DOCUMENT RESUME

ABSTRACT

          This study surveyed equal groups of American, French
Canadian, and English-Canadian high school students to learn what
sources they used in formulating views on national and international
issues. A total of 600 eleventh grade history students was surveyed.
Results showed that mass media was the primary source used by all
groups: in particular television newscasts, newspapers, and
documentary films were influential. Both Canadian groups used these
media more than Americans did. The second most important source was
the school, although this was a minor source for both Canadian
groups. In all groups, the teacher has the dominant individual role,
while textbooks are next in importance. Films and educational
television have only a minor role in school information. Third in
importance was influence of the peer group, and least important was
religion. This study negates earlier studies by showing that the home
has changed from an information-poor environment to an
information-rich one, due to television. The schools are falling
behind in their role as an agent of socialization. Schools should
utilize the mass media far more than they do presently. (JK)

EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND THE FORMULATION

OF

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATIONS

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NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATIONS

Gary O. Coldevin

INTRODUCTION

A direct consequence of high technology within North America has been
variously labeled as "Global Village" communication dissemination and aware-
ness. How this information implosion affects the process of national and
international socialization among the television generation, however, has
been the subject of limited direct research attention. Indeed, while the
process of political socialization is generally held to be the societal trans-
fer of political behavior(s) to pre-adults (Dawson & Prewitt, 1969; Easton &
Dennis, 1965; Langton, 1969), the primary sources for political cognitions
have been scarcely looked at. The generalizations concerning the impact of
the ubiquitous television medium in this area, have for the most part been
theoretically rather than empirically derived. Given the amount of time pre-
adults devote to television viewing,[1] a fair question which emerges from this
state is, how effective have the schools remained as a dominant source for
these socialization processes? Is the informational impact in fact higher
outside than within the formal school environment?

Research at the national systems level has largely avoided this question
through "single agency" analyses stressing the importance of the family (Daw-

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[1] Culkin (1967) notes that today's child spends 3,000 to 4,000 hours in
front of the television set prior to starting the first grade. This figure
moves up to 15,000 hours of television time by the time he graduates as
opposed to 10,800 hours of time spent at school. Similar documentation is
provided by Schramm (1961).

son & Prewitt, 1969; Hyman, 1959; Lane, 1959; Sigel, 1965) or the school
(Hess & Torney, 1967). The relative influence of all competing sources in-
cluding the mass media in the national socialization process has largely been
ignored. Research at the international systems level has been more compre-
hensive in this regard. The mass media in general and television in parti-
cular were determined to be foremost among the sources influencing percep-
tions of war among American adolescents (Haavelsrud, 1972; Hollander, 1970)
and war and peace for Norwegian (Aalvik, 1968) and Swedish (Rosell, 1968)
school children. The question as to whether these sources are dominant
across a variety of international/national issues among American adolescents
was positively confirmed by Coldevin (1972a, 1972b). The importance of tele-
vision was largely derivative of television newscasts with a secondary role
attributed to documentary films.

In view of the critical lack of research toward identification of prima-
ry agents of national and international socialization in general and cross
cultural comparisons in particular, the present study was addressed to a com-
parative probe of three distinct North American cultural groupings, namely,
American, English Canadian and French Canadian adolescents.[2] Specifically,
the study was undertaken to assess and compare:

1- The relative impact of the mass media in general and television in
particular as dominant sources for North American adolescents' national and
international orientations;

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[2] English Canadian refers to dominance of English language utilization and
Protestant religious affiliation; French Canadian denotes dominance of
French language and Catholic religion.

2- The specific content categories of television and formal educatio-
nal media primarily utilized as sources.

METHODOLOGY

1. Variables

Essentially two major dependent variables were measured in this study:
1) Attributes for both alternatives of general international issues; 2) The
most important attribute influencing a national or international decision
posture. The primary independent variable consisted of the perceived most
important source for the attributes provided.

