Terrorism” stimulated interest in both understanding and shaping foreign public opinion and thus reinvigorated the U.S. commitment to public diplomacy. Furthermore, the continuing appearance of Osama Bin Laden on al-Jazeera, and the perceived success of Al Qaeda in spreading its message in the Muslim world led to the growing perception in the media and among policymakers that the United States was losing the “public relations battle” in Islamic countries, and that the United States needed to step up public diplomacy efforts (Ajami, 2001; Becker, 2001; el-Nawawy and Iskandar, 2002; Kaiser, 2001).

The United States’ involvement in Iraq has only deepened this perception among military planners and government policymakers. They believe the United States is involved in an “information war” as Iraqi insurgents have effectively used the mass media and other communication channels to influence public opinion both within and without Iraq (Johnson, January, 2006). Arab satellite channels such as al-Jazeera or al-Arabiya “air far more graphic images than are typically seen on U.S. TV—leaving the impression, say U.S. military officials, that America is on the run” (Johnson, January, 2006). Anti-American videos created by insurgents and aired on television or the Internet are “worth a division of tanks to those people [the insurgents]” in the opinion of one U.S. military intelligence analyst (Johnson, January, 2006).

However, though many policymakers believe that anti-American sentiment is a problem of communication and current public diplomacy efforts are predicated on the assumption that anti-American sentiment is driven by media use, there is still limited empirical evidence to date demonstrating this relationship. Furthermore, media effects may be selective, impacting
some segments of the public more so than others. Thus, beyond the question of whether there is a relationship between anti-American sentiment and media use among foreign audiences, this relationship may vary and be stronger for some audience segments while weaker for others. As several U.S. government-sponsored reports and reviews of public diplomacy efforts have noted, there is a serious lack of empirical benchmarking on what may influence the formation of anti-American sentiment among foreign publics in general and specifically what role media use may play in comparison to other social influences (e.g., Djerejian, 2003; Schneider, 2004; GAO 2004, 2006, 2007). Therefore, the primary goal of this study is to theoretically explicate and empirically test this assumed link between media use and anti-American sentiment among foreign audiences.

**Previous Research on Media and Anti-American Sentiment**

Quantitative, empirical research probing the relationship between media and anti-American sentiment falls generally into two categories, content analysis of foreign media and analysis of public opinion surveys examining the correlation between types of media use and perceptions of the United States. Unfortunately, overall the available research to date is scant, somewhat contradictory, and not comprehensive as it disproportionately focuses on either European or Arab media, especially al-Jazeera.

In examining how foreign media portray the United States, Dimitrova and her colleagues (2005) illustrate how the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq immediately became the primary news focus for 70% of 246 international news websites they surveyed on the first day of hostilities. Furthermore, one third of news coverage in non-Coalition countries, and 15% of news coverage in Coalition countries, was negative toward the United States (Dimitrova, et. al; 2005). In comparison, one-quarter of Coalition country news coverage was positive compared to 8% of coverage in nonmembers (Dimitrova, et. al; 2005). Not only were there significant differences in valence, the framing of the news coverage also substantially differed according to Dimitrova and her colleagues. For example, in comparison to U.S. news coverage, international news websites were more than twice as likely to discuss and analyze responsibility for the war in their news coverage (Dimitrova, et. al; 2005). Furthermore, they were also more likely to attribute this responsibility to the United States rather than Saddam Hussein or Iraq (Dimitrova, et. al; 2005).

Aday, Livingston, and Hebert (2005) conducted a content analysis comparing domestic and Arab news coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. They concluded that the vast majority of al-Jazeera’s news coverage of the first few weeks of the Iraqi war was on the most part balanced and comparable to the news coverage of American networks. However, al-Jazeera still had a higher percentage of critical reporting than the other networks and when it did depart from neutral reporting al-Jazeera’s strong focus on civilian casualties in comparison to other media outlets “carried an antiwar, or even anti-American, tone” (Aday, Livingston, and Hebert, 2005, p. 17).
Lynch (2006b) also examined the content of *al-Jazeera*, especially its public affairs talk shows, for anti-American bias across a wider timeframe (1999 to 2005). He concludes that overall “negative images of the United States clearly predominated over positive images” with the highest levels of negativity in 2002 and 2003 (p. 218). Most of the anti-American messages on *al-Jazeera* focused around American power, arrogance, hypocrisy, and irrational hostility toward Arabs and Muslims (Lynch, 2006b). Lastly, according to Lynch (2006a, 2006b) anti-American sentiment is encapsulated in pro-Arab and pro-Muslim narratives that present news and information from these identity perspectives, which is also consistent with findings from other scholars (Miles, 2005; Zayani, 2005).

Ravi (2005) examined newspaper coverage of the war from the United States, Great Britain, Pakistan, and India. He found substantial variation with newspapers in Pakistan and India the most negative toward the United States, though the left-leaning *Guardian* was also “vehement” in its opposition to the war and U.S. policy (Ravi, 2005, p. 57). The news coverage in the Pakistani newspaper gave equal prominence and credibility to both Iraqi and American accounts of the war (Ravi, 2005). Both Pakistani and Indian newspapers focused much more heavily on the impact on Iraqi civilians and civilian deaths than newspapers in other countries. In addition, the Pakistani newspaper coverage was quite Pan-Islamic in its identification and framing, similar to *al-Jazeera* in this regard. Furthermore, it explicitly linked the war to the “Israel-Palestine conflict and the plans of Israel were high on its lists of concerns and were brought into the analysis of the war at every stage” (Ravi, 2005, p. 58).

Moving away from the Muslim and Arab worlds, Dimitrova and Stromback (2005) and Lehmann (2005) compared foreign newspaper reporting in Sweden and Germany, respectively, to U.S. newspaper coverage of the Iraq war. Dimitrova and Stromback (2005) found the majority of Swedish reporting was balanced, but also was relatively more critical in tone than U.S. reporting (16% vs. 2%). There were significant differences in the prevalence of media frames as well, with Swedish reporting on Iraq significantly focusing more on anti-war protests and attributions of responsibility for the war and less on specific aspects of the military conflict than the U.S. newspaper coverage. Leading up to the war, Lehman (2005) found German media coverage quite critical of the United States and strongly supporting continued weapons inspections as an alternative compared to U.S. media. In all, Lehman (2005) asserts that the German media “did not critically distance themselves from the growing anti-Americanism in the German public” but instead “generally jumped on the popular, antiwar bandwagon” (p. 85).

Beyond examining media content, several other scholars have focused on examining links between media use and anti-American sentiment. Employing Pew’s 2002 survey of 44 nations, Chiozza (2006) tests whether those who watch international TV news channels had anti-American views toward the United States across six dimensions (general opinion, U.S. democracy, customs/values, popular culture, science/technology, and “war on terror”). Grouping countries by region, he found that for most dimensions watching international TV news had either a negative, or no significant association, with anti-American sentiment.
fact, in the case of popular culture, watching international TV news was associated with less negative attitudes in four out of the five global regions.

However, examining the association between media use and anti-American sentiment yields different results when examining the association at a less global level and differentiating between media outlets. Nisbet and his colleagues (2004) used the 2002 Gallup Poll of Islamic countries to examine the association of Arab national (domestic) TV, Pan-Arab satellite TV, and Western TV news use with negative evaluations of the United States. They found that across all TV news sources, media use was associated with an increase in negative perceptions of the United States. However, they also found that Pan-Arab satellite TV news use (such as al-Jazeera) was associated with an amplification of anti-American sentiment compared to other news sources. In other words, no matter the information source, Arab audiences had higher levels of anti-American sentiment the more they watched television news about the United States. However, this anti-American sentiment was more prevalent for audience members who watched al-Jazeera compared to those who watched other TV channels. A separate analysis of the same survey data by Gentzkow and Shapiro (2004) also found that the source of news impacted evaluations of the United States, with reliance on Arab news channels associated with higher levels of anti-American opinion compared to other information sources.

**HOW MEDIA USE SHAPES PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES**

How can we understand how media use may promote anti-American sentiment among foreign publics? What are the theoretical mechanisms? Employing the accessibility model of opinion formation, we may theorize that foreign media may shape public opinion toward the United States directly by exposing individuals to a relatively higher number of negative considerations than positive, or neutral, considerations about the United States and its policies in its news reporting. In turn, this leads to negative evaluations of the United States and its policies when audiences form opinions or make judgments.

The accessibility model is based on the notion that when it comes to forming opinions and making evaluations, individuals are typically “cognitive misers,” employing information shortcuts as a means to process new information, form attitudes, and reach decisions (Downs 1957; Popkin 1991). Most individuals, regardless of their location in the world, rely on a combination of their pre-existing views and the information most readily available to them in the news media as the mutable material from which to mold their opinions. Moreover, when evaluating entities, issues, or topics that are socially or physically distant (i.e., United States, Americans), individuals are heavily dependent on the media for information or cues upon which to form opinions or make decisions, and thus the media may play a disproportionate influence on public opinion (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976; Graber, 1980; McLeod, Becker, and Byrnes, 1974).
Therefore, considering these premises and employing the “memory-based” or accessibility model of opinion formation, we may understand at least one of the ways that foreign news media may shape public opinion about the United States. In the memory-based model an individual’s opinions are influenced by making certain considerations more salient, and therefore more accessible, when an individual expresses an opinion or makes a judgment (Hastie and Park, 1986; Iyengar, 1990; Scheufele, 2000; Zaller, 1992). The memory-based model assumes that: 1) some pieces of information are more accessible in a person’s mind than others; 2) that accessibility is mostly a function of “how much” or “how recently” a person has been exposed to these certain considerations; and 3) public opinion and/or evaluations are an outcome of the relative accessibility and prevalence of competing considerations (Kim, Scheufele, and Shanahan, 2002). Thus, we may conclude that if foreign media have a relatively high prevalence of anti-American considerations and messages within its news content as compared to positive considerations, then media use may contribute to a rise of anti-American sentiment as these negative considerations are more accessible when individuals are asked to make evaluations or form judgments about the United States.

Within the accessibility model, strongly held value or ideological predispositions may also play a significant role in opinion formation by either directing selective attention toward some considerations over others or “resisting” considerations that do resonate with the predisposition, impacting the balance of positive and negative considerations about the United States and its policies, for example (Zaller, 1992). Thus, beyond foreign media, individual political ideology or religious attitudes (i.e., Muslim religiosity) may also impact public opinion toward the United States.

Analyzing Foreign Media Content

In order to develop hypotheses regarding how specific foreign media channels may be associated with anti-American sentiment, we analyzed media content indicators from both Arab and European media acquired from Media Tenor. Media Tenor provided content analysis data for five European television channels and two Pan-Arab news channels. The five European TV news broadcasts were the BBC One (News at 6 and 10) and BBC Two (Newsnight) in the United Kingdom, the ARD Tagesthemen and ZDF heute journal in Germany, the TF1 Journal in France, and TVE 1 Telediario in Spain. The British, German, and Spanish television news broadcasts are publicly funded while TF1 is privately owned. However, in all four countries these news outlets are the most prominent and highly rated
television news broadcasts in their respective media markets. The two Pan-Arab channels included in the analysis were al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya. Both channels are private, independent broadcasters that command large audiences throughout the Middle East. The selection of these news channels was based on the need for media content indicators from the same countries and time period as the available survey data.

For each channel/country, Media Tenor provided the percentage of news content that was positive, negative, or neutral by major categories of U.S. actors. The data also included the percentage of total news coverage of the United States that fell within each category. The nine categories of U.S. actors were predefined by Media Tenor and include the 1) United States in general, 2) President Bush, 3) Executive branch, 4) U.S. military, 5) other U.S. agencies/authorities, 6) Congress and political parties, 7) states and local communities, 8) business/economic, and 9) society/celebrities. Reported differences between media outlets in terms of coverage focus or valence discussed below were all tested for significance, employing a chi-square test with a significance criteria of $p<.05$.

### The Salience of Anti-American Considerations in Foreign Media

Collapsing the aforementioned categories of U.S. actors into more general categories of political actors (the first six categories) and economic/social actors (last three categories), Table 1 provides the percentage of news coverage that was positive, negative, or neutral for each set of foreign TV channel across each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Televison Channel</th>
<th>Political Actors</th>
<th>Economic/Social Actors</th>
<th>All Actors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Pos</td>
<td>% Neu</td>
<td>% Neg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Arabiya</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Jazeera</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ARAB</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British TV</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German TV</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French TV</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish TV</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EUROPE</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL MEDIA</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
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</table>
Within Pan-Arab media, *al-Jazeera* and *al-Arabiya* differ significantly in valence of news coverage. *Al-Jazeera* is slightly more negative in its coverage of political actors (26.6% vs. 24%), substantially more negative in its portrayals of economic/social actors (36.4% to 23.3%), and overall tends to have 30% (8 percentage point difference, 31.8% vs. 23.9%) more negative statements about the United States than *al-Arabiya*. However, at the same time, *al-Jazeera* tends to be more positive overall about the United States than *al-Arabiya* (8.6% vs. 2.5%), primarily driven by a difference in the number of positive statements about economic/social actors between the two channels (14.3% for *al-Jazeera* vs. 3.6% for *al-Arabiya*). Nevertheless, negative statements on both channels dramatically outnumber positive statements, especially for political actors for which there are 11 negative statements for every one positive statement on *al-Arabiya* and 13 negative statements for every one positive statement about the U.S. political actors on *al-Jazeera*.

Turning to European media, there are also significant differences in valence of coverage across TV news broadcasts. French TV and Spanish TV were significantly less negative toward the United States than either U.K. or German TV news in their coverage of political actors (14.8% and 15.2% vs. 20.3% and 26.8%, respectively), economic/social actors (17.1% and 22.6% vs. 27.5% and 37.1%, respectively), and overall (16.3% and 19% vs. 23%, respectively). In addition, British TV news is also significantly less negative than German TV news across all three categories (political, economic/social, and overall), making German TV news the most negative of the four European media outlets by a substantial margin.

Similar to Pan-Arab media coverage, positive coverage of the United States within European TV news was scant compared to negative coverage. German and U.K. TV news had more positive coverage of political actors than either French or Spanish TV (4.9% and 5.6% vs. 1.2% and 2%). German TV news was also the most positive for economic/social actors (9.2%), followed by British media (6%). Overall, though Germany’s TV news tended to have the highest percentage of negative statements, it also tended to have the highest percentage of overall positive statements (7.3%) compared to all the other media outlets.

Also similar to Pan-Arab media, negative statements about the United States vastly outnumber positive statements in European TV news in relative terms. For example, negative statements about U.S. political actors outnumber positive statements 4 to 1 for British TV, 6 to 1 for German TV, 8 to 1 for Spanish TV, and 12 to 1 for French TV news.

Comparing Pan-Arab media as whole to European media also highlights some important differences. Pan-Arab media coverage is significantly more negative than European media for both political and economic/social actors, with about a four percentage point difference (28.5% vs. 24.1%) in levels of negativity overall. Differences in positive coverage were less straightforward. European media tends to be twice as positive in its coverage of political actors as Pan-Arab media (4.1% vs. 2.2%), while conversely Pan-Arab media tended to be about twice as positive toward economic/social actors as (12.2% vs. 5.8%) as compared to
European media. Across all actors, both European and Pan-Arab media had comparable levels of positive coverage toward the United States.

In addition, we also examined the valence of foreign media coverage across the six political actor sub-categories as exhibited in Table 2. Within Pan-Arab media, al-Jazeera
covers the United States in general (53.8% vs. 41%) and President Bush (16% vs. 7.8%) much more negatively than al-Arabiya. Conversely, however, al-Arabiya tends to portray the U.S. Congress and political parties (18.6% vs. 0%) more negatively than al-Jazeera. The two channels differ in terms of positive coverage as well, with al-Arabiya significantly more positive than al-Jazeera when portraying President Bush (3.2% vs. 0%). Overall, Pan-Arab media tend to portray the United States in general (46.4%), the U.S. military (30.3%), and the Executive Branch (16.9%) the most negatively. Conversely, the United States in general (3.6%) and other U.S. authorities or agencies (2.9%) are the most likely actors to receive positive news coverage.

Consistent with being the most negative European news outlet, German TV news was significantly more negative toward the United States in general (33.8%), the Executive Branch (48.1%), and the U.S. military (29%) compared to the other European news broadcasts. However, though the least negative TV broadcaster overall, French TV had the most negative coverage of President Bush (28%) while British TV news was the most negative toward other U.S. authorities/agencies (24.1%). British TV and German TV were also relatively tied for most negative coverage toward the U.S. Congress and political parties (8% and 10.3%, respectively).

Compared to Pan-Arab media, the European media as a whole was much less negative toward the United States in general (27.3% of coverage was negative for European media compared to 19.5% for Pan-Arab) and the U.S. military (21.8% negative for European vs. 30.3% for Pan-Arab). However, European TV news was more negative than Pan-Arab TV news toward President Bush (21.3% vs. 9.9% negative) and the U.S. Executive Branch (36.7% vs. 16.9% negative). Regarding positive coverage of political actors, the most substantial differences between European and Pan-Arab TV news were the higher percentages of positive statements toward the U.S. military (4.8% vs. 1.8% positive) and other U.S. authorities/agencies (6.7% vs. 2.9% positive) in European media compared to Pan-Arab.

**LINKING MEDIA CONTENT WITH EVALUATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES**

Now that we have reviewed the content of select foreign television news broadcasts, we can use our findings to develop some hypotheses regarding the relationship between the reliance on these specific television stations and evaluations of the United States. Drawing upon the accessibility model of opinion formation previously discussed, we may propose that individuals who rely on television news broadcasts with a high percentage of negative considerations will have a more negative evaluation of the United States. Conversely, individuals who rely on news broadcasts with a low percentage of negative considerations should express a less negative evaluation of the United States.
In the European media, German TV was the most negative toward the United States while French TV was the least negative. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1a: Reliance on German TV news is associated with a more negative evaluation of the United States.
H1b: Reliance on French TV news is associated with a less negative evaluation of the United States.

Turning to Pan-Arab media, al-Ajazeera has significantly more negative coverage of the United States than al-Arabiya, and thus we propose:

H2a: Reliance on al-Jazeera TV news is associated with a more negative evaluation of the United States.
H2b: Reliance on al-Arabiya TV news is associated with a less negative evaluation of the United States.

**Methodology**

The public opinion data for our analysis stems from two different cross-national surveys conducted during the fall of 2005. The first survey is wave 64.2 of the Eurobarometer survey conducted on behalf of the European Commission. Data for Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Spain were gathered from this survey. Zogby International and Dr. Shibley Telhami at the University of Maryland conducted the second cross-national survey included in our analysis. This survey included six Arab countries: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates.

For Europe, two sets of ordinary-least-squares (OLS) regression models were constructed for each country to examine the relationship between media use and evaluations of United States’ role in several policy areas. One set of regression models predicted European evaluations of the U.S. role in world peace and terrorism, while the other predicted evaluations of U.S. economic and social policies.

For the Arab countries a single OLS regression model tested the relationship between media use and general anti-American sentiment. Due to the small number of contextual units (four and six), the universal availability of satellite news channels across countries in the sample, and that our primary focus was on individual-level phenomena rather than contextual, we decided that a full multi-level (mixed) model was not necessary for the Arab analysis. Responses across the six Arab countries were pooled and thus a secondary weight was created that accounted for the population distribution between countries and employed in the analysis. Nominal dummy variables (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Lebanon with the U.A.E and Morocco comprising the reference group) corresponding to each country sample were entered into the analysis as controls for any contextual (country) level impact.
on the individual-level variables. Furthermore, since we did not employ a multi-level model, we decided not to report the relationships between the exogenous dummy country variables and the endogenous variables as the inflated degrees of freedom associated with each nominal country variable would make inference testing unreliable for these variables.

In each regression model, we introduce two blocks of variables. The first block is comprised of four socio-demographic, or exogenous, variables: age, gender, education, and either ideological (European analysis) or religious (Pan-Arab) predisposition. In the European model, two sets of media use measures were included in the analysis. The first set assesses general newspaper use and television news exposure as controls. The second set of measures assessed whether respondents relied on any of the specific German, Spanish, French, and British TV news channels for which we had corresponding content data.

In the Pan-Arab analysis, general media use measures were not available, but measures assessing how often respondents were exposed specifically to al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya were included in the analysis.

In the European analysis the criterion variable was respondents’ evaluations of U.S. security, economic, and social policies, with negative evaluations coded high. The analysis was further split between evaluations of America’s role in national security issues as compared to economic and social issues. The criterion variable in the Pan-Arab analysis differed from the European analysis in that it took advantage of more robust measurement in the Arab surveys. The dependent measure in this case assessed anti-American sentiment based on the conceptualization by Katzenstein and Keohane (2006) that defined anti-Americanism as comprised of a combination of unfavorable opinion, distrust, attribution, and perceived threat. This composite measure also mitigates the possibility of ceiling effects on attitude measurement limiting the analysis.

RESULTS

The results of the three sets of regression models are presented in Tables 3a/3b, 4a/4b, and 5. In Europe, ideology was strongly correlated with evaluations of the United States’ impact on peace and terrorism across all four European countries in the sample (conservatives were less negative). Ideology, though, appears to play a weaker role in the United Kingdom compared to the three other European nations. Other socio-demographic correlates varied considerably by country. Women tended to express more negative evaluations of American security policy in Germany, United Kingdom, and France, but not Spain. In the United Kingdom, respondents with higher levels of education were more likely to evaluate U.S. security policy negatively, but not in other European countries. Older respondents in the United Kingdom and Spain tended to be less negative toward U.S. security policy.
Media use was only associated with evaluations of U.S. security policy in the two European countries (Germany and France) that were not part of the original “Coalition of the Willing” that invaded Iraq. In Germany, though TV news exposure in general was associated with less negative evaluations of American security policy (β = -.07), consistent with the content analysis of German TV news, reliance on the German channel ARD as a source of TV news was associated more negative evaluations (β = .08) of the United States’ influence on peace and terrorism, partially confirming H1a. Conversely, in France, general exposure...
to newspaper news was associated with more negative evaluations of the American security policies (â=.08). However, again consistent with the media content data, viewers who relied on the French TV channel TF1 (â=.10) for news tended to express less negative evaluations of the United States in regards to peace and terrorism, partially confirming $H1b$.

