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ABSTRACT

This paper empirically evaluates the proposition that political conformism, specifically structural, passive, psychological, and defensive conformism, is a function of exposure to mass media. Secondary analysis of data from the National Opinion Research Center's 1975 General Social Survey revealed a significant relationship between TV viewing and conformism. The 484 heavy viewers were less active and interested in political affairs and had greater apprehension in regard to interpersonal and national relations than did the 650 light viewers. However, education weakened the correlation between viewing and passive and psychological conformity, and in the small nonwhite sample none of the four aspects were related to television viewing. There was no support for the hypothesis that heavy viewers generally approve existing political policies. In fact, the heavy viewers favored more government action to change social structure than did light viewers. Researchers suggest more attention to routine television viewing as a variable in political attitudes. (Author/KS)

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POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HEAVY TELEVISION VIEWING

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POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HEAVY TELEVISION VIEWING

Theory and content analysis would suggest that political conformism is a prime result of individuals' exposure to mass communications. Yet there is very little research treating any type of political stance as if it were a consequence of mass media use. More often, media consumption is taken as the dependent variable -- as the mark of good citizenship or an aid in political activism. The result has been rather narrow and unproductive research in a topic nevertheless inspiring sustained interest throughout the social sciences.

Current efforts are to broaden perspective on relationships between politics, individuals, and mass media (Chaffee, 1975; Seymour-Ure, 1974).

In parallel, this paper therefore explores the merits of treating television exposure as an independent variable relevant to individuals' political interests, preferences, beliefs, and behaviors.

Beginning with early mass communication theory, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1949) present an extended argument that mass media typically enforce the status quo through impact on individuals. They dismiss concern about harmful effects of propaganda. More important, they suggest, is a second peril, namely that consumption of mass media content renders the public conformative to the social order. Inasmuch as mass media are supported by businesses geared into social and economic systems, Lazarsfeld and Merton reason there is no logical alternative but for them to exert conservatizing social force. They doubt that even minor change comes of mass communications; instead, they speculate that mass media have cemented social structures.

Bogart (1962) reiterates Lazarsfeld and Merton's argument that individual-level conservatism follows from commercial control of mass media. In particular, he notes that television "entertainment" is important for its political implications:

The problem which television poses, both to the student and to the policy maker, is not that it has brought about any major qualitative transformation in the mores, values, or cultural standards of the public. It is, rather, that television content expresses the prevailing standards and delivers them with enormous impact within the home for more hours of the day than any media has ever done before (p.64).

Like Bogart, Breed (1958) and Gerbner (1973) advance the proposition that media exposure contributes to the maintenance of social order. Breed argues that manifest media content reinforces tradition as it repeatedly expresses and dramatizes accepted patterns of behavior. Additionally, through "reverse" content analysis, he suggests that mass media support the status quo by omission. Among items not published (or judged not likely to be published), many he analyzed dealt with politics and religion, matters of controversy. Gerbner refers to a "cultural politics" of mass communication. A particular consequence of viewing prime-time television drama, he suggests, is that existing power is conserved and maintained.

In support of a more limited proposition, that specific aspects of television content affirm existing power structures, there is an abundance of content analytic research. Dating from the early 50's to the present, this research consistently implies the conclusion that television encourages conformity (cf. Wright, 1975). Overall, network programming seems to fit the need for social order, judging by its pervasive, systematic distortions of reality. As

a familiar example of this distortion, TV crime never pays. Some chasing may be required, but criminal characters always are apprehended by the sure hand of the law or the private eye. Prisoners are brought to trial with speed. And at the close of court proceedings, punishments are prudently administered, usually with remorse on both sides. If there is no remorse, transgressors most often are portrayed as insane or inhuman.