The dependent variables were adapted from the Sampson and Smith (1957)
Worldmindedness Scale. This scale is devided into eight dimensions of a
worldmindedness frame of reference, each represented by four scale items:
religion, immigration, education, war, government, economics, race and
patriotism. The religion dimension was excluded from this study and substi-
tuted by the question "What does the term 'International' suggest to you?"
This question was intended as the opening exercise toward focussing the
respondents' attention to the frames of reference inherent in the questions
which followed. The seven modified objective questions eliciting a Yes or No
response, in order of appearance, consisted of the following:

1. Immigration: Do you feel that immigration might be controlled
better by an international organization rather than by each country on its
own?

2. Education: Do you think that an international committee on educa-
tion should be set up to control what is taught in high school social studies
in all countries?

3. War: Do you think that it is possible to prevent war among

nations?

4. Government: Do you feel that a world government might better guarantee the welfare of all nations rather than allowing each nation to control its own welfare?

5. Economics: If necessary, would you be willing to support your country in lowering its standard of living in order to help poorer countries to improve their standard of living?

6. Race: Do you think that your responsibility to people of different races in other countries should be the same as your responsibility to people of your own race?

7. Do you think that it would be better to be a citizen under a world government than a citizen under the government of one country only?

Each of the seven basic decision questions were preceded by questions eliciting international and national attributes for the adoption of alternatives. For example, the Immigration question was preceded by, "State as many reasons as you can for having immigration controlled by an international organization" and "State as many reasons as you can for having immigration controlled by each country on its own". A parallel questioning strategy was employed for each of the succeeding six dimensions. This questioning process places the respondent within his own orientation wherein the primary attributes for both alternatives are formulated before he is asked to make a decision. Further, by asking for the one most important reason for adopting a national or international decision posture for each dimension, the discriminating attributes used in decision making may be isolated.

In order to probe the independent variable, a second task required subjects to provide the code of the most important source for each attribute

supplied to the questions. As the present research was concerned with the
impact of all sources in general and school and television sources in parti-
cular, the major content areas were isolated for analysis (Figure 1). Codes
were listed for each of the listed sources. Examples of typical programs were
listed for possible ambiguous television content areas such as quiz programs,
dramatic series and variety and musical shows. Educational institution pro-
grams were subsumed under the category, "Television in School". Television
content areas were adapted from program categories established by the Federal
Communications Commission (1965, p.8) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corpora-
tion (1971, pp. 77-78).

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Insert Figure 1 here

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2. Sample Selection

The subjects were drawn from 11th grade history classes since this was
the most relevant curriculum area for a survey of this nature. The 11th grade
was chosen on the basis of pre-testing over high school grade levels. It was
determined that this level of student had the most appropriate background and
level of maturity to effectively deal with the complex concepts elicited by
the questionnaire. A sample of 200 students each were drawn from two high
schools each in Seattle, and English (Protestant) schools in Montreal, and
200 from one French (Catholic) school in Montreal (N = 600). Randomization
was precluded in the Seattle schools through student assignment to classes by
random computer selection. In this circumstance, 200 students were randomly
selected from four intact classes in each school. In the Montreal schools,
of the approximately 250 students in each cultural grouping who completed
the questionnaire, 200 were selected at random to form the samples.

The American sample was composed of 53% males and 47% females, English Canadian, 52% and 48%, and French Canadian, 49% and 51% respectively. In terms of sex distribution, all samples fell within 2.5% of their respective combined school 11th grade totals and accordingly may be considered as highly representative on this control variable.[3] The mean age for respondents in all samples was 16 years. While the socio-economic profile of American subjects was approximately equated between professional, white and blue collar home backgrounds[4] (U.S. Department of Labor, 1965, p. XVII), the English Canadians were positively skewed and French Canadians negatively skewed toward professional home backgrounds with approximate equivalence between white and blue collar profiles[5] (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1961, pp. 15-19).