Turning to European evaluations of the United States’ impact on economic and social policy issues, different patterns emerge. As in the previous analysis, ideology was
TABLE 4B
EUROPEAN TV NEWS AND NEGATIVE EVALUATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES’ IMPACT ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B (s.e.)</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.00 (.00)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.01 (.00)</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (women)</td>
<td>.08 (.16)</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predisposition (ideology)</td>
<td>-.22 (.05)</td>
<td>-.19***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Incremental R²</td>
<td>4.8***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Media Exposure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper News</td>
<td>.10 (.06)</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV News</td>
<td>.09 (.10)</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Incremental R²</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TV News Attention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARD (German)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZDF (German)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC 1 (UK)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC 2 (UK)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVE 1 (Spanish)</td>
<td>-.08 (.16)</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF 1 (French)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.34 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Incremental R²</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total % Explained R² | 5.1 | 5.1

*** p ≤ .001 **p ≤ .01, *p ≤ .05. Partial co-efficients, standard error, and standardized betas are reported.

consistently associated with evaluations of the United States across all four countries (again, conservatives were less negative). Gender is only associated with evaluations of U.S. economic and social policies in France, and in that case women on average express less negative opinions of the United States (as opposed to more negative evaluations of U.S. security policy). Older respondents in Spain were less negative toward the United States,
while in France older respondents were more negative. More educated respondents in Germany tended to express more negative evaluations of the United States. General media exposure was not significantly associated with evaluations of United States’ economic and social policies in any of the four European countries. However, specific channels in both the United Kingdom and France were associated with opinion toward the United States. In the United Kingdom, viewers who relied on BBC2 for news were more critical (â = .09) of the United States’ impact on economic growth, poverty, and the environment. Conversely, viewers who relied on French channel TF1 tended to express less negative evaluations (â = -.11) of the United States’ role in these three areas.

Moving on to the third regression analysis of pooled data from six Arab countries, women (â = .08) and Muslim religiosity (â = .25) were both associated with higher levels of expressed anti-American sentiment. In terms of media use, exposure to al-Jazeera TV news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B (s.e.)</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.06 (.04)</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (women)</td>
<td>.50 (.10)</td>
<td>.07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predisposition (Muslim religiosity)</td>
<td>.55 (.04)</td>
<td>.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Incremental $R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td>.67***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TV News Exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Jazeera</td>
<td>.29 (.04)</td>
<td>.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Arabiya</td>
<td>-.22 (.05)</td>
<td>-.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Incremental $R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td>.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total % Explained $R^2$</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p ≤ .001 **p ≤ .01, *p ≤ .05. Partial co-efficients, standard error, and standardized betas are reported.
was associated with more anti-American sentiment (â=.13) and exposure to al-Arabiya was associated with less (â= -.13), confirming both H2a and H2b.
DISCUSSION

Some Limitations

For both Arab and European media the magnitude of the associations between media use and evaluations of the United States were small to moderate. There are several factors that may contribute to this weak association in the models. The first is measurement, with the available measurement of television news use and reliance rather limited, especially within the European analysis employing dichotomous indicators of reliance on specific TV channels. The second factor that hampers the analysis is the cross-sectional nature of the data. McGuire (1992) notes that effect sizes of media use and explained variance are often underestimated within a cross-sectional research design of this type. The optimal design would be a longitudinal panel to study the contribution of media use to opinion formation over time and to better explicate causality. A third factor is the depth of anti-American sentiment in both regions, with the analysis possibly inhibited by ceiling effects and limited variance in the criterion variable.

Unfortunately, the analysis is also limited from a comparative viewpoint as the dependent variable in the two sets of analysis differed considerably. In the European analysis, evaluations of the United States’ role in specific policy areas were the dependent variable, whereas in the Pan-Arab analysis a more comprehensive conceptualization of anti-American sentiment was employed. This limits the direct comparison these two analyses, but nevertheless they both demonstrated the potential of media use to be associated with either specific policy evaluations or more general sentiment toward the United States.

A third set of limitations is the reliance on correlational analysis and the possibility of self-selection bias. In other words, the association between reliance on some TV channels for news and either positive or negative evaluations of the United States may be an artifact of individuals selecting media sources that reinforce or reflect their pre-existing attitudes or viewpoints, rather than media having an independent impact on opinion formation. Though only a longitudinal panel study or an experimental research design can effectively test this possibility, two factors in the analysis suggest that the results are not methodological artifacts. First, all the TV channels in the analysis are the major TV news sources in their respective countries/regions and are not niche or specialized channels representing targeted audience segments. Second, ideological and religious predispositions, by far the strongest predictors of opinion in all the analyses, are not significantly mediated by these information sources. This suggests that even after controlling for strongly held predispositions toward the United States that may direct media attention, reliance on these information sources contribute to negative opinions of the United States.
Conclusions

In summary, our content analysis revealed important dimensions of media coverage of the United States. First, across all seven TV news outlets, negative coverage of the United States and associated actors far outweighed positive coverage — though some channels were substantially more negative than others. Pan-Arab channels tended to focus more on political actors than economic or social actors, while European media were evenly split. On the whole, Pan-Arab media tended to be more negative toward the United States than European media as a whole, though the most negative European channel, German TV, has comparable levels of negative coverage as that of the most negative Pan-Arab TV, al-Jazeera.

Moreover, there were significant differences between European and Pan-Arab media on which actors they had negative coverage about. For example, Pan-Arab media was about twice as negative in general about the United States and the U.S. military as compared to European media. In turn, the European media were more likely to focus on President Bush than Pan-Arab media with this focus tending to be twice as negative toward both Bush and the U.S. Executive Branch. These differences in valence and focus are suggestive of differences in news framing between Pan-Arab and European media coverage. Pan-Arab media appears to attribute, or frame, most of its negative statements in terms of the United States in general and the U.S. military, while the European media is more likely to differentiate between the U.S. in general and more specific actors and focus its negative statements on President Bush and the Executive Branch in its news coverage. Moreover, future survey research should attempt to explicate whether these content differences result in qualitative differences in what aspects of the United States or its policies European and Arab audiences evaluate negatively, beyond overall assessments of the United States and/or its policies.

The findings also demonstrate that differences in TV news coverage of the United States manifest in differences between TV news audiences. In both Europe and the Middle East, individuals who watch TV news with a higher percentage of negative statements about the United States express more negative evaluations of the United States and its policies, while respondents who watch TV with fewer negative statements tend to express a less negative opinion of the United States. In terms of Pan-Arab media, the analyses confirmed the common perception that al-Jazeera is associated with a higher degree of negativity toward the United States, whereas al-Arabiya is comparatively less anti-American based on the relative valence of their news content.

In Europe, several noteworthy patterns in the relationship between media use and public opinion toward the United States emerged. First, the associations between evaluations of U.S. policy and media use were for the most part regarding national security policies, rather than economic and social policies. This is not surprising as the most salient issues internationally involving the United States are most often concerning national security or terrorism such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and the U.S. War on Terror. It is also consistent...
with the observed patterns of news coverage and associations between information sources and opinion, with German TV the most negative toward the U.S. military and French TV the least negative. Thus, in terms of media effects on public opinion in Europe, moving forward we may expect the media to play a disproportionate role in shaping public opinion toward the United States on issues like peace and terrorism as compared to topics like the environment, poverty, and economic growth.

A second pattern is the differing roles of ideology across countries and types of evaluations. The association between ideology and evaluations of U.S. impact on peace and terrorism was substantially weaker within the United Kingdom as compared to the other three European countries. This weaker association is most likely a result of the left-leaning Labor Party controlling the U.K. government and being a strong supporter of U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq and terrorism, including participation in the invasion of Iraq. This ideological disconnect within the United Kingdom appears to have reduced the impact of ideology on public opinion toward the United States compared to the other European countries. In addition, the magnitude of the association between ideology and evaluations of the United States was much weaker for economic and social issues as compared to peace and terrorism for three of the European countries. Again the exception was the United Kingdom, most likely due to the aforementioned reason. These results suggest that U.S. policies on peace and terrorism are possibly more ideologically polarizing among European publics than U.S. policies toward economic growth, poverty, and the environment.

A third observed pattern is that the media has the strongest association, both in terms of general media use and reliance on specific channels, with public opinion in the two countries that were not members of the original so-called “Coalition of the Willing” that invaded and occupied Iraq, nor that had suffered terrorist bombings the preceding 18 months (Spain in March 2004 and United Kingdom in July 2005). This finding is consistent with the media dependency perspective, as German and French publics were farther removed from issues such as the U.S. War on Terror and U.S. security policy, and thus more dependent on the media, than the publics in Spain and United Kingdom. This context may also explain why British and Spanish TV channels, both government-operated, were less negative toward the United States compared to Germany TV news (also publicly managed), though it does not explain why French TV news was less negative than all other sets of channels. A possible explanation for this French anomaly is that TF1 is the only channel in the analysis that is privately owned, and this institutional difference may have resulted in less negative coverage of the United States relative to the other government-managed channels.

Also regarding France, the results of the content analysis are at odds with the common perception that the French public is more hostile toward the United States than other European countries. How do French evaluations of America’s role compare to the other three European countries in the analysis? In terms of evaluations of the U.S. impact on peace and terrorism, the sample mean for France was in the middle range, with the British sample the least negative, the Spanish sample the most negative, and French and German sample means
in-between. However, in terms of United States’ economic and social impact, the French sample scores had the highest mean level of negativity, followed by Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom again with the lowest mean score. Interestingly, results from the content analysis also show that French TV focused much more on American economic and social actors (64.6% of its news statements) than any other set of European news channels (35.6% for U.K. TV, 56.3% for German TV, 51.1% for Spanish TV). Though, at the same time, this coverage was significantly less negative than the other European channels. What conclusions we may draw from these two sets of observations are unclear, though they do suggest the perception of a general French negativity toward the United States may be overstated and may be more narrowly focused on economic, social, or cultural considerations.

Is anti-American sentiment a communication problem? The results of this study suggest that beyond individual predispositions, foreign media do contribute to an increase in anti-American sentiment among Arab and European audiences. What are possible public diplomacy strategies to mitigate this effect? Reducing the prevalence of negative considerations about the United States foreign media is one direct strategy that may reduce anti-American sentiment. The recent establishment of media centers in Europe and the Middle East by the U.S. State Department that are designed to engage foreign news media is a step in that direction. Strengthening local communication efforts and engaging foreign media to influence media coverage of the United States should be a priority for public diplomacy efforts. However, the results of the study suggest that simply increasing the overall amount of positive coverage or improving the ratio of positive to negative coverage is sufficient. Rather, U.S. public diplomacy efforts need to reduce the overall amount of negative portrayals to possibly reduce anti-American sentiment stemming from foreign media.

The results of the study also suggest that encouraging the development of al-Arabiya as a counter-weight to al-Jazeera has also appeared to help reduce anti-American sentiment within the Middle East to a degree, at least possibly in relative terms. Engaging foreign media and encouraging rival private media are most likely more effective strategies, at least in the short-term, than U.S. broadcasting efforts like al-Hurra and Radio Sawa, as these U.S. government information channels lack market share and credibility compared to domestic and regional media in Europe and Middle East.

In addition, the results of this study are consistent with several scholars’ and policymakers’ observations regarding the increasingly powerful impact of media globalization on American foreign policy and international relations. For instance, Kohut and Stokes (2006) assert that news media globalization has reached a point that the United States and its actions/policies are put under an unprecedented level of international scrutiny and that this unique visibility has led to an increase in anti-American sentiment. The Department of Defense DSB echoes this sentiment when it notes that media globalization and new information technologies have revolutionized the level of “global transparency” and thus has created both threats and opportunities for U.S. foreign policy (Schneider, 2004).
In addition, at the same time the most powerful predictors of public opinion toward the United States in both Europe and the Middle East were not general media use or reliance on specific channels, but rather ideological and religious predispositions. These hardened biases are incredibly difficult to influence in the short-term and require long-term communication strategies to address. Within the context of the accessibility model, strongly held negative predispositions increase both the likelihood of internalizing negative considerations and disregarding any positive considerations about the United States available in the foreign media. Thus, U.S. public diplomacy strategies should not only include policies that address the content of foreign media content, but also craft positive persuasive messages that either somehow resonate with these ideological or religious predispositions, or at least that do not provide contextual cues that will activate negative predispositions toward the United States that mitigate the effectiveness of a persuasive message. Thus, in this context, anti-American sentiment may be viewed as a communication problem involving not only the messenger (foreign media), but also the message presented by American foreign policy.

ENDNOTES

1. Media Tenor was founded in 1994 and is an independent, private German company that specializes in collecting and analyzing print and TV news media. More information about Media Tenor may be found at www.mediatenor.com.

2. Content from examined news broadcasts are analyzed at the statement level. All information given about a U.S. actor (such as the United States in general, U.S. Military, President Bush, etc.) is coded as a new individual statement. Each coded statement contains a person/institution, topic, valence rating, and source. If any part of a statement changes (i.e., topic, valence, etc.), a new statement segment is created and coded. Human coders who are native speakers of the statement’s original language conduct all statement coding. Inter-coder reliability is assessed and maintained at 90%. The valence rating for each statement is derived from the combination of context (when the content is embedded in positive or negative context) and explicit ratings (for example, when a journalist uses or cites words of clearly positive or negative judgment). The total number of coded statements for BBC was 6492, 3219 for TF1, 2799 for ARD Tagesthemen, 3693 for ZDF heute journal, 4250 for TVE1 Telediario, 3474 for Al-Jazeera, and 2525 for Al-Arabiya.

3. The Eurobarometer is an annual series of cross-national surveys sponsored by the European Commission. The TNS Opinion and Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe, conducted the Eurobarometer 64.2 between October 11th and November 15th, 2005. The survey covers the national population of each country, aged 15 years and over. The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each country, a number of sampling points are drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density. In order to do so, the sampling points were drawn systematically from each of the administrative regional units, after stratification by individual unit and type of area. They thus represent the whole territory of the countries surveyed according to the EUROSTAT NUTS II (or equivalent) and according to the distribution of the resident population of the respective nationalities in terms of metropolitan, urban and rural areas. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people’s homes and in the appropriate national language. A total of 1534 interviews were collected for Germany, 1009 for France, 1015 for Spain, and 1320 for United Kingdom. For each country a comparison between the sample and the universe was carried out. The universe description was derived from Eurostat population data or from national statistics offices. For all countries surveyed, a national weighting procedure, using marginal and intercellular weighting, was carried out based on this universe description. In all countries, gender, age, region, and size of locality were introduced in the iteration procedure. For more information on Eurobarometer survey series, see http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm.

4. Zogby International annually conducts a cross-national survey of Arab countries each October (this survey was conducted October 2005). Probability household sampling was employed within each country to produce representative national samples and interviews were conducted face-to-face by local interviewers. A total of 3617 surveys were completed across the
six countries with an overall response rate of 81%, and with some weighting applied. The following is a breakdown of the completed surveys, weighting, and margin of error for each country within the analysis.

a. 800 interviews conducted in Egypt, from Oct. 18-24, 2005 in Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor. Slight weights were applied to religion, age, and education to more accurately reflect the adult population. MOE +/- 3.5 percentage points. Response Rate: 86.6%

b. 500 interviews conducted in Jordan, from Oct. 15-23, 2005 in Amman, Irbid, and Al Zarqa. Slight weights were applied to religion, age, and education to more accurately reflect the adult population. MOE +/- 4.5 percentage points. Response Rate: 84.6%

c. 500 interviews conducted in Lebanon, from Oct. 15-21, 2005 in Beirut, Beqaa, Mountain Lebanon, North Lebanon, and South Lebanon. Slight weights were applied to religion, age, and education to more accurately reflect the adult population. MOE +/- 5.4 percentage points. Response Rate: 85.9%

d. 800 interviews conducted in Morocco, from Oct. 15-22, 2005 in Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakech, and Tangier. Slight weights were applied to age and education to more accurately reflect the adult population. MOE +/- 3.5 percentage points. Response Rate: 89.6%

e. 800 interviews conducted in Saudi Arabia, from Oct. 15-21, 2005 in Dammam, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Mecca. Slight weights were applied to education and gender to more accurately reflect the adult population. MOE +/- 3.5 percentage points. Response Rate: 87.9%

f. 217 interviews conducted in UAE, from Oct. 18-24, 2005 in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah. Slight weights were applied to religion, age, education, nationality, and city to more accurately reflect the adult population. MOE +/- 6.8 percentage points. Response Rate: 86.7%

Due to the nested sample design, employing mixed-models was examined as an analytical option to account for possible between-country variance and random effects. However, the random intercept-only models for each dependent variable in the analysis were not significant. Furthermore, since the hypotheses and analyses were focused on fixed-effects and did not include any examination of random effects or interactions between country-level and individual-level variables we decided to conduct an OLS regression and enter country-level dummy codes for ease of interpretation.

The measures of ideological and religious predispositions toward the United States were included in both analyses as important controls. The measures differed in each analysis based on available survey variables and differences within the political context of each region. In the European model, ideological orientation on a traditional Left/Right scale was included as a predisposition variable, while in the Pan-Arab model a measure of Muslim religiosity was included. In the European model, age is measured as a continuous variable with a respondent range of 15 to 98 years of age (M=46.2, SD=18.5). Gender is dummy coded with women coded high (51.9%). Education is measured by a continuous variable assessing at what age respondents stopped their formal education (M=17.5, SD=4.3). Ideological predisposition is measured on a 10-point scale from “Left” to “Right” (M=4.98, SD=1.8). In the Pan-Arab model, age was measured with a continuous variable with a respondent range of 18 to 93 years of age (M=35.4, SD=11.5). Education was measured on a six-point scale, ranging from elementary school and below to graduate studies, with the mean-level being secondary education (M=3.1, SD=1.23). Gender is dummy coded with women coded high (49.8%). Muslim religiosity was based on a six-point scale that asked respondents how important their religion was in their life, with zero coded for non-Muslims and five coded as “extremely important” for Muslims (M=4.2, SD=1.4).

General media use was assessed by two questions asking respondents how often they watched TV news or read the newspaper generally, both on a five-point scale ranging from “never” to “every day.” Respondents in each country were asked which television news channels they watched regularly (at least 5 times a week). A dummy variable was created where “1” meant that the station was regularly watched and “0” meant the station was not regularly watched. The frequency distribution for each channel was BBC1 (79.1%), BBC2, (47.3%), ARD (68.2%), ZDF (69.1%), TF1 (61.7%), and TVE1 (54.1%).

Pan-Arab TV exposure was assessed by employing a set of questions that asked each respondent how many days a week they watched each station on a five-point scale where zero meant “never” and four meant “every day.” On this measure, al-Jazeera had the highest mean score (M=2.2, SD=1.6) again followed by al-Arabiya (M=1.3, SD=1.6).

In the European analyses, two different indicators measuring evaluations of U.S. policy were created. The first combined two 3-point measures asking respondents whether the United States had a positive or negative, or neutral role regarding “peace in the world” and “fighting terrorism,” with the resulting measuring ranging from two to six (M=5.61 across all four countries). Recoded into 5-point scale from one to five, the mean scores for each country were United Kingdom (M=4.7, SD=1.6), Germany (M=3.6, SD=1.5), Spain (M=3.9, SD=1.3), and France (M=3.7, SD=1.4). The second measure assessed the U.S. impact on “economic growth worldwide,” “fighting poverty worldwide,” and “environmental protection” by again combining three 3-point indicators asking respondents whether the United States had a positive, negative, or neutral role.
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across all four countries. Recoded into a seven-point scale from one to seven, the mean score for country were United Kingdom (M = 4.8, SD = 2.0), Germany (M = 5.1, SD = 1.7), Spain (M = 5.3, SD = 2.0), and France (M = 5.6, SD = 1.6).

11. Combining measures of favorability, confidence, threat, and attributions/motivations assessed the Pan-Arab criterion measure. Favorability toward the United was a four point measure (very unfavorable, somewhat unfavorable, somewhat favorable, very favorable) that was reverse coded (M = 3.4, SD = 0.91). Confidence was assessed by a single item asking respondents how much confidence they had in the United States on a three-point scale ranging from “a lot confidence” to “no confidence” (M = 2.6, SD = 0.53). Perceived threat from the U.S. was a dichotomous variable based on a single item from the survey that asked respondents to name which two countries they believe pose the “biggest threat” to them. Respondents that mentioned the United States as one of the two countries were coded as “1” on a dichotomous measure of perceived threat (68.9%). The measure of perceived motivations was based upon a mix of positive and negative worded items on the survey that asked respondents how important (using a five-point scale ranging from “not important” to “very important”) different factors were to the United States: objectives in the Near East: a) controlling oil, b) protecting Israel, c) promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, d) spreading democracy, e) spreading human rights, f) desire to dominate the region, and g) weakening the Muslim world. Positive items (promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, spreading democracy, and spreading human rights) were reverse-coded and all seven items were combined into one additive index (M = 30.8, SD = 4.9, α = .81). All four component items, favorability, confidence, threat, and motivations were then standardized and combined into one additive index of negative evaluations of the United States (M = .11, SD = 3.11, α = .79).

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Images of Nations in the Eyes of American Educational Elites

Xiuli Wang, Pamela Shoemaker, Gang (Kevin) Han and E. Jordan Storm

This study examines the relationships among people’s perceptions of nations, their personal, and mediated experiences, and the nation’s deviance (an indicator of newsworthiness). Data were collected in a cross-sectional internet survey of 495 American educational elites’ opinions of 16 countries. Personal experiences, mediated experiences, and perceptions of countries’ deviance all predict American educational elites’ attitudes toward other countries. More positive personal experiences with a country and exposure to positive media content about the country lead to thinking the country is stronger and more favorable. However, the more American educational elites rate a country to be deviant, the less favorable and strong they perceive the country to be.

Keywords: deviance, personal experience, mass media, national image, public opinion

What do Americans think about other countries? Why does it matter? Why are other countries engaged in public relations networks to influence Americans’ images of their countries? National image is generally understood as public opinion about a country (Wang, 2003). It has one dimension which addresses the existing meaning held about a country by those from the outside, although people also continually define and revise the meaning of

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their own country. This study constrains the use of the term national image to the opinions of people in one country about another. Specifically, we look at American educational elites’ opinions about 16 other countries: Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Germany, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, North Korea, Russia, and South Africa.

Governments have become increasingly concerned with their nations’ images in the eyes of foreign publics (Dutta-Bergman, 2006; Kunczik, 1997; Kurlantzick, 2007). Global marketing studies have found that a country’s image is important not only in how consumers’ evaluate the country’s products but also in their intent to purchase these products. A negative image can cause considerable loss in foreign income, while a positive image is associated with evaluating countries more favorably and making more product purchases (Anholt, 2005; d’Astous & Ahmed, 1999; Han, 1990; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1996).

As a result of the increased importance of public opinion on foreign purchases, public opinion about countries has been shown to influence foreign policy (Holsti, 2004; Kolossov, 2003; Sobel, 2001). If Americans hold a negative image toward other countries, then U.S. foreign policy will probably be unfavorable toward the country, but the general public is not the only audience to be considered. In democratic countries political leaders constantly survey public attitudes to develop their policies relating to international issues (Holsti, 2004; Sobel, 2001). The Economist magazine correctly notes that public opinion is now an important tool legitimizing the use of force in international relations (Oh what a lovely war, 1999).

Governments want to know why their national image is bad and how they can improve it. Commercial or similar governmental survey research facilities are often called upon to measure a nation’s image in some countries and to discover what accounts for lower ratings. Because such organizations operationalize public opinion as the aggregate or sum of individuals’ opinions, it is reasonable to hypothesize that individuals’ experiences with countries can be expected to influence their opinions about that country.