Obviously TV programs do not describe crime and punishment as it occurs in real life. Rather, as Head (1954) observes, TV's distortions represent social values, wishes, and needs. Indicating the strength of the morality enforcement theme in television, characteristics of TV heroes might be considered. In Smythe's (1953) analysis of a week's programs broadcast in New York City, semantic differentiation revealed that heroes embody a magnificent array of normally unattainable social ideals. They are clean, brave, kind, fair, loyal, honest, and attractive. But not only are opposing villains beaten in attempting to wrest power, they are depicted as ugly, dirty, and plainly undesirable.

According to recent content analyses of television drama, the bent is the same today as in the 50's. The focus of attention remains on the preservation of moral, social, and/or global order by unreal heroes who represent loci of social power. This is quite apparent in westerns and action-adventure series, as well as in crime shows (Gerbner, 1972). More subtly, it is likewise the point of most comedy and variety shows, whose humor depends on mockery of the deviant, and of soap operas, "family" programs, and doctor-lawyer shows, which enact conventional strategies for coping with physical, familial, legal, and



moral stress (Goodlad, 1971). Not surprisingly, a wave of current research on television draws parallels between the real-life political powerlessness of women and minority groups, and TV programming (Seggar and Wheeler, 1974; Hinton, Seggar, Northcott, and Fontes, 1974; Turow, 1974; Tedesco, 1974; Seggar, 1975; McNeil, 1975).

Over and above evidence suggesting that television drama preserves and fosters established sociopolitical practices, TV news and commercials seem equally prone to glorify existing patterns of power and to denigrate minorities through misrepresentation, underrepresentation, and/or stereotyping. For example, commercials quite clearly assign trivial power to women. Content analyses concur that women, when portrayed, are most often young housewives using kitchen or bathroom products in the service of men (Courtney and Whipple, 1974; Dominick and Rauch, 1972). As for TV news, its resemblance to TV drama is well noted (Lang and Lang, 1953; Boorstin, 1961; Wolf, 1973; Larson, 1974). Like drama, network news originates from a quest for profit through broad-based appeal; infringements on individuals rarely are covered (Clark, 1968). Conventionality is further implied by the fact that TV news is threatened by government regulation, weak as it might really be (Philpot, 1973).



THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite theory and content analysis implicating political conformism as a major consequence of television viewing, only a few empirical studies relate to the question. One (Hartmann and Husband, 1972) considers mass media's contribution to continued colonialist thought in Great Britain. In an analysis of the frequency of racial conflict themes used by secondary schoolchildren during openended questioning, such themes were found significantly more often among children from areas with few -- not many -- immigrants. As a source of racial information, the children cited mass media more often than those from areas with greater numbers of immigrants.

Weigel and Jessor (1973) test the hypothesis that heavy psychological involvement with television is related to conventional social values, attitudes, and behavior. Among two samples of high school and of college students, they found general support for the conventionality prediction. Traditional values were endorsed and deviant behavior was avoided more by those scoring high on an involvement index, than by low scorers. Some of the "deviant" behaviors were lying, cheating, and marijuana use. Traditional values included religiosity and desire for academic recognition. The index of television involvement combined exposure, importance of the medium for information and entertainment, and contribution of TV to respondents' views on four sociopolitical issues.

Finally, Robinson and Zukin (1976) find primary dependence on television for information related to favorable views of Wallace and Nixon, and to less favorable views of the more liberal Humphrey. In their secondary analysis of 1968 Survey Research Center data, controls for age, education, income, and

political party did not much affect that relationship. The researchers speculate that television content provokes fear and anxiety, and thus, perhaps, conservative political preferences.

Notably, none of these existing studies deals with exposure to routine television content. In the case of Hartmann and Husband, exposure to mass media really is not a variable. Weigel and Jessor build into their involvement index dependency on TV as a source of political orientations. For Robinson and Zukin, the measure is reliance on television just for information, relative to other media. Secondly, these three studies deal with political conformism, indirectly, and only in specific, limited ways.