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[3] Combined school totals ranged as follows: American, 414 males and 376 females; English Canadians, 227 males and 231 females; French Canadian, 350 males and 319 females.

[4] The group <u>professional</u> incorporates professional, technical and managerial occupations. The <u>white collar</u> grouping includes clerical, sales and service occupations. The <u>blue collar</u> group encompasses farming, fishing, forestry and related occupations, processing, machine trades, bench work, structural work and miscellaneous occupations.

[5] <u>Professional</u> groupings include managerial, professional and technical occupations. <u>White collar</u> occupations include clerical, sales, service, recreational, transport and communications. <u>Blue collar</u> groupings include farmers and farm workers, loggers and related workers, fisherman, trappers and hunters, miners, quarrymen and related workers, craftsman, production process and related workers and miscellaneous labourers.

3. Data Collection and Content Analysis

The questionnaires were administered during normal history classes. All subjects were asked to remain anonymous in order to obviate feelings of inhibition in a survey of this nature. A cover page provided directions to this effect. Respondents were first asked to provide attributes and decisions to the alternatives presented as well as the most important attribute for each international or national decision orientation before undertaking the measures of source utility. Source listings and directions for coding the perceived most important sources were included on the last page of the questionnaire so that attributes supplied and decision orientations would not be influenced by questions relating to source utilization.

All questions asked and sources listed were translated into French for the French Canadian sampling.

Each attribute and most important source mentioned for the attribute were extracted through a dyad coding process. Through this type of content analysis, a most important source was correlated with all attributes mentioned. A separate analysis was employed for sources mentioned for the one most important answer influencing decision orientations.

Two research assistants participated in the content analysis with the author verifying the coding of the most important sources. In cases where contradictions were encountered, the final category code was arrived at through mutual agreement. Intercoder reliability may therefore be considered as approaching 100 percent in this study.

RESULTS

The influential sources utilized for answers given to the national and

international alternatives of each dimension are presented in Table I. Individual sources are collapsed into broad groupings for analysis simplification. The category Other incorporates the sources, personal travel and religion. Significance tests are generated through Chi-square frequency distributions.

Insert Table I here

As may be readily noted, the dominance of the mass media is pronounced across all samples for both international and national alternatives, particularly among the Canadian groupings. The most significant discrepancy in this pattern occurs within the American sources for the Education dimension wherein the school was possibly viewed as the natural source for discussion of alternatives. Television is the dominant single medium within the mass media grouping for attributes generated to both international and national alternatives (averaging 49% of mass media responses for international attributes generated by American Ss, and 54% for both English and French Canadians; 48%, 43% and 55% respectively for national attributes). For the American subjects, an average of 63% of television content was alloted to newscasts with documentary films ranking second with a mean frequency of 19%. Interestingly, however, the importance given to these content areas vary considerably among the Canadian subjects. The French Canadian adolescent appears more congruent with his American counterpart in attributing an average of 53% of television content to newscasts and 33% to documentary films. The English Canadian on the other hand rates documentary films higher with an average of 45%.[6] The

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[6] Television content averages are based on means established for both international and national alternative sources.

variability in television content utility provides support for the hypothesis that content, as opposed to exposure time, is a primary determinant of the importance of this source. These anomalies may therefore be due in large part to the emphasis given by the television networks to the various program categories.

Newspapers were consistently cited as the second most important mass medium for all samples. While magazines occupy the role of third most important mass medium for American subjects, this medium gives way to radio for French Canadians and Books-Novels for English Canadians. Movies in theatres were viewed as providing only minor utility for the majority in all samples.

No significant differences were detected between male and female response patterns nor between socio-economic stratifications and perceived source utility.