We propose that two types of personal experiences are important — direct and mediated. Direct experiences include, for example, a person’s travel to the country for business or personal reasons, interactions with citizens of the country, speaking the country’s language, and even cooking regional foods. Mediated experiences are indirect experiences that generally come through the mass media. In fact, what most people know about other countries comes to them through the mass media, including both news and entertainment programming, regardless of whether the medium’s content is accurate.

The interaction between these direct and indirect experiences creates the person’s image of the country and his or her affective assessments of its level of deviance. We introduce deviance into the study because it has been shown to be an important determinant of news in countries around the world (Shoemaker, Danielian & Brendlinger, 1991; Shoemaker 1996; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). Ideas about a country’s deviance and hence newsworthiness are formed both for journalists and audience members from what they see in the news and entertainment programming and whatever personal contact they have had with the country.
and its people. We assume that mediated experiences are the usual material from which Americans form opinions about the deviance, favorability, and strength of other countries, since 98 percent of Americans do not travel outside of the U.S. When personal experiences exist, however, they can help Americans learn things about foreign countries that are not available by watching movies or news. The two types of personal experiences and perceptions of deviance combine to create second-level judgments about how favorable or strong a country is, favorability and strength being usual dimensions of national image (Boulding, 1959; Kunczik, 1997; Park, 2005; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004).

**Deviance**, as defined by Shoemaker and Cohen (2006), is a characteristic of people, ideas, events or organizations that sets them aside as different from others. Consistent with research by Shoemaker and her colleagues (Shoemaker, Chang & Brendlinger, 1987; Shoemaker, Danielian & Brendlinger, 1991), deviance is measured in three ways: Is the country lawful and normative? How stable is the status quo? How similar is the culture to mine? This study investigates these questions and others by measuring American educational elites’ perceptions of 16 other countries, providing practical implications for policy makers and public relations practitioners on how to improve national images.

**THEORY**

We build on the current literature with our theoretical rationale for the hypothesized effects that personal and mediated experiences can have on national images of countries. In addition, we outline the role that perceptions of a country’s deviance can play on Americans’ opinions about other countries.

**Image and National Image**

*Image* refers to an overall opinion or “the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others” (Dichter, 1985, p. 75). Often, researchers define an image as the sum of cognitive, affective, and evaluative attitudes people hold regarding an object, person, or organization (Boulding, 1956; Kotler & Andreasen, 1996; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). Kunczik (1997, p. 46) describes national image as “the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people.”

**Dimensions of national image.** Although a number of scholars have studied national images (e.g., Kunzcik, 1997 & 2000; Saleem, 2007; Wang, 2003), most study the effects of national images or the variables that shape it. Of the few studies that explore dimensions of national image, Boulding (1959) identifies two dimensions in the context of the international system: hostility vs. friendliness and strength vs. weakness. The former refers to the perceived favorability of a country as either friend or enemy determined by such factors as diplomatic relations, military allies, trade ties, and cultural proximity. Usually, perceptions
of hostility are mutual: when country A views country B as an enemy, it is likely that
country B also perceives country A as an enemy. In contrast, Boulding (1959) uses the
strong/weak dimension to signify perceived power, which is based on the country’s
economic resources, political system, military capacity, and cultural attractiveness.

Regarding national images in the mass media, Manheim and Albritton (1984) identify
two dimensions of media coverage of foreign nations — visibility and valence. Visibility
refers to the amount and prominence of media coverage a given country receives, whereas
valence is the affective nature of the content. The authors examined the public relations
efforts of several foreign countries that had negative images in the U.S. media. Hiring public
relations firms improved those countries’ images in the U.S. media by reducing the amount
of negative coverage and increasing the amount of positive coverage (Albritton & Manheim,

Campaigns have tried to shape national images since World War I when British,
German, and American propagandists tried to manipulate public opinion in their favor
(Kunczik, 1997). More recently, Manheim’s (1994) research showed that the public relations
campaigns of South Korea and Kuwait in late 1980s and early 1990s were successful in
changing public opinion toward the two countries among both ordinary Americans and
influential elites. Countries now commonly hire large public relations firms to help shape
public opinion and policy formation in the United States (Johnson, 2004; Lee, 2006; Wang,
2003).

Public diplomacy is the convergence of public relations and international relations and
is intended to promote national interests by influencing foreign publics and enhancing
mutual understanding (Leonard, Stead & Smewing, 2002; Tuch, 1990). Mass
communication, head-of-state visits, tourism, cultural, and educational exchange programs
are all instruments of public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2000; Kunczik, 1997; Manheim, 1994). The
intent is to shape favorable public attitudes toward a country’s culture, ideology or policy.

Working from an advertising and branding perspective, Simon Anholt (2007) coined the
phrase “nation branding” in 1996, indicating that countries, cities, and regions can build and
manage their brand images which he later calls “competitive identity.” Specifically, Anholt
(2007) proposes that most countries can create their images by using six natural channels:
tourism promotion, export brands, government policy decisions, investment, cultural
exchanges and activities, and the people of the country themselves.
Experiences with Foreign Countries

Experiences with countries can be both personal and mediated. Personal experiences occur when traveling to a country and through interpersonal communication with people from that country. In contrast, mediated experiences are the result of exposure to the mass media, both news and entertainment. Mediated experiences are important in shaping people’s perception of foreign nations (Kunczik, 1997) because the media provide most of the information that individuals use to evaluate countries.

Mediated experience. Americans who lack direct experience with foreign countries and their people form images of those countries based on information they receive from the mass media. This mediated experience with a country can be powerful. In his experiment, Smith (1973) found that a majority of U.S. respondents changed their original perceptions of the Soviet Union after exposure to a Radio Moscow story. This illustrates how vulnerable national images are, forever at the mercy of the mass media, whose news and entertainment content can quickly change the public’s perception of foreign countries.

Second-level agenda setting predicts that the salient aspects of entities in news texts determine which attributes the public links to them (McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Golan & Wanta, 2001), and this suggests that how the U.S. mass media cover a country influences what people think about the country. Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) found that exposure to negative media content about a foreign nation leads to negative views of the nation by respondents, whereas positive and neutral coverage did not show any effect. Willnat, Graf, and Brewer (2000) also argue that media coverage of international affairs shapes people’s judgment of foreign nations. For example, coverage of terrorism in Iran led viewers to perceive Iran on the basis of anti-terrorism. Similarly, drug coverage connected with Mexico and Colombia made participants judge the two countries from an anti-drug perspective.

A modified version of the cultivation paradigm also provides a useful explanation for the effects of mass communication on the public’s perception of foreign countries, differentiating between heavy and light media users. Cultivation theory posits that the mass media, by repeating themes, can cultivate common images or perceptions about the world among heavy users of the media (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986; Signorielli, 1987). This impact is most pronounced when people have limited personal experience with what they see and are therefore unable to confirm or reject the media’s view or representation of the world.

In their survey of U.S. media’s effect on attitudes toward Americans, Fullerton, Hamilton and Kendrick (2007) find that college students in Singapore who reported higher consumption of U.S. entertainment media such as movies, television shows, magazines, and music had a more positive attitude toward Americans, although the overall attitudes were still slightly negative. Similarly, after surveying over 1,300 teenagers in 12 countries, DeFleur and DeFleur (2003) propose that American entertainment media such as Hollywood
movies, television programs, and video games are a major cause of negative attitudes toward Americans, especially among Muslim teenagers.

Personal experience. Personal experience results when the person has direct contact with the country or people from it. This could include traveling for business and pleasure, visiting family, going to school, working in the country temporarily, or immigrating to the country, as well as by meeting and interacting with people from that country.

Studies suggest that people prefer to use personal experiences when making judgments, but that they will rely on the media when no personal experience exists (Hester & Gibson, 2003; Mutz, 1992). This is true for opinions toward foreign countries. When people have traveled, studied in foreign countries, or have interpersonal communication with friends or family members from those countries, their perceptions of those countries will largely relate to their personal experiences.

In his study of the mutual perception of Koreans and Japanese, Park (2005) found that Japanese students who have personal contacts with friends or relatives from South Korea tend to have a more positive perception of Korean culture than those without personal contacts. He suggests that friends and relatives from other countries help people understand foreign countries and their cultures. Seltiz, Christ, Havel, and Cook (1963) note that foreign students who have extensive and close social relations in the U.S. hold more favorable attitudes toward the United States.

Simon Anholt also notes that people’s first-hand experience of visiting the country as tourists or business travelers is often “the most important and most powerful” way in “branding” a nation (2007, p. 88). Personal experience may provide individuals with a more complete and sometimes quite different image of a country than the mass media provides.

Perceptions of Deviance

This study introduces the concept of deviance into the discussion of national image as an intervening variable between personal and mediated experiences and the images that people have about countries. Because most news is bad news, what Americans see about other countries in the news media is often negative (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). Viewing negative news stories results in people forming cognitive assessments of countries as deviant. By synthesizing biological and cultural evolution, Shoemaker (1982, 1984, 1996; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006) concludes that people pay attention to news items about deviant events, as humans are hard-wired to pay attention to anything deviant. As such, the more bad news people see about a country, the more deviant they will believe it to be and the less favorable and strong the countries’ national images are.

Three dimensions of deviance are important: normative, social change and statistical deviance. Normative deviance refers to a behavior, attitude or opinion that breaks norms, rules or laws (Shoemaker, 1984; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Wells, 1978). For example, at this writing 189 countries have signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Therefore news
coverage of North Korea’s nuclear arms program shows the country to be normatively
deviant within the international context.

*Social change deviance* refers to an idea, people or event that has the potential to
challenge the status quo of the social system, whether it is a city, region, country or
international in scope. For example, some people may see the transformation from
dictatorship to democracy in Iraq as a good thing but others may see it as a bad thing. Social
change deviance is often associated with an image of instability and weakness.

*Statistical deviance* occurs when an idea, person, or event is very different from the
average in the sense of being odd, unusual, or novel. People often judge a country’s
statistical deviance by comparing a country’s culture or political system to their own. For
example, a communist country might be viewed as statistically deviant when compared to
the political systems of the approximately 200 nations in the world.

**HYPOTHESES**

We propose hypotheses that test the relationships among national images, deviance, and
personal and mediated experiences. This set of hypotheses is tested twice — once for each
operationalization of the dependent variable, national image. The first is how *favorable*
and the second is how *strong* the country is perceived to be.

**H1:** Personal experiences influence how favorable (or strong) Americans think a country
is.

**H1a:** The more enjoyable Americans’ experiences in a country are, the more favorable (or
strong) they think the country is.

**H1b:** The more personal contacts Americans have with people from a country, the more
favorable (or strong) they think the country is.

**H2:** Mediated experiences influence how favorable (or strong) Americans think a country
is, even when controlling for their personal experiences.

**H2a:** The more attention Americans pay to *news* about a country, the more favorable (or
strong) they think a country is.

**H2b:** The more Americans are exposed to positive *news* about a country, the more favorable
(or strong) they think a country is.

**H2c:** The more attention Americans pay to *entertainment* content about a country, the more
favorable (or strong) they think a country is.

**H2d:** The more Americans are exposed to positive *entertainment* content about a country,
the more favorable (or strong) they think a country is.

**H3:** The more deviant Americans think a country is, the less favorable (or strong) they
think the country is, even when controlling for personal and mediated experiences.

This hypothesis is tested separately for normative, social change, and statistical deviance.
METHODS

To measure national images of foreign countries and identify the factors that may influence this public perception, an internet survey was conducted during late February and early March 2007.

Sampling

The target population in this study was American educational elites, specifically, communication faculty — communication because of their conveniently available e-mail addresses, and faculty because of their travel to and interaction with other countries. Although this strategy does result in a sample that is not representative of the general population, it does allow us to test the proposed relationships. In a general sample of American adults, only a few would have personal experiences with other countries, so none of our hypotheses using those variables could be tested. As it turned out, 91 percent of our respondents had been to at least one foreign country, 50 percent had traveled to at least 3 countries, and a few respondents had been to 10 out of the 16 countries in our study. In addition, 60 percent of the respondents had students from at least one out of the sixteen listed countries, 77 percent had foreign friends, and 71 percent had foreign colleagues at the time of the survey. In addition, communication faculty had frequent exposure to mass media coverage of the countries.

The study used two sample strategies to gather e-mail addresses from these individuals. The first was a systematic sample taken from the member directories of several communication and public opinion associations. Using a random starting point, every seventh e-mail address in the following directories was systematically selected: the International Communication Association, the World Association for Public Opinion Research, the National Communication Association, the American Association for Public Opinion Research, and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

To include faculty who were not members of these groups, we searched online university and college web sites. Communication, journalism, and media studies’ departments were identified, and their faculties’ e-mail addresses were collected.

To increase the sample size and to reach students, individuals from the sample were asked to forward the questionnaire to other faculty members and to their students. Although snowballing results in a non-probability sample and reduces the generalizability of the findings, studies have shown that associations among variables from probability and snowball samples are similar, with only slight differences in the strength of the relationships (Etter & Permeger, 2000; Shoemaker, Lee, & Han, 2005).

Internet Survey Procedure
Before the questionnaire was emailed to the sample, a pretest was conducted. After slight modifications, six waves of e-mails were sent out to 3,393 American communication faculty between late February and early March 2007 through a subscription site providing online survey software and services. The outcome was 495 American respondents, 383 from the e-mail list and 112 from the snowball strategy. The response rate for the list sample was approximately 11.3 percent. Previous research has shown that online survey response rates range from 6 to 19 percent (Tse et al., 1995; Schuldt & Totten, 1994). The response rate for the snowball sample could not be calculated.

Among the 495 respondents, about half were male. They were on average 47 years old and had 20 years of formal schooling. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents were university faculty and 22 percent were students. Eight out of ten identified themselves as affiliated with communication-related departments.

**Foreign Nations in the Survey**

The instrument was designed to gather public opinion on 16 countries, plus the U.S.: Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Germany, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, North Korea, Russia, South Africa, and the United States. Although no 16 countries can be said to represent the world, these countries do vary in terms of size, population, geographical location, religion, culture, economic status, and political system. Hypotheses were tested separately for each country.

**Variables and Measurement**

National image, the dependent variable, was measured as two dimensions — how favorable and strong respondents perceived the countries to be. Both used 7-point, bipolar scales (see Appendix for question wording and measurement). The questions are borrowed from the Gallup Poll’s annual survey of perceptions of foreign countries.

The independent variables included personal experience, mediated experience, and perceptions of deviance. Personal experience was measured by two sets of questions, representing overseas experience in foreign countries and personal contacts with foreign people. The former was measured as a multiplicative index of the amount of travel/study abroad experience by the level of enjoyment they had in the foreign country, while the latter is measured by an additive index of the amount of foreign personal contacts they have and how helpful those contacts are in their understanding of the country and its culture. The construction of the two indices considered both the quantity and the quality of personal experiences.

Mediated experiences with foreign countries were assessed by respondents’ exposure to both news and entertainment content about these countries on a 5-point Likert scale, according to the amount of attention paid to news or entertainment content about each
country as well as the perceived valence of the media content. The amount of attention was related to the availability of the media content and also the respondents’ decision whether to attend to that content or not.

The deviance of countries was based on three dimensions: statistical, normative, and social change deviance. Responses were calculated on a 7-point scale with 7 representing the most deviance.

TABLE 1 shows that Canada and Australia had the most favorable images among the countries American respondents rated, whereas North Korea, Iraq, and Iran have the most unfavorable images. China, Germany, and Japan were perceived the strongest, whereas Afghanistan and Iraq were the weakest. Afghanistan, Iraq, North Korea, and Iran were most different from the United States, while Canada and Australia were the most similar. Iraq and Afghanistan were perceived to be undergoing the most social changes, whereas North Korea, Iraq, and Iran were said to seldom follow international laws and norms. Canada, Australia, Germany, and Japan were viewed as the most stable and also as often following international laws and norms.

In terms of personal experiences with other countries, American educational elites travel and study the most in Canada, Mexico, and Germany, and they have the most personal contacts with people from Canada, China, Germany, and India. American respondents report paying moderate attention to the news about all of the countries, with slightly more attention to Iraq and Iran. News about Canada and Australia is considered the most positive, whereas news about North Korea, Iraq, and Iran is the most negative. Little attention is paid to entertainment content about the countries.

There are strong positive relationships (Table 2) between how favorable and strong a country is, except for Afghanistan, China, North Korea, and Russia, suggesting that Americans are likely to perceive a country as both favorable and strong or unfavorable and weak. In general, personal and mediated experiences (Table 3) are positively correlated with favorability and strength perceptions and negatively correlated with perceptions of deviance for nearly all the countries. Also, the more deviant a country is perceived to be, the less favorable and strong American educational elites rate it.
Table 1: Means and standard deviations for variables measuring Americans’ assessment of countries’ rational images, personal experiences with countries, perceptions of how deviant countries are and media use variables

<table>
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* Both favorability and strength were coded on a 7-point scale with 1=unfavorable, 7=favorable and 1=weak, 7=strong.
**Computed index of three variables. See appendix for details.
***Computed index of eight variables. See appendix for details.
****Responses were coded on a 7-point scale. Statistical deviance: 1=similar and 7=different; social change deviance: 1=stable and 7=changing; normative deviance: 1=always and 7=never
*****Responses were coded on a 5-point scale with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.
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a. $p \leq 0.05$; b. $p \leq 0.01$; c. $p \leq 0.001$
Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses, which allows the researcher(s) to decide the number and order of the predictors to enter into the equation. Usually, the order of entry is based on logical or theoretical considerations, and the predictor entered last is often the one that the researcher(s) are most interested in. Because people are more likely to rely on personal experience to make judgments when they are available, the two personal experiences indices were first entered into the equation, followed by mediated experiences and deviance perceptions.

Table 4 and 5 report the model fit indices ($R^2$ and $R^2$ change) and regression coefficients of the hierarchical analysis. Hypothesis 1 is only partially supported, as is shown in Model 1 of Table 5. Personal experiences was found to be significant in predicting Americans’ favorability toward most surveyed countries except for Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Japan, and Russia. Hypothesis 1a is supported for Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Germany, India, Iran, Mexico, and North Korea, suggesting that more enjoyable overseas experiences lead to more favorable perceptions; hypothesis 1b is supported for Germany, India, Iraq, Jordan, Mexico, North Korea, and South Africa with more personal contacts with foreign people resulting in more favorable perceptions.

Hypothesis 2 suggests that, when controlling for personal experiences, mediated experiences affect how favorable Americans perceive foreign countries to be. As is shown in Model 2 of Table 5, hypothesis 2 is supported across all 16 countries with mediated experiences explaining a large part of the variance in favorability ratings. Hypothesis 2a is partially supported for Israel and Jordan with more attention leading to more favorable perceptions. Hypothesis 2b is fully supported. For all countries, the more positive news Americans see about a country, the more favorable they are toward it. Hypothesis 2c is partially supported for Iran, Japan, and North Korea, and hypothesis 2d is partially supported for Jordan and North Korea, with more attention paid to and more positive exposure of entertainment content resulting in more favorable perception.

Hypothesis 3 examines the relationship between perceptions of deviance and favorability of foreign countries when controlling for personal and mediated experiences. The general deviance hypothesis is supported across all 16 countries but different dimensions of deviance are statistically significant for the countries. The negative regression coefficients shown in Model 3 of Table 5 indicate that perceptions of deviance are negatively correlated with Americans’ favorability toward the countries: The more deviant Americans perceive a country to be, the less favorable they are toward it. In countries such as Australia, Chile, Germany, India, and Iran, all three dimensions of deviance are related to favorability. Statistical and normative deviance predict Americans’ opinions toward Afghanistan, China, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, North Korea, and Russia, explaining up to over 30 percent of the variance. Normative deviance helps explain Americans’ perceptions of Japan and South Africa, and social change deviance does the same for Canada.
Table 4  \( R^2 \) change, total \( R^2 \) and adjusted \( R^2 \) for hierarchical least-squares regression analysis of personal experience, mediated experience, deviance on perception of country favorability

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Note: a.p ≤ .05; b.p ≤ .01; c.p ≤ .001

Table 5: Standardized Beta values for hierarchical least-squares regression analysis of personal experience, mediated experience, deviance on perception of country favorability

Independent variables:

1 = Overseas experience; 2 = Personal contacts with foreigners; 3 = Attention to foreign news; 4 = Valence of foreign news; 5 = Attention to entertainment content; 6 = Valence of entertainment content; 7 = Statistical deviance; 8 = Social change deviance; 9 = Normative deviance
When analyzing the perceived strength of foreign nations as the dependent variable, the results differ somewhat. Table 6 and 7 report the model fix index and regression coefficients of the hierarchical analysis. As Model 1 in Table 7 shows, personal experiences predict Americans’ perceptions of four foreign countries on the strong vs. weak spectrum. Hypothesis 1a is supported for Canada and Germany, with more enjoyable overseas experiences leading to stronger perception of the countries; while hypothesis 1b is supported for Australia and India, with more personal contacts resulting in perceptions of the countries as stronger.

When controlling for personal experiences, mediated experiences influence how strong Americans perceive foreign nations to be. This is true for most of our studied countries except North Korea, as shown in Model 2 of Table 7. Hypothesis 2a is supported for China, Israel, and Russia, indicating that more attention to news coverage about the two countries leads to a perception of the countries as stronger. Although the regression coefficient is statistically significant for Afghanistan, the negative sign reveals that the more Americans see news coverage of Afghanistan, the less strong they think it is. Hypothesis 2b is supported for Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, India, Iraq, Jordan, Mexico, and South Africa, with more positive news exposure leading to stronger perceptions of the countries. Hypothesis 2c is not supported for any of the countries. Although the regression coefficients are significant for China, Iraq, and Japan, the results are in the opposite direction hypothesized. Hypothesis 2d is supported for Chile, Iran, Israel, and Japan, with more positive entertainment exposure leading to stronger perceptions of the countries.

By controlling for personal and mediated experiences, perceptions of a country’s deviance predict the perceived strength for most of our countries, but not for Canada, Germany, Japan, Mexico, and North Korea. Hypothesis 3 is only partially supported, with deviance explaining less than 6 percent of the variance, as shown in Model 3 of Table 6. The negative regression coefficients in Model 3 of Table 7 show that the more deviant Americans rate the countries, the weaker they perceive them to be. Americans perceive Afghanistan, China, India, Jordan, and Mexico to be different from the United States, resulting in perceptions of those countries as weak. Perceptions of ongoing social change in Afghanistan, Chile, Iran, Iraq, and Israel also result in perceptions of those countries as weak. In addition, Americans judge the strength of Australia and India based on whether they follow the international laws and norms.