By contrast, in this paper television content in itself and as a whole is taken to encourage the political status quo. To test the proposition that TV exposure encourages political conformism, simple viewing therefore is the independent variable, along with appropriate controls.

The dependent variable, political conformism, is defined as compliance with existing power structures. But this might take private or public form, and it might be practiced for a number of reasons. Immediately, we think of what might be called "structural" conformism, springing from a general view that social change, and thus political change, is unnecessary. But, as suggested by Robinson and Zukin, conformism can as well arise from fear, as a defensive measure. Consequently, four aspects of political conformism will be considered in relation to television viewing: (1) psychological conformism, (2) passive conformism, (3) structural conformism, and (4) defensive conformism.



METHOD

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Measures appropriate to test the relationship between political conformism and television viewing were found in existing survey data: last year's "General Social Survey" by the National Opinion Research Center. The sample includes 1490 noninstitutionalized adults (18 years and older), distributed throughout the nation. A combination of block quota and full probability sampling techniques was used, half and half, both subsamples representing the same universe.

Data were elicited by trained interviewers, in respondents' homes. All but one questionnaire item -- the one ascertaining television viewing -- had been asked in previous surveys. A wide variety of topics was covered, such as politics, sex, religion, child-raising, and personal fulfillment. Interviews lasted about one hour.

Independent Variable

As a measure of television viewing, respondents were asked: "On the average day, about how many hours do you personally watch television?" Most often, three hours of viewing was the reply. Fifty-seven respondents said their average was nil.

For a comparative, "pure case" analysis, two viewing groups were defined by breaks on each side of the television viewing median. This puts 650 respondents into the "light viewer" category (1 or 2 hours of TV a day). "Heavy viewers" (4 hours or more daily) total 484. Eliminated from consideration were 291 median viewers, and the 57 nonviewers who lie outside the distribution of concern.

Dependent Variables

Structural conformism is manifested by reluctance to approve government activity designed to change social, political, and economic statuses. In the NORC data, this is indicated by respondents' views on seven policy questions. On a five point scale, respondents registered agreement (5 = strongest; 1 = weakest) with statements such as these:

Government should do even more to solve our country's problems.

Government ought to reduce the income difference between rich and poor -- perhaps by raising taxes for the wealthy or by giving income assistance to the poor.

Government should see to it that black and white children go to the same schools.

For each such item, heavy television viewers are expected to register less agreement than light viewers. Conversely, heavy viewers, more than light viewers, are predicted to say that existing government policy generally is right. This should be reflected by a second measure of structural conformism, known as political trust:

How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right -- just about always (4), most of the time (3), only some of the time (2), or none of the time (1)?

Passive conformism is a matter of political inactivity in the public sphere.

Whatever the individual's preferences, without some sort of overt activity, support inevitably is cast to the existing situation. Fewer heavy TV viewers than light viewers, thus are expected (1) to belong to a club or organization



(2) to report voting in the 1974 Congressional election (3) to report voting in the 1972 Presidential election.

Psychological conformism is the cognitive equivalent of passive conformism; it represents the absence of mental activity relevant to politics. Specifically, this would be expressed as low-level political interest. In the NORC survey, such interest was ascertained as follows:

Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs, whether there is an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time (4), some of the time (3), only now and then (2), or hardly at all (1)?

Compared to light TV viewers, heavy viewers' political interest should be lower. Similarly, heavy viewers' description of personal political views is expected to reflect lesser concern with political change. They are predicted to label themselves politically "moderate" or "middle of the road" more often than light viewers, given their choice of an array of political orientations from "very liberal" through "very conservative."

By definition, defensive conformism involves apprehension about conflict, or some fear or anxiety in regard to social interaction. A three item summary index ("faith in people") is used to measure this concept at the interpersonal level:

- Generally speaking, would you say that most people...
- a. can be trusted (or that you can't be too careful)?
- b. try to be helpful (or that they look out for themselves)?
- c. try to take advantage of you (or try to be fair)?