Although school based sources rank overall in secondary position, this area was seen as one of tertiary importance for Canadian subjects. The American school in this study seems to be much more effective in this regard. In an era of increasing mass media influence, the teacher continues to emerge as the one most important individual school based source. Textbooks assumed the secondary position with films in school occupying a minor third role. Television in school was rarely mentioned in all three cultural groupings. The latter result appears to support DuMolin's (1971) finding that television is used less than 3% of the time in North American schools and is still regarded as a novelty rather than integral part of curriculum design.

Insert Table II here

The diversity of decision orientations to the various dimensions in indicated in Table II while Table III presents the most important sources influencing the adoption of international or national orientations. The most important source trend established for enumeration of general attributes is also evidenced for enumeration of discriminating decision attributes to the dichotomized alternatives (Table III). Television repeated its ascendency as the foremost individual mass medium (averaging 55% for international orientations among American Ss, 61% for English Canadians and 56% for French Canadians; 49%, 43% and 53% respectively for national orientations) for both decision postures. Corespondingly, the majority of television program content for American and French Canadian subjects was given over to newscasts (averaging 63% and 56% respectively) with documentary films following in the secondary position with mean frequencies of 18% and 35%. For English Canadian subjects, television content was taken up with 48% documentary films and 44% newscasts. An identical pattern of source utility followed results established for the general attributes of the international and national alternatives.

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Insert Table III here

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In summarizing the results of this study, the following conclusions may be forwarded:

1. Mass media was the primary source category fo. attributes generated to the international and national alternatives for all samples under study. Both Canadian samples, however, are significantly more "media attached" than their American counterparts. This discrepancy in the majority of cases is taken up at the expense of Canadian school sources. Television newscasts were the major specific television sources for American and French Canadian subjects

with documentary films following in second priority. This order of priority

was reversed for English Canadian adolescents. Newspapers occupy a prominent

second most important mass media role for all samples with the third priority

of importance varying between magazines for Americans, books-novels for En-

glish Canadians and radio for French Canadians. Movies in theatres were

viewed as providing only minor source utility for all samples.

2. The school ranks second in overall source importance but was per-

ceived as one of minor importance for both Canadian samples. In all cultural

groupings, the teacher occupys the dominant individual role with textbooks

following in the secondary position. Films in school fulfill only a tertiary

information role while educational television was rarely mentioned.

3. The influence of the peer group (friends) rank third in overall

source utility for American and Canadian subjects with the family following

in the fourth position. This role was reversed for French Canadians although

the frequency differences were non-appreciable.

4. Religion appears to play the least important role of all sources

in the process of formulation of national and international orientations.

5. The increased pluralism in sources of information available to

North American adolescents was demonstrated in no significant differences

between perceived source utility and socio-economic home backgrounds.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study negate many of the earlier studies iden-

tifying salient agents of national socialization and support the trends esta-

blished at the international level. The transition from an information poor

to information rich home environment suggests a vastly changing pattern of

perceived source utility among North American adolescents. The role of tradi-

tional sources such as the family appear to have undergone the more serious decline in this technological phenomenon. The most cogent reason for this interpersonal communication diminution as Walters and Stone (1971) point out is that the television set is the only "family member" which does much talking.

The more serious indictments, however, may be leveled at the school and the apparent lethargy of this institution in effectively employing the information resources of highly developed technological environment. The data presented in this study, particularly among the Canadian samples, support the McLuhan (1967) assertion that the school is a part time competitor in an "information war", a war which in its traditional format it cannot win. The environment outside the school appears to be taking over many of the school's classic information dissemination functions, while the crucial task of mediating the impact of television in the socialization process is left largely avoided. To effectively deal with this situation, a re-orientation on the part of educators toward the importance of the mass media is required on the one hand along with the practice of combining educational and mass media in curriculum design and classroom presentations on the other. Newer developments in educational communications such as the video cassette appear particularly appropriate toward bridging the information gap. The cooperation between public and commercial broadcasters and educational institutions is essential if this union is to be successfully forged.