**DISCUSSION**

This study examines relationships among national image, deviance, and personal and mediated experiences using data from a cross-sectional internet survey of 495 American educational elites. Personal experiences, mediated experiences, and perceptions of deviance all predict how favorable or strong Americans perceive other countries to be.
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<th>R² change</th>
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Table 6: R² change, total R², and adjusted R² for hierarchical least-squares regression analysis of personal experience, mediated experience, deviation on perception of country strength.
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico (401)</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Korea (389)</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (393)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.16b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Africa (392)</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 = Overseas experience; 2 = Personal contacts with foreigners; 3 = Attention to foreign news; 4 = Valence of foreign news; 5 = Attention to entertainment content; 6 = Valence of entertainment content; 7 = Statistical deviance; 8 = Social change deviance; 9 = Normative deviance

a,p ≤ .05; b,p ≤ .01; c,p ≤ .001
For those countries Americans have more personal experiences with, these experiences exert significant influence on favorability and strength, as is shown for Canada, Australia, Germany, and India. This finding is consistent with previous studies that suggest people rely on personal experiences to make judgments whenever they can (e.g., Mutz, 1992). This is why place branding expert Simon Anholt (2007, p. 25) suggests that tourism promotion can be “the loudest voice” and the most effective way in branding a nation.

Mass media influence Americans’ perception of foreign countries, no matter how much personal experiences they have with the countries. In general, for those countries with which Americans have more personal experiences (such as Canada and China), mass media play a relatively small role in influencing the perceptions. This is in contrast with countries that Americans have fewer experiences (North Korea, Jordan, and Afghanistan).

Compared to the other three media indicators, the perceived valence of news as positive or negative is the most significant factor that influences Americans’ perception of foreign countries. However, the attention Americans paid to news and entertainment, and how positive or negative they rate entertainment content are less important and only show inconsistent effects. This finding is helpful in directing foreign countries’ public relations efforts in the United States. Countries’ public relations teams should focus not only on increasing news coverage about their countries but also on assuring that coverage of their countries is positive.

When controlling for personal and mediated experiences, Americans’ deviance perceptions of foreign countries still play an important role in their attitudes toward the countries, with countries rated as more deviant being seen less favorable and weaker. Americans have more positive attitudes toward those countries that are similar to their culture, and to more stable and cooperative countries. Interestingly, when Americans have more personal experience with some countries, deviance was found to be less of an important predictor of the country’s national image as is shown in the case of Canada, Japan, Germany, Mexico, and Australia. The opposite is true of those countries where Americans have less personal experience such as Iran, Iraq, Israel, and North Korea.

Although the three sets of independent variables — personal and mediated experience and deviance — are all significant predictors of national image, they are better predictors of perceptions of countries’ favorability than of their strength. This may be because favorability is a more subjective construct than strength. Whether we view a country as strong or weak may be based more on such objective criteria as economic and military power, whereas a judgment on favorability may be based more on emotional and affective connections. One bad travel experience to a country may make us dislike that country, but it does not necessarily make us perceive that country as weak.

Our use of communication faculty and students and non-probability sampling raises concern about the generalizability of the study findings. However, a comparison with the recent BBC’s global-spanning survey of national image (AP, 2007), which polls over 28,000 people in 27 countries, indicates that the two survey’s findings are similar. In both studies
Canada has the most positive image and Iran has one of the most negative images, not only for individuals in the United States but worldwide as well. These similarities boost the external validity of the results across nations and issues.

This study not only contributes to the current literature of national images, deviance, and public opinion, but it is also useful in the newly developed field of public diplomacy. In order to improve their national images, countries should focus more on building up their soft power, the ability to attract rather than coerce (Nye, 2004), by encouraging more intercultural communication and international exchanges through education, business, and tourism promotion.

As public opinion becomes more important in the formation of government policies, national images, and public diplomacy are attracting more attention from both government and academia. A content analysis of media coverage of countries should be conducted in future research to supplement the survey findings. The interaction between mediated and personal experiences also needs to be further evaluated. As travel and tourism advertising are playing an increasingly important role in nation branding (Anholt, 2005; Anholt, 2007), future studies should include advertising as a new variable in addition to news and entertainment.

**APPENDIX**

**Question Wording and Variables Measurement**

**National image**

In your opinion, how favorable or unfavorable are these countries?  Unfavorable 1 to 7 Favorable
In your opinion, how weak or strong are these countries?  Weak 1 to 7 Strong

**Personal experience**

Have you ever traveled to the following countries? (a list of 17 countries) Yes=1, No=0
Have you ever studied in the following countries? (a list of 17 countries) Yes=1, No=0
How much have you enjoyed visiting these countries?  Not at all 1 to 7 Enjoyed a lot
Do you have family members from the following countries? Yes=1, No=0
Do you have friends from the following countries? Yes=1, No=0
Do you have colleagues from the following countries? Yes=1, No=0
Do you have students from the following countries? Yes=1, No=0
My family members in these countries have helped me understand the country and its culture.
  Strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree
My friends in these countries have helped me understand their country and its culture.
  Strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree
My colleagues in these countries have helped me understand their country and its culture.
  Strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree
My students from these countries have helped me understand their country and its culture.
  Strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree

**Overseas experience** = (Q3+Q4) * Q5

**Personal contacts with foreigners** = Q6*Q10 + Q7*Q11 + Q8*Q12 + Q9*Q13

**Mediated experience**

I pay attention to news about this country. (a list of 17 countries)
  Strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree
The news I get about this country is primarily positive. (a list of 17 countries)
  Strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree
I pay attention to entertainment content about this country. (a list of 17 countries)
Strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree
Entertainment content about this country is primarily positive. (a list of 17 countries)
Strongly disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree

Deviance

Statistical deviance
Thinking of your own country’s culture, how similar to or different from yours are these countries’ cultures?
Similar 1 to 7 Different

Social change deviance
In your opinion, are these countries stable or changing? Stable 1 to 7 Changing

Normative deviance
In your opinion, to what extent do these countries follow international laws and norms? Always 1 to 7 Never

REFERENCES


Xiulu Wang et al.

Images of Nations in the Eyes of American Educational Elites


INVESTIGATING EFFECTS OF IDENTIFICATION WITH REAL-WORLD AGGRESSORS AND VICTIMS ON THE LINK BETWEEN EXPOSURE TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE NEWS MEDIA AND AGGRESSIVE WORLDVIEWS

Adrienne McFaul, Paul Boxer and Andrew M. Terranova

Research on the effects of exposure to media violence largely has focused on fictional portrayals of violence. This study explored relations between exposure to violent news media stories (i.e., “real world” violence) and aggressive behavior and beliefs. Self-reports of exposure to violence in the news, aggression-supporting beliefs, aggressive behavior, and identification with the actors portrayed in violent news were obtained for 300 individuals. Exposure to violent television news about U.S. Urban and Israeli/Palestinian conflict, identification with actors portrayed in violent news, and identification with specific ethnic groups were related positively to “mean world” beliefs. The evidence suggests that exposure to violent television news is related to certain aggression-supporting beliefs, and discusses the importance of incorporating “real world” violence into research on violent media effects on behavior and cognition.

Keywords: aggression, identification, news media, political violence, media violence

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People in the United States watch a substantial amount of television. For example, adults spend approximately 30 hours per week watching television (Nielsen, 1998; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), and roughly twenty-five percent of U.S. teenagers watch four hours of television or more each day (YRBS, 1999). Television programming often contains fictional violent content (National Television Violence Study, 1998). Exposure to fictional television violence is associated with aggressive cognitions and behaviors (Anderson et al., 2003; Bushman & Huesmann, 2006). With the advent of 24-hour news stations, exposure to news and issues of the day is a growing part of television programming with approximately 50% of people reporting they view television news each day (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2004). Similar to fictional television programming, news programs often feature segments on crime and violence (Gerbner, 1996). Yet little research has examined if the typical impact of fictional television violence on aggressive cognitions and behaviors generalizes to televised news reports of “real” crime and violence. The current investigation addresses this limitation by examining associations between news media consumption and aggressive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) has guided much research exploring the effects of media exposure. According to social learning theory, the self-regulation of behavior is guided by the activation of internalized rules of behavior, which include behavioral scripts and schemas as well as biases and beliefs (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). One important way that individuals acquire these internal cognitive structures is through the observation of others, including family, friends, and media characters. Schemas about a hostile world and normative beliefs about aggression are especially important to the long-term effects of violent media exposure (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001; Huesmann, 1998).

Experimental and longitudinal research guided by social learning theory indicates a causal link between exposure to fictionalized depictions of media violence (i.e., television, movies, and video games) and increases in aggressive cognitions and behaviors, as well as decreases in pro-social cognitions and behaviors (Anderson et al., 2003; Paik & Comstock, 1994). Laboratory experiments, for instance, have found short-term increases in aggressive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors following exposure to media violence (Bjorkqvist, 1985; Bushman, 1998; Anderson, 1997). Field experiments have also demonstrated a link between exposure to aggressive media and aggressive behavior (Berkowitz, 1993; Leyens, Camino, Parke & Berkowitz, 1975; Parke, Berkowitz, Leyens, West & Sebastian, 1977). Longitudinal studies have shown long-term effects of exposure to media violence in childhood on aggressive behavior in adulthood (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003; Johnson et al., 2002).

Additionally, some factors impact the direct link between fictional media violence and aggressive-supporting attitudes and aggressive behaviors. Identification with violent media characters and perceived realism of media violence are two factors that may exacerbate the negative outcomes of violent media consumption. Huesmann and colleagues (2003) found
that exposure to violent media tends to be more strongly related to aggressive-supporting attitudes and aggressive behaviors when the violent media is perceived as more realistic and that perceived realism of media violence may be a predictor of later aggression. Identification with the aggressor in violent media also moderates the effects of violent media exposure on aggressive outcomes (Bandura, 2002; Chory-Assad & Cicchirillo, 2005). Greater identification with aggressive media figures increases the risk for aggressive-supporting attitudes and aggressive behaviors (Huesmann et al., 2003). Huesmann and Eron also (1986) found identification with violent media characters to be associated with aggression in children.

Research and theory about the effects of exposure to media violence has largely focused on fictionalized portrayals of violence. Television news programs, however, also frequently present accounts of violent and aggressive acts (Center for Media and Public Affairs, 2000; Gerbner, 1996; Johnson, 1996). Content analyses have revealed that reports of violence and crime dominate news programs (Dominick, Wurtzel & Lometti, 1974; Dorfman et al., 1997; Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991). There is evidence that factual news reports also influence people’s more general attitudes and behaviors. For example, news media consumption is related to negative minority stereotypes (Dixon & Maddox, 2005), negative perceptions of the mentally ill (Diefenbach & West, 2007), misperceptions of juvenile crime (Goidel, Freeman, & Procopio, 2006), estimates of crime victimization risks (Shrum and Bischak, 2001), and greater support for the punishment rather than the prevention of crime (Trautman, 2004). Research has also shown that exposure to news reports of crime affects children’s (Cantor, 1998; Cantor et al., 2001; Smith & Moyer-Guse, 2006) and adult’s (Gerbner, 1996; Gross and Aday, 2003; Romer et al., 2003; Smolej & Kivivuori, 2006) fear of crime, fear of violence and estimates of crime rates. Gerbner and colleagues (1978) found that exposure to crime-related programming, including crime reporting, was related to owning a dog or a gun for protection.

Reports of war, political violence, and ethnic conflict also are characteristic of television news reports. Previous research has explored the effects of exposure to television news reporting about war and political violence on attitudes, beliefs, and mental health outcomes. Nisbet and colleagues (2004) found exposure to television news to be related to anti-American beliefs in Muslim countries. Television news viewing in the weeks following September 11, 2001 was associated with college student’s negativity towards Islamic peers (Lett, DiPietro & Johnson, 2004). Exposure to television news about war or terrorist attacks has been found to be associated with increased post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in individuals affected by the Gulf War (Nader et al., 1993), the Oklahoma City bombing (Pfefferbaum et al., 1999), and the September 11th attacks (Ahern et al., 2002).

Though there is clearly a link between news media exposure and attitudes and behaviors more generally, less is known about the relation between exposure to news reports of local and international violence with aggression supporting attitudes and beliefs more specifically. To address this gap, the current study examined the relations between exposure to violence
in the local and international news media and aggression-supporting beliefs. Based on the assertions of social learning theory, it is likely that the processes that lead to aggressive supporting beliefs and aggressive behaviors in people exposed to fictional violent media generalize to factual news reports of violence (Bandura, 1977; Gerbner et al., 2002; van der Molen, 2004). It seems even more likely that factual news reports of violence will relate to aggressive beliefs and behaviors given that greater perceived realism of violent fictional media tends to be associated with aggression (Huesmann et al., 2003). In this study, we explored the hypothesis that exposure to violent news media will be related to aggression-supporting beliefs. We also considered the extent to which identification with the actors portrayed in violent conflict in the news media moderated the relation between news media exposure and aggression-supporting beliefs.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Participants in this investigation were undergraduate students (N = 300; 67% female; M age = 20.4 years) at a medium-sized state university in the southeast. Females are overrepresented in the current sample, as females comprised approximately 55% of this student population during the time of the study. Participants were 55% Caucasian, 25% African American, 8% Asian, 6% Hispanic, and 6% of other ethnic backgrounds. All participants were enrolled in introductory-level courses in psychology and completed surveys in order to receive course credit for participation in research activities.

**Measures**

*General consumption of news media.* Participants indicated the frequency (0 = never ..., 4 = more than once a day on most days) with which they consume five different forms of news media (local television news channels, national television news channels, radio news, internet news websites, local newspapers), e.g., “How often do you listen to news reports on the radio?” A composite score was computed by taking the mean of the five items (á = .64).

*Exposure to violence in the news media.* Participants indicated the frequency (0 = never ..., 4 = every day) with which they typically have been exposed to news reports about a variety of violent national (urban violence, 2 reports) and international (Iraq war, 3 reports; Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 3 reports) events. For each event, participants rated separately their frequency of exposure via television and via “internet, newspaper, or radio.” Composite scores were created by calculating the mean of items to reflect total exposure across all media (á = .91; 16 items), via television (á = .87; 8 items), and via other media (á = .87; 8 items). Mean composites also were computed separately for exposure to stories about U.S. urban violence (total á = .74, television á = .62, other media á = .67), Iraq war violence (total
á = .84, television á = .76, other á = .75), and Israeli-Palestinian violence (total á = .87, television á = .83, other á = .81).

Identification with actors in incidents of political and ethnic violence. Following the conceptualization of identification with actors in media portrayals advanced by Huesmann and Eron (1986), we presented participants with eight brief descriptions of incidents involving American/Iraqi and Israeli/Palestinian political/ethnic violence they might see on television (e.g., “Suppose you saw this on television: American soldiers shooting at Iraqis”). After each description, participants responded to two questions concerning the extent to which they identified with the aggressive actors in the incident (“How often have you imagined what it would be like to be an American soldier in that situation?” “How right or wrong do you think the American soldiers are in that situation?”) and one question concerning the extent to which they identified with the victim in the incident (“How often have you imagined what it would be like to be an Iraqi in that situation?”). Questions asking about the frequency of “imagining what it would be like” used a 4-point scale with responses ranging from 0 = never to 3 = many times; questions about “how right or wrong” used a 4 point scale ranging from 1 = really wrong to 4 = perfectly right.

From all of those responses we computed two sets of composite variables: 1) Identification with aggressors (8 items; á = .84) and victims (8 items; á = .91). These scores were calculated across the entire set of incident descriptions regardless of the ethnicity/nationality of the actors involved in the incidents. 2) Identification with Americans (6 items; á = .83), Iraqis (6 items; á = .81), Israelis (6 items; á = .77), and Palestinians (6 items; á = .79). These scores were calculated across each subset of questions concerning specific ethnicities/nationalities regardless of the aggressor/victim status of the actors described.

Aggression-supporting beliefs. We used two measures of aggressive cognition to assess aggression-supporting beliefs: 1) Participants completed Huesmann and Guerra’s (1997) Normative Beliefs about Aggression Scale (NOBAGS). Although the NOBAGS was established initially for use with children and adolescents, studies with adults have confirmed its reliability (alphas) and validity (positive correlations with aggression). The NOBAGS requires respondents to indicate the extent to which they approve or disapprove of aggression generally (e.g., “In general, it is wrong to hit other people”) and as retaliation to various provocations (e.g., “Suppose a young man hits a young woman. Do you think it’s OK for the woman to hit him back?”). In this study, internal reliability for the 20-item NOBAGS total score was good (á = .86); we created a composite score from the mean of all items. 2) Participants also completed a 7-item scale measuring “mean world beliefs” based on Zelli’s (1992) persecution beliefs questionnaire. The original scale asked respondents to indicate their agreement with statements indicating a general persecutory orientation to the world (e.g., “everyone is out to get me;” “people want to be mean to me”). The modified version used in this study changed the wording item by item to gauge respondents’ perceptions of the world as a mean, hostile place; for example, “people are usually out to get each other,”
“people generally want to be mean to each other.” Responses were made on a 4-point scale ranging from “never” to “frequently.” We created a composite from the mean of the 7 items (α = .89).

**Aggressive behavior.** Participants completed Buss and Perry’s (1995) Aggression Questionnaire (AQ), a widely used and well-established measure of trait aggressiveness for adults. The AQ comprises two subscales, one indicating physically aggressive tendencies (9 items; e.g., “If someone hits me, I hit back”; α = .81) and one indicating verbally aggressive tendencies (5 items; e.g., “I have threatened people I know”; α = .69). Responses were made to the various statements on a 5-point scale ranging from “very much like me” to “very much unlike me.”

**Procedures**

All procedures were reviewed and approved by the institutional review board of the university where the study was conducted. Surveys were completed during class periods of several different introductory and 200-level psychology courses. In each instance, a research assistant or the first author described the purpose of the study and provided a general overview of the survey. Participants reviewed and signed a consent statement, which then was removed from survey packets to ensure anonymity. Surveys typically took about 30 minutes to complete. For completing the survey, participants received extra credit for research participation from their instructors and were entered into a lottery drawing for university bookstore gift certificates.

**RESULTS**

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and ranges for all study measures separately by sex. Independent samples t-tests revealed females reported greater exposure to news reports about urban U.S. violence. Males reported greater identification with aggressive actors, normative beliefs about aggression, and aggressive behavior. To examine our hypotheses regarding the relations between exposure to news media violence and aggression-supporting beliefs, we computed a series of ordinary least squares hierarchical regression analyses for two outcome variables: normative beliefs about aggression and mean world beliefs. In each regression analysis, we included sex and age along with Buss-Perry physical and verbal aggression scores as control variables in step 1. For each outcome
variable, we computed separate analyses to ascertain which news media content (i.e., total, U.S./Iraq conflict, Israel/Palestine conflict, U.S. urban violence) and format (i.e., total, television only, newspaper/radio/internet) accounted significantly for variance in the

\[ \text{TABLE 1} \]

\textbf{DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND SEX DIFFERENCES ON STUDY VARIABLES}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>\textbf{Males}</th>
<th>\textbf{Females}</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>\textit{M (SD)}</td>
<td>\textit{Range}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total exposure to news media</td>
<td>1.49 (.78)</td>
<td>0-3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total exposure to violent news</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All media</td>
<td>1.51 (.63)</td>
<td>.2-3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On television</td>
<td>1.66 (.76)</td>
<td>0-3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via newspaper/radio/internet</td>
<td>1.35 (.73)</td>
<td>0-3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to U.S./Iraq conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All media</td>
<td>1.58 (.77)</td>
<td>.2-4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On television</td>
<td>1.68 (.89)</td>
<td>0-4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via newspaper/radio/internet</td>
<td>1.49 (.84)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exposure to Israel/Palestine conflict</td>
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<td>All media</td>
<td>1.19 (.72)</td>
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<tr>
<td>On television</td>
<td>1.34 (.85)</td>
<td>0-4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Via newspaper/radio/internet</td>
<td>1.05 (.82)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exposure to U.S. urban violence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>All media</td>
<td>1.74 (.81)</td>
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<tr>
<td>On television</td>
<td>1.97 (.92)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Via newspaper/radio/internet</td>
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<td>0-4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with aggressive actors</td>
<td>1.35 (.52)</td>
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<td>Identification with victimized actors</td>
<td>1.03 (.84)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with American actors</td>
<td>1.59 (.89)</td>
<td>0-3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with Iraqi actors</td>
<td>1.07 (.76)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification with Israeli actors</td>
<td>.99 (.69)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with Palestinian actors</td>
<td>1.09 (.76)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Normative beliefs about aggression</td>
<td>1.94 (.38)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean world beliefs</td>
<td>2.62 (.64)</td>
<td>1.0-4.0</td>
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<td>Buss-Perry physical aggression</td>
<td>2.63 (.80)</td>
<td>1.1-4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buss-Perry verbal aggression</td>
<td>3.50 (.73)</td>
<td>1.8-5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Sex difference is significant at \( p < .01 \).
outcome variables prior to executing any moderator analyses. These initial results indicated that although total exposure to violent news stories (all content) was predictive of aggression-supporting beliefs, this relation was observed consistently only for mean world beliefs, and accounted for largely by exposure to stories on television about Israeli/Palestinian conflict and U.S. urban violence. Thus, Table 2 displays the results of the regressions predicting normative beliefs and mean world beliefs from the control variables as well as total news media consumption and exposure only using television stories about the three content types.

Our second set of analyses considered the extent to which identification with the actors involved in ethnic and political violence moderated relations between exposure to news media violence and aggression-supporting beliefs. These analyses included all of the variables presented in Table 2 along with the variables indicating identification with various actors in the ethnic-political conflicts (i.e., identification with aggressors or victims; identification with Americans, Iraqis, Israelis, or Palestinians). For these analyses we utilized the centered variables indicating exposure to televised news violence along with the control variables listed above (Holmbeck, 2002). We computed two sets of regression models examining separately the variables indicating identification with aggressors and victims, and the variables indicating identification with Americans, Iraqis, Israelis, and Palestinians.

We observed no moderating effects of identification with aggressors or victims on associations between the various types of news media exposure and the outcome variables of mean world beliefs and normative beliefs. However, main effects were apparent for identification with aggressors (β = .14, p < .05) and with victims (β = .16, p < .01) on mean world beliefs. We observed a generally similar set of effects for the variables indicating identification with various ethnic/national groups. Greater identification with Palestinians (β = .17, p < .01), Israelis (β = .15, p < .05), and Iraqis (β = .17, p < .01) was linked to higher levels of mean world beliefs.

We did observe a significant interaction effect on normative beliefs for identification with Israelis and exposure to TV news stories about conflict and violence between Americans and Iraqis (β = -.17, p < .05). Post-hoc probing of this interaction (Holmbeck, 2002) revealed an interesting effect for identification with Israelis. At high levels of identification, there essentially was no effect of exposure to TV news stories about American-Iraqi conflict on normative beliefs (β = .07, ns). However, at low levels of identification, there was an inverse effect of exposure on normative beliefs (β = -.25, p < .05). Greater exposure to news stories on TV about the American-Iraqi conflict was associated with less approving beliefs about the use of aggression under conditions of low identification with Israelis.
DISCUSSION

This study examined the association between exposure to violent news media and aggression-supporting beliefs in the context of trait aggressiveness. We observed that televised news about Israeli/Palestinian or U.S. urban violence was associated with some aggressive supporting beliefs (i.e., higher mean world beliefs). The findings also indicated that identification with the aggressors and victims in violent news stories was related to greater mean world beliefs, and identification with specific ethnic groups (i.e., Palestinians, Israelis, and Iraqis) was also associated with meaner world beliefs. Finally, though news reports did not add to the prediction of attitudes toward aggression, this lack of association was dependent on whether the participants identified with Israelis. For individuals less-identified with Israelis, high exposure to TV coverage of American/Iraqi conflict was associated with low approval of aggression. For individuals highly identified with Israelis, no relation was obtained between exposure to TV coverage of American/Iraqi conflict and...
approval of aggression. In general, our findings regarding the relation between violent news media consumption and aggression-supporting beliefs were significant yet small.