Pessimistic responses to two of three index items are taken to indicate "fear of being taken advantage of."



At the national level, two single items are taken to measure defensive conformism:

Do you expect the United States to fight in another war within the next ten years?

Do you think it will be best for the future of this country if we take an active part in world affairs, or if we stay out of world affairs?

More heavy television viewers are predicted to expect war and international conflict than light viewers.

Control Variables

Disregarding hours of television viewing per day, respondents' sex, race, age, and education provide independent bases for predicting political conformism. In cases of significant differences between light and heavy viewer groups on major dependent variables, these factors therefore will be controlled. However, specific differences in political conformism will not be considered as they occur within and across control groups. Insofar as this paper explores questions regarding any general relationship between television viewing and political conformism, group-restricted phenomena are of minor interest.

RESULTS

Beginning analysis with consideration of structural conformism among the heavy and light viewers, Table 1 indicates that heavy TV viewers are more likely to advocate social change through government action. Contrary to prediction, they favor government action to a significantly greater extent than light viewers. Heavy viewers are more likely to approve government reduction of the income gap, vigorous efforts at school integration, assistance with health costs, improved standards of living for blacks and the poor, and overall increase in attempts to solve the country's problems. Also, they express greater agreement with the idea of increased spending on domestic problems through cuts in the defense budget, but this difference does not reach conventional levels of significance.

Controlling for sex, race, age, and education for the six policy questions reflecting statistically significant differences between heavy and light viewers, the relationship between TV viewing and structural nonconformism generally is maintained (Table 2). Except in the case of the nonwhite subgroup ($n = 126$), all t -values in Table 2 are negative, indicating for this analysis consistently greater desire for government action among heavy viewer subgroups. With a few exceptions, these t -values also are statistically significant, at the .05 level of probability, or better.

Lack of evidence for structural conformism among heavy as opposed to light TV viewers comes too from comparing levels of political trust across the two viewer groups. The result: mean trust does not differ perceptibly or significantly ($t = 0.6$).

However, from analysis of heavy and light viewers' political activities (Table 3), it appears that heavy viewers tend to conform to existing power structures publicly if not privately. Significantly fewer hold membership in any club or organization, and significantly fewer report voting either in 1972 or in 1974. In each case, the difference in activity is at least twelve percent in favor of light viewers. Table 4 indicates that this relationship between viewing and passive conformism holds for both sexes and under 30/30 and over age groups. Further, it holds for whites and the high school educated. However, it fails for nonwhites and for those with some college.

Support is gained for the prediction that heavy TV viewers conform psychologically to the status quo. Mean political interest is significantly lower for the heavy TV group (Table 5), a pattern of response which holds for males, both age groups, and the white majority. For nonwhites, again light and heavy viewers do not differ significantly on the measure of political conformism. Neither do the college educated viewers. Among the high school educated group, political interest is considerably lower for heavy viewers, but the difference is not quite significant.

Psychological conformism also is suggested by the labels viewing groups attach to their political orientations. As predicted, more heavy viewers call themselves politically "moderate" or "middle of the road" than light viewers (44% vs. 37%, $t=2.33$, $p=.01$).

Finally, Tables 6 and 7 indicate significantly greater defensive conformism among heavy TV viewers. Compared to light viewers, more report apparent fear

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of interpersonal interaction. On the national-level, a greater percentage expects war within ten years, and more say it would be better if the United States entirely avoided world affairs. Except for the nonwhite subgroup, this pattern of response holds generally -- for males and females, young and old, high school and college educated viewers alike.

DISCUSSION

Support was lent to the proposition that television viewing is an important factor in three of the four aspects of political conformism under consideration. Heavy television viewers showed significantly less political activity, less psychological involvement, and more apprehension in regard to interpersonal and national relations than did light viewers. However, there was negative support for the idea that heavy viewers are committed intellectually to the status quo. The analysis indicated just the opposite, that they advocate more social change through government action than light viewers. Why might this be?