In summary, this study suggests that the school must undergo an intense transformation if it is to continue to function as a critical socialization agent. This transformation may be seen as a logical re-orientation to the role of the school in the socialization process in harmony with theory and developments in educational communications and technology.

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National and International Socialization Sources

Friends   Family   School   Mass Media   Personal Travel   Religion

Teacher   Radio

Text Books   Newspapers

Films in School   Magazines

Television   Books-Novels
in School

Movies in Theatres

TV Quiz Programs

TV Dramatic Series

TV Variety & Musical Shows

Movies on TV

TV Cartoon Programs

TV News Casts

Documentary Films on TV

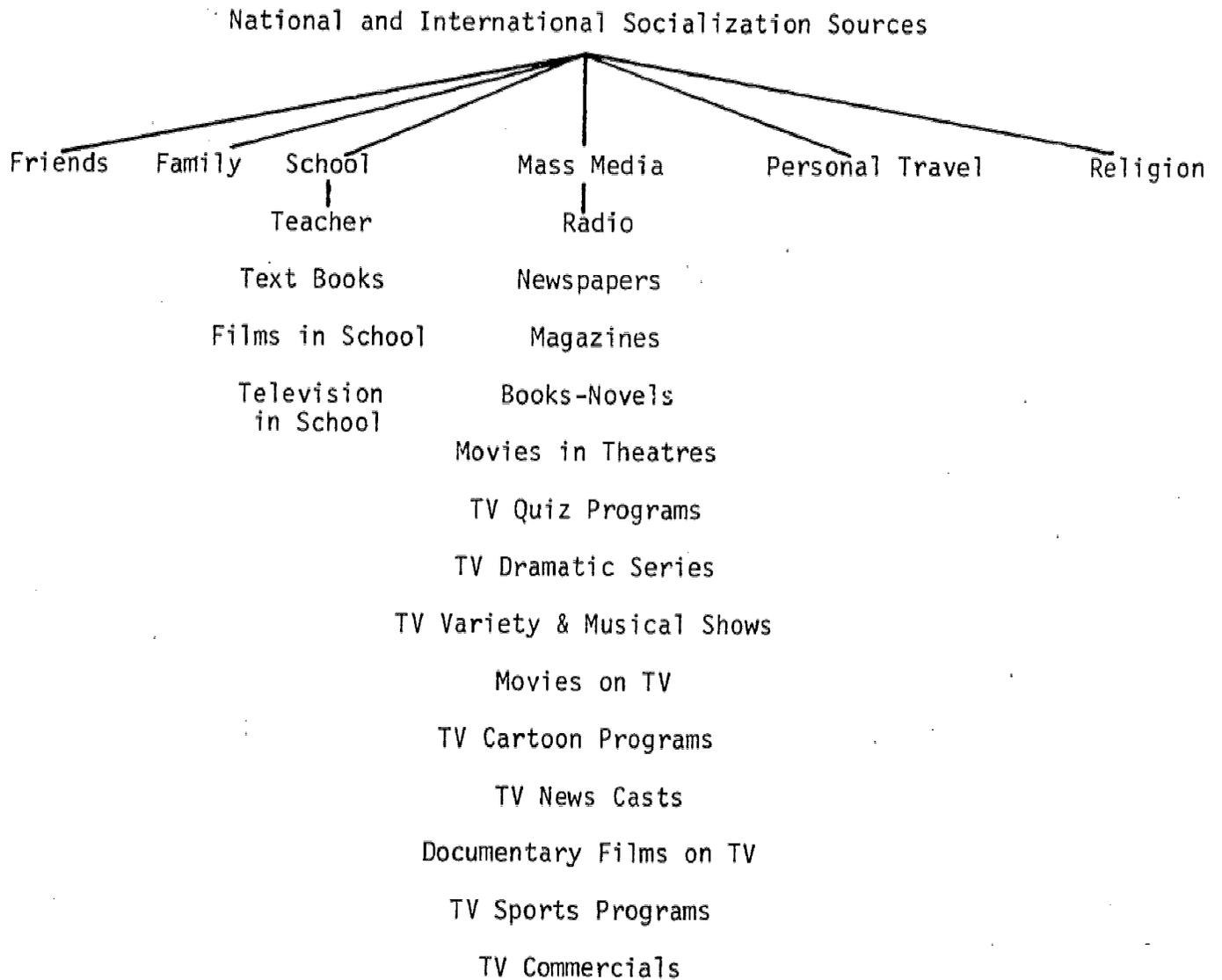TV Sports Programs

TV Commercials

Figure 1. Sources of National and International Socialization

TABLE I

Salient sources for attributes generated to international

and national alternatives

Dimension	Alternative		Friends %	Family %	School %	Mass Media %	Other %	Total f
Immigration	International	US	6	8	43	41	2	497
		EC	9	9	12	63	7 **	409
		FC	11	9	16	61	3	633
	National	US	6	7	37	44	6	432
		EC	7	6	10	69	8 **	409
		FC	11	9	14	64	2	481
Education	International	US	10	7	46	32	5	419
		EC	13	4	31	41	11**	374
		FC	9	10	38	40	3	519
	National	US	7	5	56	28	4	358
		EC	8	6	24	48	14**	273
		FC	9	11	36	41	3	420
War	International	US	16	10	28	41	5	442
		EC	12	5	10	67	6 **	395
		FC	14	13	8	57	8	598
	National	US	15	7	20	51	7	423
		EC	8	5	16	61	10**	432
		FC	9	12	11	64	4	498