Consistent with our hypotheses, exposure to televised news media portraying U.S. urban and Israeli/Palestinian violence and conflict is related to mean world beliefs (Gerbner et al., 2002). The finding that greater identification with aggressors and victims portrayed in the news media is associated with greater mean world beliefs is consistent with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) as well as the work of Huesmann and colleagues (2003), which highlights the importance of identification with aggressive media characters in the development and maintenance of aggressive beliefs and behavior. Also consistent with social learning theory is the finding that greater identification with Palestinians, Israelis, and Iraqis portrayed in violent news media is associated with greater mean world beliefs. Conspicuously absent from this list of variables is identification with Americans portrayed in violent news media. Because the vast majority of participants are assumed to identify themselves at least partially as “American,” it is not necessarily surprising that identification with actors of the same nationality is not related to aggressive beliefs.

Findings from the current study are also consistent with predictions from cultivation theory regarding second-order effects (Potter, 1991). Cultivation theory suggests that greater exposure to television will result in perceptions of social reality that increasingly resemble the social world portrayed on television (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorelli & Shanahan, 2002; Signorielli & Morgan, 2001). According to cultivation theory, because television programming depicts aggressive and other anti-social behaviors at high rates, heavy television viewers will come to hold mean world beliefs (Gerbner et al., 1980). Our finding that exposure to news about Palestinian/Israeli and urban conflict is predictive of mean world beliefs supports cultivation views on the relation between consumption of violent media and attitudinal measures.

It is notable that exposure to violent televised news, in contrast to print and radio news, largely accounts for the relation between mean world beliefs and exposure to violent news media. The concept of modeling, in which learning is facilitated through the observation of the behaviors of others (Bandura, 2006), is important to understanding televised media’s influence on behavior. The disparity between the relation of different media to mean world beliefs can be understood as in part due to television’s visual presentation of human action allowing opportunities for modeling not found in print or radio media.

We also found that identification with Israelis influenced the relation between exposure to news stories about American/Iraqi conflict and normative beliefs about aggression. Overall, exposure to news reports regarding the American/Iraq conflict was unrelated to normative beliefs about aggression, but this lack of an association was true only for participants who tended to identify with Israelis. As identification with Israelis decreased, news exposure to the conflict was unexpectedly associated with less approving attitudes toward aggression. This is inconsistent with the literature on the role of identification with actors in fictional violent media on aggressive supporting beliefs, which generally suggests
that greater exposure and identification are related to greater aggressive supporting beliefs. However, differences in the ways fictional and news media are conceptualized in research may clarify this effect.

Typically in research with fictionalized violence, participants report how much they identify with the aggressors and victims directly portrayed in violent media (see, e.g., Huesmann & Eron, 1986). The extant literature on identification with fictional media characters does not address how complex social relationships may be related to aggression-supporting beliefs (e.g., viewers' identification with the cousin of a victim). In contrast, the relationships between individuals and nations in the real world are much more complex than simple binary relations. As these real world relationships become more complex, other characteristics of the viewer, media, and event may begin to effect the relations between identification with the actors portrayed in conflict and beliefs about aggression. The complex contexts of factual reports of violence, particularly political conflicts, should be considered in future research. At the same time, recent research has produced more predictable effects of identification with particular ethnic/regional actors in ethnopolitical violence on links between news media consumption and aggressive cognitive biases (Dubow et al., 2007). Thus, the possibility that our unexpected interaction accrued from unique properties of our sample or measurement cannot be ruled out.

In general, the findings of this study are in accordance with previous research which has examined the relation between fictional depictions of media violence and aggression-supporting beliefs. It seems that exposure to violent news media tends to be associated with greater aggression-supporting beliefs, especially mean world beliefs. These findings indicate that aggression-supporting beliefs are not only related to fictional violent media exposure and identification with violent fictional media characters, but they may also be related to non-fictional media. Unique to news media violence effects may be the importance of nationality and real-world allegiances in understanding the effects of exposure. The concordance between the nationality of the individuals portrayed in violent news reports and the nationality of viewers probably is important in understanding the effects of news media violence exposure, and should be explored in further.

The current study possesses several limitations that must be considered when interpreting the findings. We relied on a cross-sectional design, which limits the inferences that can be made about the direction of relations between variables. The gender disparity as well as the use of a college sample also limits the generalizability of the findings. Caution should be exercised in extrapolating the implication of these findings to divergent populations. Additionally, the current study relied on self-reported measures of aggression, which may lead to the under-reporting of aggressive behaviors and attenuate relations among variables. Also, indices of reliability for the general news consumption scale, the subscale of exposure to news stories about U.S. urban violence, and the verbal aggression subscale of the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire were less than optimal. Following guidelines suggested by Wilkinson & The Task Force on Statistical Inference (1999), we expect that
the reliability of these scales may be low due to characteristics of our college convenience sample.

The findings of the current study imply that the news media might be related in salient ways to aggression-supporting beliefs not only about members of one’s own country, but spanning the global community. Given the exploratory nature of this study, additional research is needed to understand potentially complex relations between identification with aggressors and victims across the world, exposure to media violence, and aggressive beliefs and behaviors. Future studies may benefit by parsing identification with aggressors/victims of particular nationalities and identification with a country’s national culture. Future studies would benefit from supplementing or replacing self-report measures of media exposure with potentially more objective indicators such as questions about total hours of news media consumption paired with content analyses of recent broadcasts. Future research is also needed in order to determine the directionality of the detected relations between aggression-supporting beliefs and news media viewing variables.

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FRAMING THE OLYMPIC GAMES: IMPACT OF AMERICAN TELEVISION COVERAGE ON ATTITUDES TOWARD INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND FOREIGN POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

CAROLINE WALTERS AND SHEILA MURPHY

The official mission of the Olympic Games is to utilize sport for the promotion of peace and mutual understanding among the nations of the world. This laudable goal, aided by the ability of the Games to attract an unparalleled global audience, makes the Olympics one of the most powerful and influential public diplomacy tools of our time. Unfortunately, such a tool may be undercut by the tendency of the American media to portray the Games as a competitive and nationalistic spectacle. This research examines the role that domestic television coverage plays in framing the Olympic Games and the impact divergent frames may have on viewers. Results suggest that television coverage which frames the Olympic Games in nationalistic terms may actually serve to reinforce divisiveness and international rivalry, while coverage framed in more international terms may promote the Olympic mission.

Keywords: framing, Olympics, sport, diplomacy, television

The modern Olympic Games are perhaps the single most recognized media event capturing the attention of the global community on a recurring basis. In fact, the Games have claimed such a prominent place on the world’s calendar that approximately one of every two

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people in the world watch the Olympics on television, and it is broadcast in more countries than any other event (Emerson & Perse, 1995; Tomlinson, 1996). In the United States, viewership is even higher. According to Nielsen (2006), over 81% of all U.S. households saw all or part of the 2006 Torino Olympics, making them the 8th most viewed event in U.S. television history. Given such pervasiveness, the symbolic themes which accompany the televised presentation of the Olympics have the potential to influence the opinions of a substantial segment of the world population.

But what are these themes? When Pierre de Coubertin re-established the ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic Games in 1896, his stated goal was for the Olympic Movement to “contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind… with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play” (International Olympic Committee, 2007). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has continued to officially endorse this mission and has also promoted the concept of the Olympic Truce, which encourages all participating countries to lay down their weapons during the Games in an effort to create a window for dialogue, reconciliation, and diplomatic conflict resolution. Such high-minded objectives were echoed at the Olympic Winter Games in November 2001 by IOC President Dr. Jacques Rogge when he stated, “The IOC wishes that this peaceful gathering of all Olympic athletes in Salt Lake City will inspire peace in the world” (International Olympic Committee, 2007).

However, this concept of the Olympics as a promoter of international dialogue and world peace has been hotly contested by several Olympic scholars, who note that de Coubertin’s establishment of the Games was at least partly motivated by his desire to find a way for France to reassert its national power after losing the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Indeed, demonstrations of nationalistic and political strength can still be found in the Olympic Movement today. As Toohey and Veal (2000) state:

The overtly political organizational structure and rituals of the Games themselves exacerbate the event’s political construction. They draw upon and provide symbolic capital to various interest groups, despite the fact that the rhetoric and philosophy of the IOC suggest the opposite… When, during the Olympic medal ceremonies, national anthems are played and the flag of the victors’ countries are raised, when team sports are organized on national lines and, during the Opening Ceremony athletes march into the stadium nation by nation, these practices are overtly creating nationalistic tensions, self-regard, and rivalries. (p. 97-99).

Thus, it could be argued that despite the IOC’s stated desire to contribute to productive international dialogue and peaceful coexistence, the Olympics actually serve as more of a vehicle for displays of cultural and political dominance.

Putting this debate aside, international sporting events like the Olympics can indeed open up a conversational space for nations that are having trouble engaging one another in a positive or constructive way, thus making sports a powerful tool for international diplomacy. While sports are “not a cure for animosities and conflicts that have existed for 50 years,”
scholars have suggested that the “success of the likes of Michael Jordan, Mark McGwire, Jesse Owens, or Pelé can have positive effects beyond the playing field, onto the political chessboard” (Goldberg, 2000, p. 69). Tomlinson (1996), for example, notes that at the opening ceremony of the 1992 Olympics, nations from the former Soviet Union paraded independently from Russia and 107 athletes from Kuwait and Iraq marched only nine nations apart. Likewise, athletes from both North Korea and South Korea marched under one flag at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics in 2000. This “harmonizing symbolism,” as Tomlinson calls it, has the potential to be a powerfully motivating force.

Unfortunately, the ideals of the Olympic Games have been repeatedly hijacked by various governments, organizations, and athletes in order to advance their own agendas — often at the expense of world peace and camaraderie. The use of the Games as a political tool largely began with Hitler’s reinforcement of Aryan superiority at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. This was followed by the performance of the black power salute by Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, the Israeli hostage crisis of the 1972 Munich Olympics, and the Cold War boycotting of both the 1980 and 1984 Olympics in Moscow and Los Angeles, respectively. The Games have also been used as an indicator of acceptance into the Western, capitalized world. The 1964 Tokyo Olympics and the 1988 Seoul Olympics were framed as Japan and Korea’s entry into the elite halls of international power, and this same tactic was also utilized by China’s Olympic Organizing Committee for the 2008 Summer Games. Ironically, the motives of those who coordinate and participate in the Olympic Games often run counter to the goals of the IOC.

The mission and purpose of the Olympics may be further distorted by the way the Games are covered by the American media. While media outlets from all countries are guilty of reporting on the Olympics (as well as other international events) from their own perspective, the American media have been routinely criticized for their overly nationalistic coverage (see Sabo, Jansen, Tate, Duncan & Leggett, 1996, for a review). As noted previously, the vast majority of Americans experience the Olympics through the medium of television. Consequently, the way that American television outlets choose to portray the Games — in particular, the frames that they adopt for their coverage — may impact how the American viewing audience perceives not only the Olympics, but also the participating countries.

The present research examines the potential impact of nationalistic and international media frames on potential Olympic viewers and, by extension, the ability of the Olympics to serve as an effective public diplomacy tool. More specifically, Study 1 analyzes the effect these divergent frames have on public perceptions of whether the Olympics achieve the objectives laid out by the IOC. Study 2 looks at the broader implications these nationalistic and international frames may have on public perceptions of other nations, and on support for aggressive foreign policy positions such as preemptive attacks.
The concept of framing can be understood as the process of shaping the opinions and perspectives of others by including, excluding, or emphasizing certain aspects of an issue or event. Entman (1993) has defined framing as follows:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described...[T]he frame determines whether most people notice and how they understand and remember a problem, as well as how they evaluate and choose to act upon it. (p. 52-54)

Framing can be distinguished from related constructs such as agenda-setting or priming in that it does more than make a particular issue salient or more cognitively accessible (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Miller & Krosnick, 1996). Framing also influences how individuals are likely to think about that issue by focusing attention on certain key elements. To "frame" an issue or event is to select one among a number of possible ways of looking at something. For example, the Olympics could be framed as more of a celebration than a competition or, alternately, as a competition among individuals each striving to achieve their personal best. Nationalistic elements inherent in the Olympics Games such as distinct costumes, flags, and anthems almost certainly prime the category of country among all viewers. But the U.S. broadcast media takes this one step further. By focusing disproportionate attention on the American athletes and events that American athletes might win, through the constant tallying of each country’s medal count, and by allowing highly charged competitive rhetoric from network commentators, the Olympics are portrayed using a hypernationalistic “us versus them” frame (Sabo et al., 1996).

To be sure, media frames serve many useful purposes. As McQuail (2003) rightly points out, media outlets are the principal means of public expression in modern society, and the frames they utilize help citizens to make sense of the overwhelming and often very complex amount of information available, thus enabling the public to better interpret and digest news and other data.

However, American television networks also depend on profits and are therefore primarily concerned about attracting the largest share of viewers possible. As a result, the framing of media content is often constructed according to the tastes of the audience, and news organizations frequently frame issues using the most provocative or entertaining format rather than the most realistic or informative format (Wicks, 2005). Consequently, the framing of media content is “constrained by the anticipated reaction of the audience — or, to use a different language, by what the American political culture finds permissible” (Kinder, 2007, p. 156). As a result, media outlets often rely on the dominant societal frames, thus reinforcing the way media consumers currently interpret their reality (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Of particular relevance to this study is television’s framing of international and sporting events. As Gruneau (1989) states, the way that sports competitions are portrayed to
audiences in the United States involves a multitude of decisions regarding which images, camera angles, sports statistics, styles of language, theme songs, and storylines will be employed. These choices are often based on what the program’s producers feel are in line with the “dominant ideological tendencies” of our society. Thus, the “processes of selection and representation involved in the production of sport for television have been viewed as manifestations of such (allegedly) ‘dominant values’ as hero worship, instrumental rationality, obedience to authority, possessive individualism, meritocracy, competitiveness, and patriarchal authority” (Gruneau, 1989, p. 135). Through these frames, some aspects of sporting events are highlighted while others are either de-emphasized or completely omitted.

The most common frame used in the televising of sports is an emphasis on competitive conflict. Despite sport being a form of competition where cooperation is often necessary in order to agree upon rules and the authority of the referee, extensive research by Bryant, Comisky, and Zillman (as cited in Bryant & Raney, 2000) has shown that sports commentators frequently use war-like metaphors and conflict-driven language to highlight the competitive aspect of sports. Prior research has also demonstrated that this aggressive language influences viewers’ perceptions of violence in sports (Sullivan as cited in Bryant & Raney, 2000). Indeed, Comisky concluded that such “findings are suggestive of the great potential of sports commentary to alter the viewer’s perception of the sports event” (as cited in Bryant & Raney, 2000, p.170). Implicit in this competitive frame is the idea that the winner/loser binary is the singular most important element of sport.

Other experts have pointed to the framing of sports as a high drama or storytelling event, designed to increase the entertainment value of the sportscast regardless of outcome. By elevating the sporting event to the level of dramatic conflict and using the elements of drama (such as plot, symbolism, and social message) in its presentation, the broadcast is able to grab and hold the attention of viewers. This use of narrative in sports media demonstrates that there is a “point of convergence for two dominant ‘models’ of coverage—‘news actuality and dramatic entertainment.’ Televised sport brings these elements together in a unique manner” (Gruneau, 1989, p. 145).

Sporting events that take place between nations bring other frames with them as well. Levermore (2004) found the stereotyping of national populations to be commonplace in an analysis of World Cup 1998 media coverage. Germans, for example, were frequently referred to as “thorough, efficient, cold-hearted, and with no sense of humor” (p. 21). Similarly stereotypic references were made to describe Japanese, Iranian, Korean, British, and Cameroonian players. Such tendencies were also found by Sabo et al. (1996) who documented many specific instances of nationalistic bias contained within 340 hours of American television coverage of seven different international athletic events:

Nationalism thrives on “we versus they” scenarios. In this regard, we found that commentators characterized athletes from Communist bloc, or formerly Communist bloc, countries in ways that suggested they are cheaters, machine-like, inhuman, and without
feelings. In contrast, athletes from the United States and its allies were generally featured as warm, fair, and human.... It was stated or implied that some nations bring a political agenda to international athletic events, but the hidden assumption being conveyed was that the United States has no such political agendas. Whereas doubts are raised about the state funding of athletes from other countries, problems linked to corporate sponsorship of athletes in the United States or Western democracies are unstated. Comments about drug use among Chinese or East German athletes ignored the fact that some U.S. athletes use drugs as well. Such stories about Soviet women gymnasts and East German women swimmers point up the contrast between the “good” (us) and the “bad” (them). (p. 18)

The authors summarized their results by calling national bias within sports telecasts the “fly in the ointment” for televised international sports (Sabo et al., 1996, p.19).

But referring to nationalistic media bias as merely a “fly in the ointment” suggests minor or inconsequential effects. Prior research on in-group/out-group bias suggests otherwise. For example, Tajfel’s (1978) work on the minimal conditions necessary for individuals to give preference to their in-group showed that even when people were randomly assigned to a group that never actually met, they rated members of their in-group more positively and, conversely, members of the out-group more negatively. One way to explain this phenomenon is through the lens of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hogg & Abrams, 1988). This theory asserts that groups only exist in contrast to other groups. In other words, in order for an “us” to exist, a “them” must exist as well. This process is not inherently evil but is a natural result of an individual’s attempt to understand their world by undergoing a “process of categorization” and dividing the world into “comprehensible units” (Hogg & Abrams, 1990, p. 2). However, according to Social Identity Theory, when a category includes oneself, an individual’s “desire for positive self-evaluation provides a motivational basis for differentiation between social groups” in a way favorable to both one’s in-group and, as a result, oneself (Hogg & Abrams, 1990, p. 3).

Drawing on these concepts, Rivenburgh (2000) argues that when the nation is viewed as the salient in-group, as is often the case during international sporting events, people are much more likely to protect or maintain national identity in order to maintain positive self-perceptions. Not surprisingly, American television outlets either consciously or unconsciously promote a point of view which favors the U.S. when reporting on events that takes place in an international context. In fact, as Rivenburgh points out, this focus on national identity is no doubt “encouraged by the knowledge that the producers of media are constructing news for a national audience with which they share national membership” (Rivenburgh, 2000, p. 306). Entman (1991) provides a classic example of Social Identity Theory’s relevance to the framing of international events in his analysis of the KAL and Iran Air incidents. Through a content analysis of media coverage, he demonstrates that while the 1983 Soviet shooting of KAL Flight 007 was framed by the American media as an act of aggression, the similar incident of a 1998 American shooting of Iran Air Flight 655 was framed as an “understandable accident.” Entman’s analysis aptly illustrates that the framing
of both incidents served to protect U.S. national identity and therefore enabled Americans following the stories to maintain positive perceptions of their own in-group.

**American Television as Framer of the Olympic Games**

To date, American television networks that have broadcast the Olympic Games have chosen to adopt frames which bear a striking resemblance to the generic sports and international news frames described above. As a result, they portray an image of the Olympics which is very different than that which is outlined by the IOC’s official mission. In fact, Epsy (1979) argues that the Olympics are being distorted from their original intent into “an extravaganza that reflects and enhances the competitive and divisive interests in the world” (p. 162). Scholars such as Emerson and Perse (1995) have observed that “instead of promoting understanding among the earth’s peoples as de Coubertin had hoped…the broadcasts of the Games perpetuate present day stereotypes” (p. 80). Thus, the frame being employed by American television networks in their coverage of the Olympic Games emphasizes the in-group/out-group dynamic which is central to Social Identity Theory, perhaps raising international tensions and undermining the very purpose of the event. In reality, this is unsurprising. As previously noted, media outlets will often utilize the frames which are culturally resonant with their target audience.

This emphasis on competitive conflict and nationalism rather than internationalism and athletic skill in the Olympics has been further highlighted by the regular conflation of political power and victory in international sporting events. One of the best examples of “competitive importance attached to an inter-state sporting contest was…when ice hockey matches between the U.S. and Soviet Union were played in a volatile competitive context and where the winning team depicted its political system as the pre-eminent one” (Levermore, 2004, p. 19). By employing the dominant competitive frame for its Olympic coverage and imbuing international sporting events with political significance, the media served to portray the Olympics — and politics by extension — as a zero-sum game. Such promotion is not only contrary to the official mission of the IOC, but likely serves to reinforce existing international tensions.

In a detailed study of ABC’s television coverage of the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Meadow noted that the network gave its presentation such a nationalistic frame that it appeared “overwhelmingly preoccupied” with American athletes and the sports that are normally popular in the United States. He found that U.S.-related coverage of the Olympics took up 44.7% of total coverage, while African athletes received only 2.8% and South Americans just 2% (as cited by Houlihan, 1994). Likewise, NBC’s coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta was criticized for largely ignoring the successes of foreign athletes: the exciting 1500 meter freestyle race that was won by Australian athlete Kieren Perkins was never even broadcast because no American athlete placed in the event. As a result, many international visitors who traveled to the Games felt slighted at what little
attention was paid to their country’s athletes. The message that was sent to these foreign tourists was that “the Olympics are not about international competition, but about competition between America and the world” (Meadow as cited by Houlihan, 1994, p. 156) — a perspective that makes sense in the context of Social Identity Theory but which is completely antithetical to the official goals of the IOC.

Meadow is not alone in his conclusions. In fact, several scholars have documented this nationalistic bias in American television coverage of the Olympic Games. In a comparative analysis of the NBC, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and TEN (Australia) telecasts of the 1988 opening ceremony in Seoul, Larson and Rivenburgh (1991) found that NBC devoted only 49 minutes, 57 seconds of its broadcast to cultural performances, compared with 81 minutes, 58 seconds for TEN and 85 minutes for the BBC. When the network missed the beginning of one South Korean dance because of a commercial break, it spent only 26 seconds on it before cutting to an athlete interview and then to another commercial break, thus preventing the American audience from “becoming engaged in the Korean cultural narrative that flowed through all the performances” (Larson and Rivenburgh, 1991). Moreover, NBC spent less time on the entry of the athletes than did the other networks: they mentioned only 86 of the 160 national teams entering the stadium (compared to 111 on TEN and 134 on the BBC), thereby ignoring 46.3% of the participating nations. The authors conclude that “television constructs the Olympic spectacle into multiple realities, and that it does so with profound implications for images of nation, culture, and the Olympic movement” (Larson and Rivenburgh, 1991). As a result of such skewed coverage, it is quite possible that Americans have a more biased perspective, not only with respect to the Olympics and the mission of the IOC, but of international community as a whole.