One likely explanation for heavy viewers' structural nonconformism comes after considering possible dynamics of the three supported aspects of political conformism analyzed in this paper. The picture is one of timidity, ambivalence, and some fear of involvement. If these terms accurately describe the heavy viewer, then the desire for government action -- in the form of aid and assistance to society and its smaller members -- fits well. Heavy viewers might be seeking protection for themselves and others. We know violence is a great part of television content; perhaps it is responsible for this pattern of response, as Robinson and Zukin (1976) suggest.

Alternatively, structural conformism can be reconsidered definitionally. To the extent that television functions to preserve and foster society as an entity, a disposition to aid weaker members of the public might be taken to be the "conformist" response. For example, it can be argued that improving standards of life, and doing more to solve problems, only would strengthen society.

Improved living standards for blacks and the poor certainly would enhance sociopolitical stability. Similarly, greater effort at solving the country's problems ultimately would benefit society. Heavy viewers' political response to television thus could be considered socially "preservative," in the long run, but not fiscally conservative.

A second major question raised by this analysis concerns nonwhites' political response to television. Generally they are believed to be extra-responsive to the medium, but in this case heavy and light viewers in the nonwhite subgroup did not differ significantly in political conformism, except on one item. It may be that the population-based distinction drawn between "heavy" vs. "light" viewing simply was not appropriate for this subgroup. But at the same time it is quite likely that nonwhites' poor integration into mainstream American society precludes typical responsiveness to cues in mass media. In future research, this question might be addressed through detailed study of political conformism within and across subgroups, in consideration of the neglected issue of television's differential level of effect due to respondents' background. Additional control variables might usefully be considered as well, as part of a larger effort to determine the role of television as an agency of political socialization for adults and children.

In conjunction with research assessing television's importance as a political socialization agency, the question of causation could receive the attention it deserves. As a first consideration of a general relationship between TV exposure and political conformism, cause-effect was not an issue for this paper. But, based on the outcome of the research, now there are grounds to

seriously consider the problem. Heavy viewers may watch a lot of television because they do not participate in the same amount or type of interaction as others. Feeling a threatened existence, they might watch television as a safe, "para-social" substitute for interaction. Another possibility is that the strain of high-level sociopolitical conformity would encourage submersion in a medium offering pleasant diversion without much effort. In this regard, more information about heavy viewers' specific exposure patterns would be useful, plus some knowledge of motives in viewing.

Further attention should also be paid to the dependent variable, political conformism. Here, several of its aspects were explored, but there are of course others. In the same vein, behaviors reflecting conformism specific to selected aspects of television content could be studied. For example, we could ask whether heavy viewers would refuse to vote women and minorities into political office, given these groups' TV portrayals as unimportant and weak. And would the heavy viewers endorse the same liberal interpretation of suspects' rights as TV police?

In conclusion, a considerable number of questions surrounds these findings for a relationship between TV time and political conformism. However, the basic point endures. Exposure to television is not a trivial behavior unworthy of study. In the political realm, in fact it may prove quite important.

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Table 1

LIGHT AND HEAVY TV VIEWERS' DESIRED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS^a

| <u>Government Action</u> | <u>Light Viewers</u> \bar{x} | <u>Heavy Viewers</u> \bar{x} | <u>t</u> | <u>p</u> |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Improve standard of life among the poor | 3.2 | 3.6 | -4.90 | ** |
| Do even more to solve the country's problems | 3.0 | 3.5 | -6.25 | ** |
| Help people pay for doctors and hospital bills | 3.3 | 3.8 | -5.95 | ** |
| Reduce income difference between rich and poor | 3.4 | 3.9 | -5.39 | ** |
| Improve standard of life among blacks | 2.4 | 2.6 | -2.27 | * |
| Cut defense budget and spend more on domestic problems | 3.0 | 3.2 | -1.91 | ns |
| See to it black and white children go to the same schools | 2.2 | 2.5 | -2.97 | ** |
| | n = 630 | 460 | | |