American television outlets do indeed have legitimate reasons for framing the Olympic Games in these nationalistic and competitive terms. Given that it is extremely hard to maintain viewer interest in any event that spans sixteen days, such frames are designed to provide the most entertainment value to the widest possible American audience — regardless of whether or not they conform to the values which the IOC wishes to project. When one considers the staggering amount of money which networks must now pay for broadcasting rights to the Games (NBC paid over $600 million for rights to the 2006 Olympics), it becomes understandable that their primary concern is the ability to cover such costs.

In fact, one might argue that the very success of these nationalistic and competitive frames is the reason that the Olympics have become as big a spectacle as they are today. Prior to the 1960s, U.S. broadcasters did not believe that Americans would be particularly interested in watching a multi-sport event held in a remote location, especially one that featured unfamiliar events such as the pentathlon and the luge. Some contend that interest in the Games only came about as a result of television’s portrayal of the event through the frame of international rivalry combined with the use of nationalistic competition as political theater. In this way, the American media and the IOC are engaged in a symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationship: the IOC needs the American media to continue legitimizing and
promoting the Olympics, and the American media sees the Olympics as a jewel in the sports broadcasting crown.

But could the American media’s nationalistic portrayal of the Olympic Games ultimately undercut the very purpose of the event? In Study 1, we examined whether — far from promoting world peace — adopting a competitive and nationally-centered frame for Olympic coverage actually serves to reinforce international rivalry and undercuts the intended objectives of the IOC. More specifically, Study 1 predicted that:

**H1:** Individuals exposed to a nationalistic frame of the Olympic Games will be more likely to view the Olympics from a nationalistic perspective, and

**H2:** will be less likely to perceive the Games as supportive of official IOC goals.

We further predicted that if American television outlets were to reshape their broadcasting of the Olympic Games so as to adopt a more universal, internationally-centered frame, the goals of the IOC may be better realized. Thus, we predicted that:

**H3:** Individuals exposed to an international frame of the Olympic Games will be less likely to view the Olympics from a nationalistic perspective, and

**H4:** will be more likely to perceive the Games as supportive of official IOC goals.

In Study 2, we considered the broader implications these nationalistic and international frames may have on the American public’s perceptions of other nations and certain foreign policy decisions. Here we predicted that:

**H5:** Individuals exposed to a nationalistic frame of the Olympic Games will be less likely to demonstrate willingness for international engagement and trust, and

**H6:** will be more likely to support aggressive foreign policy actions.

By contrast, we hypothesized that viewing a more universal, internationally-centered frame would have the opposite effect. In other words:

**H7:** Individuals exposed to an international frame of the Olympic Games will be more likely to demonstrate willingness for international engagement and trust, and

**H8:** and will be less likely to support aggressive foreign policy actions.

In addition to these hypotheses, we chose to examine the effects of both the nationalistic frame and the international frame on viewer interest. As noted previously, current portrayals of the Olympics by American broadcasting companies are pursued because the networks believe that adopting a less nationalistic, more international frame would not generate as much interest and would significantly decrease viewership and revenue. Consequently, testing the effects of each frame on the willingness of the participants to watch and/or attend
future Olympic Games was seen as an important part of measuring the commercial feasibility of adopting a more international Olympic frame. In both Study 1 and Study 2 we tested the following:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between how the Olympics are framed and audience interest?

**STUDY I**

**Method**

Participants were recruited from undergraduate classes at a major university. All participants filled out a pre-viewing survey. This survey first assessed participants’ pre-existing interests which could affect the efficacy of a particular frame (such as their interest in travel, sports, foreign policy, and international affairs) using a 10-point Likert scale. The pre-viewing survey then asked participants to respond to a series of 10 items adapted from Emerson and Perse’s (1995) Olympic Viewing Motivation Scale, which was designed to assess the extent to which a variety of motives play a role in whether or not the respondent would watch the Olympics on television. These motives included the following: to learn about other countries and cultures; to root for my country’s athletes; to feel like a citizen of the world; to admire the dedication and athletic skill of the participants, to feel the thrill of competition; to relax or unwind with family and friends; to learn more about different Olympic sports; to participate in an historic event; to be able to discuss the event with others in the future; and to experience a sense of pride for being a citizen of my country. The extent to which the respondent agreed or disagreed that their Olympic viewing would be motivated by each of the above was measured using a 10-point scale ranging from “Not at All” (1) to “Extremely” (10).

Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions — a nationalistic frame condition, an international frame condition, or a control group. Those assigned to the nationalistic frame condition were shown a 4-minute video compilation of images from past Olympic Games that primarily featured U.S. athletes and the U.S. role in the Games, ceremonies in which U.S. athletes won gold medals with the American flag displayed prominently in the background, and demonstrations of nationalism on the part of both U.S. and foreign athletes (such as the waving of a flag). In the nationalistic condition at least two minutes or half of the video was exclusively dedicated to images of American athletes and activities. Those assigned to the international frame condition were shown a video compilation of images of equal length but featuring international opponents celebrating together and competition among athletes from all nations (not primarily U.S.), with a heavy emphasis on the skill of the athletes rather than their nationality (for example, gravity defying snowboarding, gymnastic events, ice skating, races). Both video compilations included the same opening and closing scenes and featured roughly the same
number and range of Olympic events. All images were taken with permission from commercially available footage of the 2004 Summer Games and the 2002 Winter Games. The images in both conditions were accompanied by the song *Titans Spirit* by Trevor Rabin. Participants in the control condition were not shown any video. A manipulation check of the two videos was conducted on 20 undergraduates with 10 students viewing each video and then completing Emerson and Perse’s (1995) Olympics-related Nationalism and Internationalism Scales (described in more detail below). The results of this manipulation check suggested that the videos did differentially evoke the two desired Olympic frames.

Participants were then asked to fill out a post-viewing survey, which asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements designed by Emerson and Perse (1995) to measure Olympic-related nationalistic sentiments. Prior research has demonstrated that these two subscales effectively measure feelings of Olympic-related nationalism and internationalism among survey respondents. Items from Emerson and Perse’s Olympic Nationalism Scale include the following: it makes little difference to me if the American entry wins in the Olympics; success at the Olympics brings prestige to the U.S.; the Olympics make me feel that the U.S. is the greatest nation in the world; the Olympics make me realize that we should strive for loyalty to our own country before we can afford to consider world brotherhood; I feel angry at U.S. athletes when they do not win; I feel angry at non-U.S. athletes when they beat U.S. athletes. Items from Emerson and Perse’s Internationalism Scale (conceptually similar to our international frame) include the following: the Olympics make us more aware of our differences rather than our similarities; the Olympics provide a common ground for cooperation; watching the Olympics gives me a sense of belonging to the global society; watching the Olympics makes me feel that it is better to be a citizen of the world than of any particular country; watching the Olympics makes me feel that I am a member of the international community.

Next, the post-viewing survey measured the extent to which participants believed that the Olympic Games do or do not fulfill various aspects of the International Olympic Committee’s stated goals. Using a 10-point scale, respondents indicated the extent to which they felt the Olympic Games achieve each of the six following IOC objectives: promote world peace; celebrate individual achievement; promote feelings of friendship and solidarity with the people of other nations; blend sport with culture and education; promote understanding and respect for the people of other countries; and encourage sports. Interspersed within these six IOC goals were two counterobjectives: promote national pride; and display the U.S.’s strength and power. The survey then assessed each respondent’s interest in attending and watching future Olympic Games using a scale that ranged from “Not at All Interested” (1) to “Extremely Interested” (10).

Finally, respondents were asked a series of demographic questions including age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, year in college, and major. In addition, they were asked how many hours of television they watch per week (on average) and how much coverage of the 2002, 2004, and 2006 Olympic Games they had watched using a 5-point scale (Not at All,
All respondents were subsequently debriefed about the experimental conditions and thanked for their participation.

Results

One hundred and twenty-eight individuals completed both the pre-viewing and post-viewing surveys. To be eligible to be included in the subsequent analyses respondents had to be United States citizens. Eight participants who were not U.S. citizens, and therefore may not have responded to the nationalistic frame, were excluded from subsequent analyses. The remaining 120 respondents were equally represented in terms of gender in the three experimental conditions with 20 males and 20 females in each of the three experimental conditions — nationalistic frame, international frame, and control condition.

Analyses. All dependent variables were subjected to a one-way analysis of variance followed by paired contrasts between each of the three experimental conditions (nationalistic, international, and control) to determine precisely which conditions were significantly different from one another. All analyses used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software Version 15.

Pre-existing interests and demographics. There were no significant differences on any of the pre-existing interests or background variables between the three experimental groups. The only pre-existing interest found to predict participant interest in viewing and attending future Olympics was an interest in sports. All subsequent analyses were run both with and without interest in sports as a covariate. Since there were no statistically significant differences between these two sets of analyses we report the more conservative analysis of the two — the analysis without a respondent’s interest in sports as a covariate.

Motives for viewing Olympic Games. Ten items were adapted with some slight wording changes from Emerson and Perse’s (1995) Olympic Viewing Motivation Scale to assess participants’ preexisting motivations for watching the Olympic Games. There were no significant differences by experimental condition for any of the individual motivations or for the scale as a whole.

Olympic nationalism versus internationalism. Table 1 reports the mean scores by experimental condition of Emerson and Perse’s (1995) Olympic Nationalism and Internationalism Scales. Scientific notation is used to identify which conditions are significantly different at \( p < .05 \). Entries in a row representing a particular dependent variable that do not share a letter subscript are significantly different from one another.

On average, participants in the nationalistic frame condition of the current study scored significantly higher on Emerson and Perse’s Olympic Nationalism Scale (\( M = 5.54 \)) than
Walter and Murphy Framing the Olympic Games

those in both the control (M = 4.72; F(1,78) = 17.41, p < .001) and the international frame condition (M = 4.26; F(1,78) = 51.06, p < .001; F(2,118) = 18.81, p < .001 in the overall one-way analysis of variance). Conversely, participants exposed to the international frame scored significantly higher on Emerson and Perse’s Olympic Internationalism Scale (M = 5.63) than their counterparts in both the nationalistic frame (M = 4.01; F(1,78) = 53.9, p < .001) and control condition (M = 4.51; F(1,78) = 71.01, p < .001; F(2,118) = 31.33, p < .001 in the overall one-way analysis of variance). This suggests that the different compilations of Olympic images in the present study did indeed invoke the desired frames.

International Olympic Committees objectives. Participants were asked to use a 10-point scale ranging from Not at all (1) to Extremely well (10) to assess the extent to which they felt the Olympic Games met six objectives either explicitly or implicitly stated in the mission statement of the IOC (see Table 2). A series of one-way analyses of variance revealed that there were significant differences by condition for four of the six IOC objectives: promoting world peace (F(2,117) = 46.41), promoting feelings of friendship and solidarity with the people of other nations (F(2,117) = 24.82, p < .001; blend sport with culture and education (F(2,117) = 15.66, p < .001; promote understanding and respect for the people of other countries (F(2,117) = 25.09, p < .001. Encouraging sports and promoting individual achievement were not statistically significant in the one-way analysis of variance. Both of the two counterobjectives — promoting national pride and display the U.S.’s strength and power — were also significant by condition (F(2, 117) = 4.10, p < .01 and F(2,117) = 13.79, p < .001, respectively).
Framing the Olympic Games W alters and Murphy

### Table 1
**Feelings of Olympic Nationalism and Internationalism as a Function of Frame**

These items were adapted from Emerson & Perse’s (1995) Nationalism and Internationalism Scales. The letter subscripts indicate scientific notation. Means that are statistically significant from one another do not share the same letter subscript. An asterisk indicates that the item was reverse coded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Olympic Nationalism</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Nationalistic</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It makes little difference to me if the American entry wins in the Olympics.*</td>
<td>4.35b</td>
<td>3.60a</td>
<td>5.00c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success at the Olympics brings prestige to the U.S.</td>
<td>6.93a</td>
<td>7.10b</td>
<td>6.63a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Olympics make me feel that the U.S. is the greatest nation in the world.</td>
<td>3.08a</td>
<td>4.62b</td>
<td>2.95a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Olympics make me realize that we should strive for loyalty to our own country before we can afford to consider world brotherhood.</td>
<td>4.78b</td>
<td>5.08c</td>
<td>3.68a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel angry at U.S. athletes when they do not win.</td>
<td>3.75a</td>
<td>4.60b</td>
<td>3.42a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel angry at non-U.S. athletes when they beat U.S. athletes.</td>
<td>4.13a</td>
<td>5.45b</td>
<td>3.88a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average score on Nationalism scale</td>
<td>4.72b</td>
<td>5.54c</td>
<td>4.26a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Olympic Internationalism</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Olympics make us more aware of our differences rather than our similarities.*</td>
<td>5.40b</td>
<td>5.95c</td>
<td>4.87a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Olympics provide a common ground for cooperation.</td>
<td>3.93a</td>
<td>3.70a</td>
<td>5.48b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching the Olympics gives me a sense of belonging to the global society.</td>
<td>4.60a</td>
<td>4.20a</td>
<td>6.00b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching the Olympics makes me feel that it is better to be a citizen of the world than of any particular country.</td>
<td>5.03b</td>
<td>3.88a</td>
<td>6.05c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching the Olympics makes me feel that I am a member of the international community.</td>
<td>4.38a</td>
<td>4.23a</td>
<td>5.55b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average score on Olympic internationalism scale</td>
<td>4.51b</td>
<td>4.01a</td>
<td>5.63c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Planned contrasts between each of the three framing conditions revealed that participants in the nationalistic condition did not differ from the control condition on 5 of the 6 items, differing only on the extent to which they felt the Olympics celebrate individual achievement (7.10 and 7.25, respectively F(1, 78) = 4.58, p < .04). In contrast, participants in the international framing condition scored significantly higher than those in the control condition on 4 of the 6 items including promoting world peace (F(1,78) = 48.5, p < .001), promoting feelings of friendship and solidarity with the people of other nations (F(1,78) = 25.77, p < .001), blending sport with culture and education (F(1,78) = 14.57, p < .001) and promoting understanding and respect for the people of other countries (F(1,78) = 27.04, p < .001). Those in the international condition did not differ from those in the control condition on ratings of whether the Olympics encourage sports or celebrate individual achievement.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IOC Objectives</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Nationalistic</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote world peace?</td>
<td>4.45a</td>
<td>4.23a</td>
<td>6.48b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote feelings of friendship and solidarity with the people of other nations?</td>
<td>4.78a</td>
<td>4.40a</td>
<td>6.45b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blend sport with culture and education?</td>
<td>5.05a</td>
<td>4.65a</td>
<td>6.35b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate individual achievement?</td>
<td>7.10a</td>
<td>7.52b</td>
<td>7.25ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote understanding and respect for the people of other countries?</td>
<td>4.68a</td>
<td>4.38a</td>
<td>6.35b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage sports?</td>
<td>8.25a</td>
<td>8.33a</td>
<td>8.35a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average IOC objectives score</strong></td>
<td>5.72a</td>
<td>5.57a</td>
<td>6.87b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| IOC Counterobjectives                                                          |         |               |               |
| Display the U.S.’s strength and power?                                         | 6.40a   | 6.90b         | 5.65a         |
| Promote national pride?                                                        | 6.60a   | 7.38b         | 6.75a         |
| **Average IOC counterobjectives score**                                        | 6.50a   | 7.14b         | 6.20a         |
Planned comparisons were also conducted on the two IOC inconsistent objectives of displaying the U.S.’s strength and power and promoting national pride. On both of these IOC-inconsistent items, participants in the nationalistic frame condition gave significantly higher ratings (M = 6.90) than those in both the control condition (M = 6.40; F(1,78) = 9.28, p < .003) and the international condition (6.71; F(1, 78) = 50.90). There was no significant difference on these items between the control and the international frame condition.

*Interest in attending and watching future Olympic Games.* As indicated by Figure 1, there was a significant influence of frame with participants in the nationalistic (M = 5.62; F(1,78) = 7.45, p < .01) and international (M = 6.18; F(1,78) = 17.57, p < .04) frame conditions reporting greater interest than those in the control condition (M = 4.53) in attending future Olympic Games (F(2,118) = 9.15, p< .001 overall). There was also a significant increase in intention to watch future Olympic Games on television with those in both the nationalistic (M = 7.13; F(1,78) = 9.278, p < .003) and international (M = 7.15; F(1,78) = 8.29; p < .001) frames reporting a significantly higher interest in viewing future Olympic Games than those in the control condition (M = 6.18; F(2,118) = 4.80, p < .01 overall).
STUDY 2

Method

Participants were once again recruited from the same undergraduate class at the same major university one semester later. Participants were informed that they would be filling out two unrelated surveys — one assessing their interest in the Olympic Games and a second assessing their opinions on international affairs ostensibly for a graduate student’s dissertation.

Olympic pre-viewing survey. The Olympic pre-viewing survey and procedure were identical to that employed in Study 1. Respondents first filled out a survey that assessed participants’ pre-existing interests which could affect the efficacy of a particular frame (such as their interest in travel, sports, foreign policy, and international affairs) using a 10-point Likert scale. The survey then asked participants to respond to a series of 10 items adapted from Emerson and Perse’s (1995) Olympic Viewing Motivation Scale, which was designed to assess the extent to which a variety of motives play a role in whether or not the respondent would watch the Olympics on television. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions — a nationalistic frame, an international frame, or a control group which was not exposed to an experimental frame — using the same stimulus materials as described in Study 1.

Olympic post-viewing survey. Next, participants were asked to fill out an Olympic post-viewing survey that once again asked them how interested they were in both attending and watching future Olympics on a 10-point scale ranging from “Not at All Interested” (1) to “Extremely Interested” (10). Unlike Study 1, participants in Study 2 did not complete Emerson and Perse’s Olympic Nationalism Scale (1995) or the items designed to measure the extent to which participants believed that the Olympic Games do or do not fulfill various aspects of the International Olympic Committee’s goals. Instead, participants in Study 2 were asked to what extent the Olympic Games made them feel proud and excited using a 10-point Likert scales ranging from “Not at All” (1) to “Extremely” (10). Respondents were then asked the same series of demographic questions as in Study 1 including age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, year in college, and major. In addition, they were asked how many hours of television they watch per week (on average) and how much coverage of the 2002, 2004, and 2006 Olympic Games they had watched using a 5-point scale (Not at All, A Little, Some, Quite a Bit, A Lot).

Public opinion survey. The second, ostensibly unrelated, survey was administered by an unfamiliar graduate student immediately after the Olympic survey allegedly as part of his dissertation research. In this survey, participants first completed a modified version of
Brewer, Gross, Aday, and Willnat’s (2004) measure of international trust. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with each of the following statements on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (10): the United States can trust other nations; the United States can’t be too careful in dealing with other nations; most of the time other nations try to be helpful to the United States; and other nations are just looking out for themselves. Respondents were then asked how much they agreed with a series of items also adapted from Brewer et al. designed to measure internationalism and isolationism which included the following statements: the United States should not concern itself with problems in other parts of the world; the United States should try to solve problems in other parts of the world; the United States should give humanitarian aid like food and medicine to foreign countries even if they don’t stand for the same things we do; the United States should use military force to solve international problems; the United States should give financial assistance to countries in economic crisis; and the United States should devote a significant portion of its budget to defense.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate how friendly each of 25 nations are toward the United States on a 10-point scale ranging from “Extremely Unfriendly” (1) to “Extremely Friendly” (10). These items were also adapted from Brewer et al. (2004). Finally, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements designed to measure support for a number of aggressive foreign policy positions including: the military-led intervention against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan; the decision to label Iraq, North Korea, and Iran as an “Axis of Evil”; the decision to place tariffs on steel imports; the decision to try Al Qaeda prisoners before military tribunals (as opposed to U.S. civilian courts); the decision to increase foreign aid to poor countries; and recent efforts to bring democracy to the Middle East. Respondents were also asked the extent to which they agreed that in the future the United States should: adopt tougher immigration policies; take pre-emptive military action; send troops abroad to spread democracy; and restrict the sale of foreign products within its own borders. After completing this survey, respondents were debriefed about the experimental conditions and thanked for their participation.

Results

One hundred and twenty-four individuals completed both surveys. Data from four individuals who were not U.S. citizens, and thus may not have reacted to the framing manipulation, were excluded from subsequent analyses. The remaining 120 respondents were equally represented in terms of gender in the three experimental conditions with 20 males and 20 females in each condition.
Pre-existing interests and demographics. A series of one-way analyses of variance using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software Version 15 revealed that there were no significant differences on any of the pre-existing interests or demographics either between experimental conditions in Study 2 or between Study 1 and Study 2.

Motives for viewing Olympic Games. Similarly, there was no significant difference between the three experimental conditions on the 10 items adapted from Emerson and Perse’s (1995) Olympic Viewing Motivation Scale assessing participants’ pre-existing motivations for watching the Olympic Games either between experimental conditions in Study 2 or between Study 1 and Study 2.

Interest in attending and watching future Olympic Games. As indicated in Figure 2, there was once again a significant effect of frame with participants in the nationalistic (M = 5.58; F(1, 79) = 8.51, p < .005) and international (M = 6.15; F(1,79) = 21.77, p < .001) frames reporting significantly greater interest than those in the control condition (M = 4.50) in attending future Olympic Games (F(2,118) = 10.63, p < .001 overall analysis of variance). There was also a significant increase in intent to watch future Olympic Games on television with those in both the nationalistic (M = 7.03; F(1,79) = 8.20, p < .005) and international (M = 7.33; F(1,79) = 15.47; p < .001) frames reporting a significantly higher interest in viewing.
future Olympic Games than those in the control condition (M = 6.08); F(2,118) = 7.65; p < .001 overall).

**Emotions Olympics elicit.** Respondents were asked to gauge the extent to which the Olympics evoked the emotions of pride and excitement on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from Not at all (1) to Extremely (10). Interestingly, there were no significant differences by experimental condition in the extent to which respondents reported feeling excitement or pride, which suggests that these emotions were not driving differences on other dependent variables.

**International trust.** As shown in Table 3, participants in the nationalistic frame condition produced levels of international trust (M = 4.11) that were significantly and consistently lower than those in the control condition (M = 5.49; (F(1,79) = 59.30, p < .001) which in turn were significantly lower than those in the international condition (M = 6.44; F(1,79) = 33.95, p< .001; F(2,118) = 88.99, p < .001 overall).

**Internationalism versus isolationism.** Table 3 also reveals that participants in the nationalistic frame condition reported the highest levels of isolationism (M = 6.16), significantly higher than participants in the control condition (M = 5.56; F(1,79) = 19.66, p <.001). Those who were exposed to the international frame had significantly lower levels of isolationism (M = 4.64) than those in both the nationalistic (F(1,79) = 127.33, p < .001) and control conditions (F(1,79) =19.66; F(2,118) = 67.74 overall).