^a Maximum desire = 5, minimum = 1

**p < .01 (t-test)
*p < .05 (t-test)



Table 2

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIGHT AND HEAVY VIEWERS' MEAN DESIRED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS,
CONTROLLING FOR SEX, RACE, AGE, EDUCATION^a

| | Males | | Females | | Whites | | Non-Whites | | Under 30 | | 30 and Over | | No College | | Some College | |
|---|-------|-----|---------|-----|--------|-----|------------|-----|----------|-----|-------------|-----|------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p |
| Improve standard of life among the poor | -3.01 | ** | -3.53 | ** | -4.69 | ** | 1.01 | ns | -2.64 | ** | -3.80 | ** | -2.68 | ** | -3.48 | ** |
| Do even more to solve the country's problems | -4.62 | ** | -3.75 | ** | -5.68 | ** | -0.06 | ns | -1.40 | ns | -5.76 | ** | -4.30 | ** | -3.43 | ** |
| Help people pay for doctors and hospital bills | -4.04 | ** | -4.40 | ** | -5.15 | ** | -1.41 | ns | -1.94 | ns | -5.07 | ** | -5.08 | ** | -3.61 | ** |
| Reduce income difference between rich and poor | -3.81 | ** | -3.38 | ** | -5.43 | ** | 1.34 | ns | -3.01 | ** | -4.53 | ** | -3.61 | ** | -1.96 | * |
| Improve standard of life among blacks | -1.53 | ns | -1.51 | ns | -1.10 | ns | 0.64 | ns | -2.41 | * | -0.80 | ns | -2.27 | * | -1.44 | ns |
| See to it black and white children go to the same schools | -1.31 | ns | -2.62 | ** | -1.47 | ns | -0.32 | ns | -2.64 | ** | -1.51 | ns | -2.04 | * | -2.65 | ** |
| | n = | 500 | n = | 590 | n = | 960 | n = | 126 | n = | 300 | n = | 770 | n = | 762 | n = | 323 |

^aNegative t = greater desire for action among heavy viewer groups
Positive t = greater desire for action among light viewer groups

**p < .01 (t-test)
*p < .05 (t-test)



Table 3

LIGHT AND HEAVY TV VIEWERS' POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

| | <u>Light Viewers</u> | <u>Heavy Viewers</u> | <u>t</u> | <u>p</u> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| | % | % | | |
| Membership in one or more organizations | 74.3 | 61.7 | 4.45 | ** |
| Voted in the 1974 Congressional election | 62.2 | 48.0 | 4.79 | ** |
| Voted in the 1972 Presidential election | 74.8 | 61.3 | 4.64 | ** |
| | n = 630 | 460 | | |

**p < .01 (t-test for difference between percentages)

*p < .05 (t-test for difference between percentages)

Table 4

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIGHT AND HEAVY VIEWERS' POLITICAL ACTIVITY,
CONTROLLING FOR SEX, RACE, AGE, EDUCATION^a

| | Males | | Females | | Whites | | Non-Whites | | Under 30 | | 30 and Over | | No College | | Some College | |
|--|-------|----|---------|----|--------|----|------------|----|----------|----|-------------|----|------------|----|--------------|----|
| | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p |
| Membership in one or more organizations | 2.63 | ** | 3.38 | ** | 4.36 | ** | 1.33 | ns | 5.77 | ** | 2.56 | * | 3.33 | ** | 1.28 | ns |
| Voted in the 1974 Congressional election | 3.79 | ** | 2.79 | ** | 4.79 | ** | -0.43 | ns | 2.28 | * | 3.51 | ** | 3.24 | ** | 1.92 | ns |
| Voted in the 1972 Presidential election | 2.87 | ** | 3.50 | ** | 4.43 | ** | 0.44 | ns | 1.99 | * | 3.64 | ** | 3.36 | ** | 0.54 | ns |
| n = | 500 | | 590 | | 960 | | 126 | | 300 | | 770 | | 762 | | 323 | |

^aNegative t = greater activity among heavy viewer groups
Positive t = greater activity among light viewer groups

**p ≤ .01 (t-test for difference between percentages)
*p ≤ .05 (t-test for difference between percentages)



Table 5

LIGHT AND HEAVY TV VIEWERS' POLITICAL INTEREST^a

| | <u>Light Viewers</u> | <u>Heavy Viewers</u> | <u>t</u> | <u>p</u> | <u>n</u> |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | \bar{x} | \bar{x} | | | |
| All | 3.2 | 3.0 | 3.37 | ** | 1090 |
| Males | 3.4 | 3.1 | 3.68 | ** | 500 |
| Females | 3.1 | 3.0 | 0.71 | ns | 590 |
| White | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.45 | ** | 960 |
| Nonwhites | 2.9 | 3.0 | -0.73 | ns | 126 |
| Under 30 | 3.1 | 2.8 | 2.85 | ** | 300 |
| 30 and over | 3.3 | 3.2 | 2.10 | * | 770 |
| No College | 3.1 | 3.0 | 1.93 | ns | 762 |
| Some College | 3.5 | 3.5 | -0.64 | ns | 323 |

^aMaximum interest = 4, minimum = 1

**p < .01 (t-test)

*p < .05 (t-test)

Table 6

LIGHT AND HEAVY TV VIEWERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT
IN INTERACTION

| | <u>Light Viewers</u> | <u>Heavy Viewers</u> | <u>t</u> | <u>p</u> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| | % | % | | |
| Fear being taken ad- vantage of | 32.1 | 50.4 | -6.05 | ** |
| Expect the United States to fight another war within 10 years | 70.2 | 75.6 | -2.00 | * |
| Think it would be best for the future of the country to stay out of world affairs | 31.6 | 47.2 | -5.34 | ** |
| n = | 630 | 460 | | |

**p < .01 (t-test for difference between percentages)

*p < .05 (t-test for difference between percentages)

Table 7
 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIGHT AND HEAVY VIEWERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT
 CONTROLLING FOR SEX, RACE, AGE, EDUCATION^a

| | <u>Males</u> | | <u>Females</u> | | <u>Whites</u> | | <u>Non-Whites</u> | | <u>Under 30</u> | | <u>30 and Over</u> | | <u>No College</u> | | <u>Some College</u> | |
|--|--------------|----|----------------|----|---------------|----|-------------------|----|-----------------|----|--------------------|----|-------------------|----|---------------------|----|
| | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p | t | p |
| Fear being taken advantage of | -4.23 | ** | -4.23 | ** | -5.65 | ** | 0.37 | ns | -4.01 | ** | -3.78 | ** | -2.63 | ** | -4.67 | ** |
| Expect the U.S. to fight another war within 10 years | -1.20 | ns | -1.45 | ns | -1.58 | ns | -1.30 | ns | -2.73 | ** | -0.44 | ns | -0.03 | ns | -3.14 | ** |
| Think it would be best for the future of the country if we stay out of world affairs | -3.85 | ** | -3.03 | ** | -4.69 | ** | -0.87 | ns | -2.35 | * | -4.50 | ** | -3.93 | ** | -0.82 | ns |
| n = | 500 | | 590 | | 960 | | 126 | | 300 | | 770 | | 762 | | 523 | |

Fear being taken advantage of

Expect the U.S. to fight another war within 10 years

Think it would be best for the future of the country if we stay out of world affairs

n =

^aNegative t = greater sense of threat among heavy viewer groups
 Positive t = greater sense of threat among light viewer groups

** p < .01 (t-test for difference between percentages)
 * p < .05 (t-test for difference between percentages)