**Ratings of friendliness toward the United States.** The average friendliness score of the 25 countries toward the United States revealed a consistent pattern with respondents in the international frame condition giving the highest friendliness ratings (M = 5.54) followed by those in the control condition (M = 4.60; F(1,79) = 20.68, p < .001) which in turn was significantly higher than the average rating of participants in the nationalistic frame condition (M = 3.97; F(1.79) = 13.59, p < .001; F(2,118) = 36.19, p < .001 overall).

**U.S. policy decisions.** As shown in Table 4, participants in the nationalistic frame condition (M = 5.49) were more likely than those in the control condition (M = 4.75; F(1,79) = 19.50, p< .001) to support aggressive foreign policies. Those in the control condition were, in turn, more likely to endorse aggressive foreign policies than those in the international frame condition (M = 4.46; F(1,79) = 7.32, p <.008; F(2,118) = 25.86, p < .001 overall).
### Table 3

**Measures of International Trust and Isolationism as a Function of Frame**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Trust</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Nationalistic</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The United States can trust other nations.</td>
<td>5.03b</td>
<td>3.88a</td>
<td>6.05c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States can’t be too careful in dealing with other nations.*</td>
<td>4.40b</td>
<td>6.20c</td>
<td>3.70a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time other nations try to be helpful to the United States.</td>
<td>4.60a</td>
<td>4.10a</td>
<td>5.98b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other nations are just looking out for themselves.*</td>
<td>3.28b</td>
<td>4.95c</td>
<td>2.58a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average on international trust scale</strong></td>
<td>5.49b</td>
<td>4.11a</td>
<td>6.46c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isolationism</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The United States should not concern itself with problems in other parts of the world.</td>
<td>6.90b</td>
<td>7.13b</td>
<td>5.78a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States should try to solve problems in other parts of the world.*</td>
<td>4.40b</td>
<td>3.40a</td>
<td>4.75b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States should give humanitarian aid like food and medicine to foreign countries even if they don't stand for the same things we do.*</td>
<td>5.05b</td>
<td>3.88a</td>
<td>6.05c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States should use military force to solve international problems.</td>
<td>5.43b</td>
<td>6.10c</td>
<td>4.88a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States should give financial assistance to countries in economic crisis.*</td>
<td>4.35a</td>
<td>4.25a</td>
<td>5.58b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States should devote a significant portion of its budget to defense.</td>
<td>4.85b</td>
<td>5.27b</td>
<td>3.58a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average on isolationism scale</strong></td>
<td>5.56b</td>
<td>6.16c</td>
<td>4.64a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These items were adapted from both Brewer et al’s (2004) International Trust and Internationalism/Isolationism Scales and Brewer & Steenbergen’s (2002) Cooperative Internationalism and Militant Internationalism Scales. The letter subscripts indicate scientific notation. Means that are statistically significant from one another do not share the same letter subscript. An asterisk * implies the item was reverse coded.
### Table 4

**Support for Aggressive Foreign Policy as a Function of Frame**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggressive Foreign Policy</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Nationalistic</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I support the military-led effort against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan.</td>
<td>8.23a</td>
<td>8.33a</td>
<td>8.00a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support Bush’s decision to label Iraq, Iran, and North Korea an “Axis of Evil.”</td>
<td>3.33b</td>
<td>4.80c</td>
<td>2.45a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support the 2002 decision to place tariffs on steel imports to the United States.</td>
<td>6.93ab</td>
<td>7.10b</td>
<td>6.63a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support the decision to try Al Qaeda prisoners before military tribunals rather than in the U.S. civilian courts.</td>
<td>4.13a</td>
<td>5.45b</td>
<td>3.88a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support Bush’s decisions to increase U.S. foreign aid to poor countries.*</td>
<td>4.43b</td>
<td>3.60a</td>
<td>4.78b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support the U.S.’s recent efforts to bring democracy to the Middle East.</td>
<td>4.13a</td>
<td>5.45b</td>
<td>3.88a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, the United States should have tougher immigration policies.</td>
<td>5.40a</td>
<td>5.95b</td>
<td>4.98a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, the United States should take military action if it has reason to believe that a country is producing weapons of mass destruction.</td>
<td>3.08a</td>
<td>4.63b</td>
<td>2.95a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, the United States should continue to send troops abroad to assist in spreading democracy.</td>
<td>3.08a</td>
<td>4.63b</td>
<td>2.95a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, the United States should restrict the sale of foreign products within its borders in order to protect American jobs.</td>
<td>5.40a</td>
<td>5.95b</td>
<td>4.98a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average on aggressive foreign policy scale**

- 4.75a
- 5.49b
- 4.46a

Note: The letter subscripts indicate scientific notation. Means that are statistically significant from one another do not share the same letter subscript. The letter R indicates the scale runs in the reverse direction.
DISCUSSION

The goals of this research were fourfold: first, to test the effects of nationalistic and international framing on the American viewing audience’s perceptions of the Olympic Games; second, to test the effects of these frames on viewers’ perceptions of whether the official objectives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) are being achieved; third, to test the effects of both frames on viewer receptivity toward international engagement and trust; and fourth, to test the effects of both frames on viewer support for aggressive U.S. foreign policy. In addition, we explored the validity of the concern that adopting a more international frame for the Olympic Games would necessarily decrease American interest in attending and watching future Games.

As shown in Table 1, when individuals were exposed to a nationalistic frame of the Olympic Games, they were more likely to endorse nationalistic items from Emerson and Perse’s (1995) Olympic-related Nationalism Scale such as “the Olympics make me feel that the U.S. is the greatest nation in the world” and “the Olympics make me realize that we should strive for loyalty to our own country before we can afford to consider world brotherhood.” They were also more likely to reject internationally cooperative statements such as “the Olympics provide a common ground for cooperation” and “watching the Olympics makes me feel that it is better to be a citizen of the world than of any particular country.” Individuals exposed to the international Olympic frame showed the exact opposite pattern of results. These results support Hypotheses 1 and 3 and suggest that the framing of the Olympics can have a major influence on how the Games themselves are viewed.

How the Games were framed also had a significant impact on whether or not individuals felt the Olympics were fulfilling IOC objectives. As shown in Table 2, those individuals who were exposed to the international frame generally perceived the Olympics to be much more supportive of the goals of the IOC than those exposed to the nationalistic frame or the control condition. Conversely, those individuals who watched the nationalistic frame generally perceived the Olympics to be much more antithetical to the goals of the IOC than those from the international frame or the control condition. Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 4 were also supported. This suggests that the heavily nationalistic framing of the Olympic Games by American television networks may serve to undermine the mission of the IOC and the very purpose of the Games. On a more optimistic note, our findings also suggest that if these networks were to adopt a more international frame, the mission of the Games may be better served.

Study 2 examined the broader implications these nationalistic and international Olympic frames may have on public perceptions of other nations or aggressive foreign policy. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, individuals who were exposed to a nationalistic frame of the Olympic Games were less likely to demonstrate receptivity toward concepts of international trust and engagement, and were more likely to support aggressive foreign policy decisions like preemptive military action as predicted in Hypotheses 5 and 6, respectively. In contrast,
individuals who were exposed to an international frame of the Olympic Games were more likely to demonstrate receptivity toward concepts of international trust and engagement, and were less likely to support aggressive foreign policy actions as predicted in Hypotheses 7 and 8.

The ramifications of these results are wide-ranging and point to an unintended, but potentially dangerous, consequence of framing the Olympics in a nationalistic manner. By employing an extremely nationalistic frame, American television networks may be encouraging negative attitudes toward other nations. As our findings show, these negative sentiments include a willingness to support international isolation and/or aggressive international action. Not only is such support in direct opposition to the mission of the IOC, but public opinion could influence U.S. foreign policy decisions in ways that increase international tension and promote rivalry among nations.

This overall pattern of results is consistent with the tenets of Social Identity Theory, which argue that when national identity is the most salient categorization, individuals will be motivated to promote positive views of their national in-group and negative views of the out-group. As a result, nationalistically framed Olympic broadcasts may encourage viewers to be less engaged and open to cooperation with other countries. By extension, Social Identity Theory also suggests that adopting a more international frame — or at least making national identity less salient in Olympic coverage — might generate more positive attitudes and actions among American audiences.

Interestingly, our findings also demonstrate that the adoption of a more international frame for Olympic broadcasts would not necessarily decrease viewership. Instead, exposure to Olympic coverage in both the nationalistic and international frame conditions increased the interest of the participants with respect to both attending and viewing future Olympic Games (see Figures 1 and 2). Contrary to what media outlets have argued, nationally-framed coverage might not draw any more viewers than a broadcast which focuses on cooperation, athletic skill, and athletes from a variety of countries.

Limitations and Future Research

Like most studies, this one suffers from a number of limitations. Perhaps the greatest limitation is the use of relatively brief clips to evoke the desired frames. Obviously, having individuals watch actual coverage of the Olympics would have greater ecological validity. Similarly, a more compelling case could be made if we could measure actual behavior in terms of subsequent Olympic viewing rather than behavioral intent. We also acknowledge that we used only a very narrow segment of the U.S. population (undergraduates at a major university who are younger and better educated than the majority of Olympic viewers). Moreover, the sample size per condition did not allow for in-depth analysis of within group differences (i.e. in terms of gender, race, etc).
There are also a number of other experimental conditions that would have been of interest. For instance, examining the impact of American media commentary on viewer perceptions of the Olympics would obviously have been very worthwhile. Also, research which compared the framing of U.S. Olympic coverage to the frames adopted by media outlets in other countries — and then correlated levels of support for IOC goals and international engagement in each country — would have proved extremely valuable. Finally, our study effectively limited discussion to the possibility of only two frames: nationalistic and international. This focus was not meant to suggest that alternative or “mixed” frames do not exist or are irrelevant to Olympic broadcasts. Thus, an exploration of a wider array of possible Olympic media frames would be most welcome. Lastly, we do not mean to suggest that television coverage of the Olympics is the only or even the primary influence on viewers’ attitudes toward other nations. Citizen attitudes, advertising demands, international business concerns, and government priorities all come together to influence the ways in which media outlets choose to cover certain topics. The relative size of the media’s role in shaping public opinion about the Olympics, as well as identifying other key factors in this process, are topics for future research.

**Conclusions**

This research exposes a contradiction between how the modern Olympics Games are currently being presented to the American public and the official mission of the IOC. Our results reveal important and potentially alarming consequences of the use of highly nationalistic framing with respect to the Olympic Games, and perhaps international events more generally. These findings make a strong argument for the need to reframe or at least soften American television coverage of the Olympic Games. Ultimately, this research provides insight into how sports diplomacy, competition, national rivalry, internationalism, Social Identity Theory, and the concept of framing fit together in the media’s portrayal of the Olympic spectacle, and how we might be able to steer a more productive course in future coverage of international events.

**REFERENCES**


MEDIA AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: AN ATTRIBUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF IN-GROUP AND OUT-GROUP PERCEPTIONS IN EUROPEAN PRESS COVERAGE OF THE 2004 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

GABRIELE MELISCHEK AND JOSEF SEETHALER

As the success of public diplomacy depends on knowledge about the ways collective identities are formed and related to other collectivities, a methodological approach is proposed to examine group perceptions in international relations. The theoretical framework draws on constructivist international relations theory, which insists that foreign policy is, at its most basic, a process of defining in-groups and out-groups in the modern state system. On the other hand, it also draws on attribution theory, which is concerned with how people make explanations for behavior and the sorts of bias that occur in this process. In-group serving and out-group derogating attributions can be identified and interpreted with regard to the widely researched “group-serving-bias.” This study involved a comparative analysis of European press coverage of the 2004 U.S. presidential election and sought to clarify the relationship between the news media and foreign policy actors in framing of a foreign country. Results indicate heterogeneous frames of U.S. policies in European media as well as an interaction of different factors affecting media framing.

Keywords: international relations, attribution theory, group perception, U.S. presidential election

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In recent years, international diplomacy has begun to extend its focus beyond the interactions of national governments and to incorporate “broader” and “softer” strategies usually referred to as “public diplomacy.” Especially since the end of the Cold War, both the political and the communications environments have changed dramatically, and diplomatic efforts are having to “adjust” to “meet the times,” as Karen P. Hughes (2007), the U.S. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, has put it. Moving from “tough-minded” persuasion to more “tender-minded” goals (Deibel, & Roberts, 1976), modern public diplomacy aims at “communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and cultures, as well as its national goals and current policies” (Tuch, 1990, p. 3).

However, this shift in public diplomacy and in the environment where it takes place has raised two major problems. On the one hand, as public diplomacy is more concerned with winning the hearts and minds of publics than with “hard facts,” an appropriate tool is needed for measuring collective attitudes towards states in order to identify the starting point of public diplomacy strategies. As Robert Entman (2008) has recently pointed out, the degree of political cultural congruence between two states can be considered as the most important determinant of the success of public diplomacy.

On the other hand, in pursuing its goals public diplomacy, unlike traditional diplomacy, relies heavily on mass media to create a public opinion environment in a target country that will enable its political leaders to make decisions that are supportive of the advocate country’s foreign policy objectives (Gilboa, 2002b; Nye, 2004). Therefore, stimulating favorable treatment of the advocate country in foreign media has to take into account the relationships among news media, public opinion, and foreign policy in the target country. In recent years, these relationships have been globally subject to change, even though the kind of changes are all but clear (Nacos, Shapiro, & Insernia, 2000), thus making the designing of proper strategies perhaps more difficult than ever before.

To address this challenge, we propose an approach based on attribution theory to examine collective attitudes towards nation-states in terms of in-group and out-group perceptions, and due to the important role of mass media in public diplomacy, we apply this approach to a comparative analysis of foreign news coverage in order to clarify the relationship between the news media and foreign policy actors, namely the government and political elites. Given the assumption that public diplomacy efforts are especially necessary for convincing foreign nations who are more or less opposed to the advocate country’s policies,¹ the media’s traditional reliance on government positions when covering international relations issues (“indexing”) would make it harder to succeed. On the other hand, a range of different views among the media in the target country offers more potential for gaining greater representation for the advocate country’s policy objectives (Entman, 2008, p. 96). In light of the importance of the transatlantic alliance and the recent differences
within this relationship, the presented case study refers to European media coverage of the 2004 U.S. presidential election.

**MEDIA, PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Since Bernard Cohen’s (1963) pathbreaking book about *The Press and Foreign Policy*, numerous studies of news reporting on international relations issues have empirically tested the transfer of issue salience from the news media to the public. Obviously, to most people, mass media are the main sources of information about foreign affairs events, in particular, regarding foreign policy objectives and the persons and institutions involved in the foreign policy decision-making process (“foreign news at home”) as well as regarding the political actors and policies of foreign countries (“foreign news abroad;” Sreberny-Mohammadi, Stevenson, & Ugboajah, 1985). In relation to “foreign news at home,” recent studies not only confirm Cohen’s hypothesis that the media is telling the audience “what to think about” (Cohen, 1963, p. 13; emphasis in original), but they also offer strong empirical evidence that the weight and the interpretation people give to foreign policy issues in their assessments of government and politicians depends on the “framing” of those issues in the media (e.g., Iyengar, & Simon, 1993; Soroka, 2003; Entman, 2004). Similar agenda setting and framing effects can be observed with regard to “foreign news abroad,” when audiences base their evaluations of foreign nations on the issues emphasized and framed in media coverage (e.g., Wanta, & Hu, 1993; Brewer, Graf, & Willnat, 2003; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). These results coincide with a rapidly growing body of research literature which is based on the assumption that a particular definition and interpretation of an issue in news reports can have an influence on the particular constructs people connect with the issue in order to gain an understanding of it (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001; Chong, & Druckman 2007).

In contrast to the largely consistent findings about the media-public relationship, the link between the media and foreign policy has been subject to controversial discussions in recent years (Robinson 2007). As Entman (2000) argues, the end of the bipolar world system and of the Cold War foreign policy consensus brought along the end of any certainty of how to interpret foreign affairs events. However, there is no agreement about the nature of the changes. On the one hand, the Cold War setting is assumed to have given an advantage to the government to direct public opinion, because the media tended to parallel or to “index” the government’s viewpoints (Bennett, 1990; Iyengar, & Simon, 1993; Zaller, & Chiu, 1996) — albeit depending on the degree of consensus among political elites in power and in opposition (Hallin, 1984; Nacos, 1990) — while studies of post-Cold War crises reveal a less clear pattern of media behavior (Goodman, 1999; Zaller, & Chiu, 2000). Moreover, without any convincing definition of “national interests” and due to new communication technologies that enabled global, 24-hour-a-day, live television coverage broadcast from
around the world, the media is hypothesized to have become more independent in defining and framing international relations issues, thus affecting the conduct of foreign policy, as the so-called “CNN effect thesis” suggests (e.g., Gilboa, 2002a; Robinson, 2002; Bahador, 2007).

On the other hand, scholars argue, that “the ‘Cold War frame’ gave the public a heuristic or cognitive short-cut for understanding foreign affairs and thereby some vantage point from which they might constrain, if not attempt to influence, the direction of government policy” (Shapiro, & Jacobs, 2002, p. 198). Without this frame, policymakers may even have greater opportunity to direct public opinion, especially when journalists fail to offer critical analysis (Mermin, 1999). These conflicting considerations are the starting point of an analysis of European press coverage of the 2004 U.S. presidential election.

Considering the importance of the American-European partnership for global politics, this election, and the unusually high degree of worldwide attention it gained (Beom, Carlin, & Silver, 2005), provides a unique opportunity for a comparative analysis of foreign news coverage in various countries with different relations to the United States. This public attention is widely considered as an expression of the deep differences within the transatlantic alliance, but also within the European Union, emerging in the course of the last Iraq War. There is, however, no agreement about the nature of these differences. The central question concerns whether they represent a temporary phenomenon primarily attributable to the leadership-style of President Bush and his handling of the war in Iraq, or whether they reflect a deeper cultural rift, especially growing since the end of the Cold War and parallel with the traditionally French- and German-led European integration process. While some political analysts argue that for all the differences over the Iraq war, American and European values and global interests remain highly similar (Gordon, & Shapiro, 2004), others contend that these differences represent only the tip of an iceberg. In their view, the value gap is increasing so quickly that it makes them question whether the alliance between the United States and “postmodern” Europe can survive (Kagan 2004, p. 157) — or at least between the United States and “old” Europe, as former U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld labeled all European states not cooperating with the United States during the Iraq war.

These multifaceted differences between the former Cold War allies might serve as a good example for examining the different conditions of public diplomacy. As governments aim at exerting control over domestic media’s framing of their foreign policies, they also attempt to implement efforts to increase support for a favorable framing of their policies in foreign media. Acknowledging the media’s expanding role in diplomacy, Entman (2008) calls this process “mediated public diplomacy.” Its success requires a favorable framing of the advocate country in the target country’s media, thus indicating political cultural congruence or, at least, cultural overlap between the two nation-states. Because the formation of news frames depends on the interplay of the aforementioned forces, such as the target country’s government, political elites, and journalists (Entman 2004), they have to be included in a model for examining those basic frames of a foreign country in international
relations coverage in order to provide sufficient analysis of the conditions for public diplomacy.

**MEDIA FRAMING OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ISSUES: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

As public diplomacy is strongly “linked to fundamental positions about the way individuals organize themselves into collectivities (whether publics or nations), form identities and relate to other collectivities” (L’Etang, 1996, p. 34), the theoretical framework of the analysis draws on constructivist international relations theory. This theory insists that international relations cannot be reduced to rational action within material or institutional constraints at national and international levels, but must be understood as a pattern of action that shapes and is shaped by social identities, i.e., how states see themselves in relation to other states (Wendt, 1994). In this sense, foreign policy is, at its most basic, “a process and manifestation of defining boundaries between in-groups and out-groups in the modern state system” (Johnston, 1999, p. 10). Accordingly, foreign policy frames are always concerned with “who are ‘we’ and ‘they’” (Gamson, 2001, p. x). They function as cognitive shortcuts for in-group and out-group formation, legitimating cooperative policies to be adopted towards states that are believed to share the same values, the same concept of legitimate domestic order and the same kind of threats to this order, while justifying competitive behavior to be directed at “out-group” states. Social identity theory argues that the construction of an in-group identity is closely connected not only to the construction of different notions of the out-group, but often also to the devaluation of out-groups (a process, commonly referred to as “othering”). Thus, the evaluative construction of in- and out-groups affects the mutual expectations about the Other’s behavior and guides the interpretation of the Other’s actions (Abrams, & Hogg, 1990; Kowert, 1998).

Moreover, as Rivenburgh (1997, p. 84) argues, “social identification is not merely the calling forth of stored ‘attributes’ of self and other, but rather a dynamic process, in which collective identities are continually being reconsidered, renegotiated, and recomposed relative to other groups,” and it is this permanent process of constructing identities that “seems critical to better understanding of the nature of media presentations of international affairs.” Thus, considering that, in an international relations context, public opinion primarily functions as one of the constraints of policy-making, setting “broad and unspecified limits to the foreign policy choices” (Risse-Kappen, 1991, p. 510), in-group and out-group perceptions can be identified as the crucial point at the interface of politics, media, and public opinion.

Obviously, there are varying degrees of in-group identification and varying degrees of devaluation of an out-group, depending on the requirements for consolidating the legitimacy of the in-group’s internal order. Less devaluation means less competitiveness directed at the
out-group and, therefore, less intergroup conflict potential (Tajfel, & Turner, 2001; Johnston, 2006). As Alexander Wendt (1999, p. 306) has put it, “identification with others is rarely total.” There may be, according to Wendt, different perceptions of the “Other” in various policy areas — and in differently emphasized policy areas — manifesting themselves in multiple group identifications, or there may be different perceptions of government and people producing tensions between different levels of group identification. Both differentiations seem to be useful to acquiring the most accurate assessment of the media’s role in constructing particular notions of in-groups and out-groups.

With regard to the distinction between government and people, it is appropriate to differentiate between the perception of policies and the perception of public opinion, as Entman (2000) has suggested. On the one hand, Entman assumes that the main power of the media is not so much to change the political preferences of the people but rather to influence the priorities people attach to their various policy preferences by what they report and how they report. On the other hand, the media (as well as politicians) attempt to influence the picture of public opinion in our heads — to vary Walter Lippmann’s (1922) famous phrase — by constructing a particular perception of polling results. With regard to international relations coverage, media tend to influence the public’s priorities in evaluating policies of a foreign country by emphasizing and framing certain policy issues, while, on the other hand, they tend to shape the perception of public opinion of a foreign country and thus the image of a foreign people by emphasizing and framing certain polling results.

**Hypotheses and Research Questions**

The coverage of U.S. politics during the 2004 presidential election campaign in leading newspapers in two European allies of the United States in the Iraq war (Italy and United Kingdom) and in two countries opposing the war (France and Germany) was chosen for a comparative case study because of two reasons. Firstly, the expected wide range of political issues addressed during an intensively followed campaign facilitates a broad-based analysis of in-group and out-group perceptions. Secondly, the different degrees of internalization of an otherwise commonly shared political culture (as manifested in different attitudes towards the war in Iraq) provide the necessary precondition for a most similar system design in order to isolate the factors responsible for differences between the cases. (Leading newspapers were chosen because they serve as news leaders for other mass media in their own country as well as abroad.) With regard to our research question, we examine whether the “indexing” assumption is still valid in the post-Cold War era, thus establishing constraints which would make it more difficult for public diplomacy efforts to succeed in target countries holding more or less opposing views on the advocate country’s policies.

To test this assumption, which suggests French and German media apply an out-group frame and British and Italian newspapers apply an in-group frame in their perception of U.S. foreign policies, the newspapers’ political orientation was introduced as a control variable.
This variable may indicate that “something has changed” in a way that insinuates a more independent approach of journalists in foreign policy reporting (Zaller, & Chiu, 2000, p. 81).

Given the assumption that the formation of frames can be explained by an interaction of the influences of interest groups and of journalists’ norms and practices (Gamson, & Modigliani, 1987, p. 168), among the professional norms and routines, the editorial line seems to be crucial to media framing (Wicks, 2005, p. 345). 5 On the one hand, long-term research results have revealed attributes of ideology as consistently having been “the most powerful correlates of attitudes on a wide range of foreign policy issues” (Holsti, 2004, p. 231). On the other hand, and perhaps more important, ideological disagreement “can make a valuable contribution to democratic politics in society” through providing a range of different views (Zaller, 1992, p. 327). Therefore, it can also offer fertile ground for public diplomacy strategies. On these grounds, we formulated the first hypothesis, reading as follows:

H1: According to the “indexing” assumption, one has to expect European media to frame official U.S. foreign policies in terms of the respective governments’ viewpoints (albeit depending on the degree of elite consensus), even when controlled for the newspapers’ political orientation.

Taking the possibility of different perceptions of the “Other” in various policy areas into account, it seems useful to enlarge the scope of the “indexing” hypothesis by examining coverage of domestic and economic policies.

H2: If the assumption is justified, that this war “was only the most accentuated and visible instance” of a series of transatlantic conflicts encroaching upon issue areas as diverse as international trade, the protection of the environment or the International Criminal Court (Hoese, & Oppermann, 2007, p. 43), then accordingly, the same pattern as predicted in H1 should be found in the coverage of official U.S. domestic and economic policies.

These hypotheses should apply most strongly to news coverage of the policies of President Bush, because state-related processes of identification and “othering” are primarily concerned with agreement versus disagreement with the official position, as represented by the respective government. Besides, foreign election coverage, at least in Europe, is assumed to concentrate on the incumbent (Zeh, 1992, p. 102). Hence, our third hypothesis reads:

H3: With regard to homogeneous frames, differences between the coverage of the incumbent and of the challenger in the various policy areas are not expected to be significant.
Finally, in line with our considerations with regard to constructing particular notions of in-groups and out-groups by holding different views of government and people, the perception of U.S. public opinion serves as a reference point for measuring the degree of identification with the United States.

RQ1: Is there any association between the perception of the U.S. government’s policies and the perception of U.S. public opinion reinforcing the group-serving bias as observed in H1—H3?

**Method and Data**

The methodological approach proceeds from two assumptions: firstly, that a particular framing of an issue in news reports can have an influence on which constructs people connect with it, and, secondly, that an applicable construct is far more likely to be activated when it is accessible (Scheufele, & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 13). Consequently, attention and comprehension, agenda-setting and framing, are closely linked to each other (McCombs, 2004, p. 70). As Entman (2007, p. 164) has argued, those “types of claims that happen to encompass the core business of strategic framing” — problem definition, evaluation, causal interpretation, and treatment recommendation — can be and are often described as central elements of the attribute level of agenda setting (Benton, & Frazier, 1976). However, frames assemble those elements in such a way “that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman, 2007, p. 164). A frame, therefore, is usually defined as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events,” suggesting “what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (Gamson, & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). In order to operationalize “in-group” and “out-group frames” as such central organizing ideas, we propose to concentrate on the media’s evaluations and explanations of “success” and “failure.”

According to social psychology findings, evaluations, and explanations of success and failure (so-called “attributions”) are one of the most powerful cognitive tools for gaining an understanding of social reality (Gerbner, 1985; Cappella, & Jamieson, 1996), evaluations of success and failure are closely connected with the perception of public opinion as well as the perception of the policies of the candidates — not only in domestic, but also in foreign policy coverage in general (Seib, 1997, p. 15) and, in particular, in foreign election coverage. While the perception of the policies and policy proposals of the candidates in a foreign election indicates who the media views to be successful or not (and why), it is through the perception of public opinion in the reported country that the media gives a sense of who they view to be successful or not in that country’s public opinion (and why).

Our analysis of the media’s evaluations and explanations of success and failure is based on attribution theory. Influenced by the work of the Austrian-American psychologist Fritz
Heider (1958), Bernard Weiner (1986) developed a four-fold classification of common sense explanations for success and failure (so-called “attributions”). It suggests that an individual’s achievement can be attributed either to factors within the person or to factors within the environment (i.e., to internal or external factors), while considering the temporal nature of the cause, i.e., whether the internal or external cause is a stable or an unstable one. Based on this classification, a large number of studies indicate that attributions may serve a self-esteem function to the extent that (in general) they are relatively internal-stable for success and relatively external or internal-unstable for failure (Zuckerman, 1979). This so called “self-serving bias” has been extended to intergroup contexts, where leading group members take credit for their group’s successes while denying or explaining away responsibility for group failures (“group-serving bias;” Hewstone, 1989, 1990). As Kowert (1998) argues, these in-group serving and out-group derogating attributions not only affect the way we view ourselves and others, but works at the level of nation-states too.

In terms of political explanations, the categories of Weiner’s taxonomy can be specified most usefully in accordance to Paul Abramson et al.’s (2007) analysis of voting behavior (see Table 1). On the one hand, issue positions and personal traits, representing terminal and instrumental values (Rokeach, 1979, p. 246), can be regarded as internal and stable attributions. This applies to explanations that refer to the principles guiding the candidates’ actions, such as unilateralism vs. multilateralism, or tax cuts vs. government spending. On the other hand, performance (such as the past or expected handling of the economy or handling of the war on terror) and strategies (concerning political action or the conduct of campaigns) can be regarded as internal-unstable attributions. Finally, social forces and situational factors can be regarded as being external. These attributions usually refer to societal developments, such as demographic changes or economic crisis, as well as to influences of other actors, like politicians or the media.

The study examines coverage of U.S. politics during the “hot phase” of the 2004 presidential campaign from Labor Day (September 6) to Election Day (November 2) in eight leading newspapers from four European countries: one right-leaning (conservative) and one left-leaning (liberal) newspaper from France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, respectively (Le Figaro, Le Monde, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica, The Daily Telegraph, and The Guardian). The selection is based on the results of a survey conducted in May 2000, among journalists mainly from Western Europe and North America, asking for their choices for the world’s elite newspapers which serve as news leaders for other mass media in their own country as well as abroad (Gross, 2003, p. 253).
According to our methodological approach outlined above, the content analysis was carried out at two levels. Firstly, following previous studies on the first level of agenda setting, we analyzed all articles on the front pages, on the international news pages in the front sections\(^8\) as well as all articles on the opinion pages and special election pages,\(^9\) referring to U.S. political actors (politicians, parties, etc.) in the headline, the lead, or the first paragraph. This was done in order to measure the general attention newspapers paid to the candidates.\(^10\) Secondly, all articles, prominently placed on page one as well as on the top half of the aforementioned pages, referring to Bush and/or Kerry as main actors, were analyzed for attributional content.

On this second level of analysis, explanations referring to the candidates’ success and failure were identified and categorized using the definitions given in Table 1.\(^11\) With regard to Entman’s distinctions between the perception of policies and the perception of public opinion, explanations with reference to the candidates’ policies were differentiated from those referring to the candidates’ horserace-standings. The analysis of the candidates’ policies is based exclusively on journalistic statements, while for the analysis of polling results, all explanations contributing to the mediated image of U.S. public opinion were taken into account (considering the source of these statements).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributions for ...</th>
<th>Success</th>
<th>Failure</th>
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<tr>
<td>In-group</td>
<td>Internal + stable: Value-based issue positions and personal traits</td>
<td>Internal + unstable: Performance and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>External + stable / unstable: Social forces and situational factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-group</td>
<td>Internal + unstable: Performance and strategies</td>
<td>Internal + stable: Value-based issue positions and personal traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External + stable / unstable: Social forces and situational factors</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Besides this content analytical data and the classification of allied and non-allied countries (as one of the three independent variables), the data used for the other two independent variables are referred from various sources. The newspapers under study were coded as “conservative” or “liberal” based on the descriptions in handbooks and overviews (e.g., Hallin, & Mancini, 2004; Johnston, 2003; Quick, 2002); the degree of consensus among political elites regarding the Iraq war was operationalized as the standard deviation of the pro- and anti-war arguments of government and opposition representatives between September 2002 and March 2003 (measured on a five-point scale). According to results from previous research, the degree of consensus among British, French, and German elites was clearly above the European average, while the degree of consensus among elites in Berlusconi’s Italy was among the lowest in Europe (Jaeger, & Viehrig, 2005, p. 22).

RESULTS

To summarize the overall results of our study, each of the eight newspapers under study published on average six articles per day about U.S. policy issues during the “hot phase” of the U.S. election campaign. The highest number of articles appeared in Le Monde (eight articles per day), and the lowest number in the Corriere della Sera (four articles per day). The average daily amount of coverage was measured at over five times higher than coverage of foreign elections in European countries (Zeh, 1992, p. 61). This is strong confirmation of the widely assumed high salience of the 2004 U.S. presidential election in the media outside the United States. Thus, all eight newspapers have created the necessary precondition for getting their messages across.

Examining the attention given to the candidates, there is a clear hierarchy of coverage in the British and German newspapers that strongly favors the incumbent. Considering the main actor, more than one third of U.S. politics stories in The Guardian and in the Daily Telegraph dealt with President Bush (38 and 34%, respectively). In contrast, Senator Kerry appeared as the main actor in only about 20% of the articles in each newspaper. A similar bias can be observed in both German newspapers, with 22% of U.S. politics stories featuring Bush, and only 13% featuring Kerry. On the other hand, French, and Italian newspapers provided a more balanced coverage of the two candidates, with only a slight advantage (of less than 7%) for the incumbent.

Considering the accessibility condition, at the attribute level, it is crucial which policy areas are most salient in attributing success and failure and to which policy areas the candidates are most often linked. Firstly, taking the subject of each attribution into account, both the journalists’ perception of the candidates’ policies as well as the perception of U.S. public opinion were primarily concerned with foreign and security issues (36 and 49%, respectively) and — to a lesser extent — with domestic issues (21 and 18%, respectively). Economic issues, campaign strategy issues and overall assessments of the candidates played a minor role. Secondly, two out of three attributions offered by the newspapers to explain
U.S. public opinion and their own evaluations of U.S. politics are related to President Bush (see Figures 1 and 2). In both respects, for the eight newspapers under study, the issue positions of Senator Kerry appear more or less to have not warranted discussion. (Only Le Monde and La Repubblica paid some more attention to the challenger’s proposals.) In particular, foreign policy attributions — as the most frequent attributions — deal primarily with President Bush; three out of four of them refer to the Iraq war and the fight against terrorism. As Margaret Scammell (2005, p. 208) has put it with regard to the British media, this election was viewed as “a referendum on Bush, the ‘war president’.”

In contrast to widespread opinion, the overall ratio of in-group to out-group attributions indicates a more balanced view on President Bush’s policies in European media (in particular with regard to foreign and economic policy), even when Senator Kerry was more likely to evoke feelings of in-group affiliation (see Table 2, column “Out-group”). Because the dependent variable is dichotomized (out-group/in-group frame), several logistic regressions were run to examine the impact of the potential press—government relationship on the framing of the candidates’ policies, controlled for consensus among political elites (with regard to the Iraq war) and the media’s political orientation. Comparable to linear regression, an $R^2$ is provided which roughly can be interpreted as the percentage of the explained variance of the dependent variable (with values above 0.2 reflecting a good fitting model). The unstandardized regression coefficient (the $B$ coefficient), multiplied by 100, can be interpreted as the increase/decrease in the probability of applying an out-group frame when the value of the predicting variable increases by 1.

Strikingly, and rather contrary to our hypotheses (H1-H3), the regression results clearly reveal great differences not only between the perception of both candidates’ policies and policy proposals in the various policy areas as well as in the general assessments of the candidates, but also between the newspapers, mainly in terms of their respective editorial line (see Table 2). However, the “indexing” hypothesis cannot be wholly rejected.

In the sensitive areas of international relations, represented not only by foreign policy but, partially, also by economic policy, the formation of frames in reporting the official position of a foreign country can be best explained by an interaction of governmental influences and of journalists’ norms, as Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p. 168) have assumed. Moreover, as Hallin (1984) has argued, the media’s willingness to join the government’s viewpoint depends on the degree of consensus or dissensus among political elites. As Italy was the only country under study characterized by a below European-average level of elite consensus, the critical attitudes of the media towards the Berlusconi government weakened the trend towards a more pronounced in-group bias in allied countries. This also applies, in the area of foreign policy, to the view of Senator Kerry who
was otherwise expected by liberal newspapers throughout Europe to return to multilateralism and international cooperation. In contrast to the third hypothesis, no “indexing” effect was found with regard to the challenger.

With regard to perceived public opinion as a reference point for measuring the degree of identification with the United States (RQ1), a comparison of the attributional patterns found in the perception of public opinion on foreign policy and in the perception of the candidates’ foreign policies reveals a balanced reflection of U.S. public opinion in European media which does not fit into an “indexing” pattern. The most striking differences can be observed with respect to the editorial line. Both conservative and liberal newspapers clearly distinguish between the U.S. government and the American people, regardless of their own
Comparing the various policy areas (H2), the political orientation of the newspapers played the most decisive role in covering U.S. domestic policies (as indicated by a relatively high regression coefficient and a high explanatory power of the regression). On the one hand, liberal newspapers were more likely to frame the President’s domestic policies in terms of an out-group affiliation than their conservative counterparts. On the other hand, they strongly
favored Senator Kerry’s (albeit less visible) domestic issue positions which were criticized by the conservative press. While both groups of newspapers differed in evaluating the candidates’ policies or policy proposals as a success or failure, they agree on referring mainly to political values in explaining domestic policy outcomes (which account for three quarters of all domestic policy attributions). These results obviously match the so-called “group serving bias.” The out-group, however, is not represented by the United States, but rather by the ideological counterpart to the respective editorial line in terms of the traditional liberal-conservative cleavage. Thus, European media coverage of U.S. domestic policy issues does not reveal any agreement on political values concerning topics such as social security, abortion, gay rights, and the protection of the environment. As far as domestic policies are concerned, the assumption that the transatlantic differences on the Iraq war represent only the tip of the iceberg, consisting of a series of conflicts on various issues, has to be rejected to a great extent. (As mentioned above, reporting on economic policies is characterized by a foreign-policy-like attributional pattern; however, the relatively low number of attributions indicates that minor importance is attached to these issues.) The results for domestic policy coverage are, by and large, supported by the perception of U.S. public opinion on this matter (RQ1). Conservative newspapers perceived the favored positions of the President to be widely shared by the American people (President Bush: $\chi^2 = 2.20, df = 1, N = 132, ns$; Senator Kerry: $\chi^2 = 1.31, df = 1, N = 49, ns$); liberal newspapers did not go so far as to impose their view entirely on the Americans, but painted at least a more or less divided country on this matter (President Bush: $\chi^2 = 26.12, df = 1, N = 150, p < .001$; Senator Kerry: $\chi^2 = 17.51, df = 1, N = 84, p < .001$).

**Discussion**

In this paper, we have outlined an approach for examining in-group and out-group perceptions as the crucial point at the interface of foreign politics, media, and public opinion and, therefore, as the most important determinant of the success of mediated public diplomacy. By addressing different policy areas, different actors, and different perspectives (government vs. the people), a multifaceted analysis of U.S. coverage in European media during the 2004 presidential election campaign was carried out. It was based on the assumption that an ongoing reliance of the media on government positions when covering foreign policy issues (“indexing”) would exacerbate public diplomacy efforts, because it might hamper communication with the media and the public of the target country.

Taking various determinants of in-group and out-group frames in media coverage into account, it becomes apparent, that with regard to the journalists’ perception of U.S. policies the political orientation of the newspapers played the most decisive, though not always straightforward role. Particularly, in reporting on official U.S. foreign and economic policies (even when the economic policies only received minor attention from European media), this trend is intertwined with the media’s tendency to accept their respective government’s
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approach, which itself is mediated by the degree of consensus among political elites. Given a high degree of consensus, on the one hand, liberal newspapers in non-allied countries (such as *Le Monde* and *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*) joined the strong opposition of the conservative French and the social-democratic German government and applied a clear out-group frame by attributing the failures of President Bush’s foreign policy primarily to a disdain of basic values in international policy (such as the observance of international law and the priority of peace-keeping actions). Their coverage of Bush’s domestic policies shows a similar framing. However, liberal newspapers in allied countries (such as *The Guardian*) tried to meet the government’s position halfway and named, chiefly, unstable and therefore changeable explanations for foreign policy failures, such as the absence of carefully considered strategies (in contrast to the otherwise internal-stable attributions of the negatively evaluated domestic policy outcomes). On the other hand, conservative newspapers in non-allied countries (such as *Le Figaro* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) framed foreign issues in the same way as liberal newspapers in allied countries but confronted it with in-group framed coverage of positively evaluated domestic policy outcomes, while conservative newspapers in allied countries (such as *The Daily Telegraph*) felt free to take a more pronounced in-group perspective. In Italy, the only country under study with a below-average degree of elite consensus (regarding its participation in the Iraq war), the critical attitudes of the media towards the Berlusconi government counteracted the trend towards a more pronounced in-group bias in U.S. foreign policy coverage in allied countries’ newspapers.

Most of all, these results indicate the media becoming a more independent controlling actor in international relations. Likewise, they also indicate a less important but nevertheless enduring role of the government in shaping the coverage of issues crucial to international relations such as the foreign and economic policy of a foreign country. However, our approach has several limitations. Firstly, influence of journalistic norms and routines was operationalized only in terms of the political orientation of the news organization. This decision was mainly based on considerations concerning the nature of democratic public discourse and its need for a range of different views which can be considered as a more promising condition for public diplomacy strategies (compared to a mainstream consensus opposed to the advocate country’s policy objectives). Nevertheless, there are a lot of factors inside media organizations that may affect media content, as thoroughly investigated by Shoemaker and Reese (1991). Secondly, in an increasingly global world, domestic and foreign policy are growing closer, because traditionally domestic policy areas such as energy policy, environmental policy, immigration policy, and social welfare are becoming subject to global pressures and influences. In our study, the results concerning the “indexing” assumption do not hold for domestic issues and, to that extent, the hypothesis that the differences over the Iraq war represent a growing value gap between the United States and “old” Europe has to be rejected. In line with these transatlantic differences as the starting point of the case study, the government’s position was operationalized as its Iraq war stance, i.e., according to a traditionally foreign policy issue. When boundaries between policy areas
become blurred in practice, it seems perhaps more appropriate to use an index consisting of various variables in future research to test the “indexing” hypothesis, particularly, in a social identity context.

With regard to the assumption that different views in the target country’s media makes it easier for public diplomacy to generate support for specific objectives through participating in the public discourse (or at least through enabling potential allies of an advocate’s country policy to force an opponent’s hand), the results can be interpreted as fertile ground for public diplomacy. The media’s political orientation plays not only the most decisive role in framing policies of a foreign country (with the exception of economic policy which evokes little ideological differences); moreover, all newspapers under study sought, for the most part, to provide a reasonably balanced picture of U.S. public opinion, thus distinguishing between government and people. As a result of both perspectives, European newspapers confronted their audiences with more or less heterogeneous frames which can be considered as essential requirements for public debate as well as for public diplomacy.

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ENDNOTES

1. Only in those rare cases where the positions of both countries coincide, would “indexing” provide a promising condition for public diplomacy.

2. While it is obvious that inconclusive data leaves plenty of room for different interpretations, in the case of more comprehensive data, highlighting specific aspects of the poll or neglecting one poll and finding another which supports one’s own view or “putting flesh on the statistical bones” via person-on-the-street interviews” (Hart, 1994, p. 107) can be useful strategies.

3. As already mentioned, a further distinction has to be made, taking both sides of an international relation into account, usually labelled as “foreign news abroad” and “foreign news at home” (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Stevenson, & Ugboajah, 1985). Accordingly, one has to distinguish between coverage of policies of a foreign country and coverage of policies concerning a foreign country and also between coverage of public opinion in a foreign country and coverage of public opinion about a foreign country. However, foreign election coverage deals primarily with two of these aspects: the policies of the candidates in foreign elections and public opinion in the reported country. The other two perspectives usually remain in the background. Even though a number of election surveys outside the U.S. were conducted in 2004, they represented the exception to the rule, and only a few articles covered
their results. Similarly, only a small number of articles were concerned with U.S.-related foreign policies, because politicians of other countries usually avoid interfering in foreign election campaigns.

4. The common shared “Kantian culture” — as Wendt (1999, p. 297) called it — is based on the rule of non-violence in settling conflicts between culturally similar states and the rule of mutual aid if the security of any one is threatened by a third party. Wendt differentiated between three degrees of internalization with identification of Self with Other only located at the third level (p. 304).

5. In particular, European newspapers usually position themselves with an identity on the left or right of, or independently from, party politics (Hallin, & Mancini, 2004).

6. This concept could be expanded to so-called “treatment attributions,” concerned with the consequences of an outcome (Brickman, Rabinowitz, Karuza Jr., Coates, Cohn, & Kidder, 1992; Iyengar, 1991; Melischek, & Seethaler, 2004).


8. Articles from other sections of the newspapers (e.g., national, finance, sports, and letters pages), short news columns as well as news without headlines were not included.

9. While most papers frequently published columns about the 2004 U.S. presidential election, there are a few papers which also offered some special pages dedicated to that topic.

10. All news stories were coded for their main subjects, as well as the main political actors. Results on this first level of agenda setting will be discussed in a forthcoming article focusing on the relationship between agenda setting and framing.

11. The coding was carried out separately for both levels of analysis. For actor and issue salience, newspaper stories were coded by nine trained coders (native speakers or graduate students with advanced foreign language skills); intercoder reliability tests were carried out in the training sessions. Based on Holsti’s (1969) formula, agreement ranged between 92.5 and 95.1%. Identification and classification of attributions was undertaken by the authors. They initially agreed on more than 90% on the categorization of attributions. Disagreements were discussed; only in a few cases was reconciliation not possible.

12. France: .59; United Kingdom: .83; Germany: .90; Italy: 1.46; European average: 1.13.

13. Due to limited space in this paper, the results of the preceding correlation analyses are not reported.

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