Government	International	US	9	10	35	40	6	442
		EC	12	4	17	62	5 **	373
		FC	10	15	7	64	4	481
	National	US	8	9	35	44	4	348
		EC	7	6	16	63	8 **	307
		FC	8	12	8	68	4	440
Economics	International	US	12	14	26	42	6	330
		EC	10	10	7	62	11**	265
		FC	12	14	8	58	8	469
	National	US	12	16	20	44	8	295
		EC	9	15	11	59	6 *	259
		FC	12	17	9	57	5	400
Race	International	US	25	17	19	29	10	377
		EC	19	16	6	39	20**	303
		FC	20	16	9	40	15	522
	National	US	18	18	22	39	3	188
		EC	11	18	14	45	12**	152
		FC	20	15	9	50	6	293
Patriotism	International	US	14	13	22	44	7	305
		EC	12	7	10	65	6 **	261
		FC	11	13	11	61	4	382
	National	US	13	11	37	38	1	291
		EC	7	7	18	61	7 **	274
		FC	10	14	7	66	3	358

Note: US denotes American sample, EC, English Canadian and FC, French Canadian samples.

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$

TABLE II

Decision orientation to international dimensions

Dimension		Decision Orientation (N = 200 for each sample)		
		International (Yes)	National (No)	Undecided
Immigration	US	99	99	2
	EC	99	99	2
	FC	103	96	1
Education	US	88	109	3
	EC	106	92	2
	FC	109	87	2
War	US	104	91	5
	EC	91	107	2
	FC	127	73	-
Government	US	112	82	6
	EC	95	101	4
	FC	84	115	1
Economics	US	94	99	7
	EC	98	89	13
	FC	112	85	3
Race	US	157	37	6
	EC	148	41	11
	FC	162	37	1
Patriotism	US	80	110	10
	EC	68	124	8
	FC	72	121	7

TABLE III

Most important sources for decision orientation

Dimension	Decision Orientation		Friends %	Family %	School %	Mass Media %	Other %	Total f
Immigration	International	US	6	7	45	40	2	99
		EC	6	11	10	64	9 ***	99
		FC	11	9	16	62	2	103
	National	US	7	1	38	52	2	99
		EC	7	8	10	69	6 ***	99
		FC	5	9	14	70	2	96
Education	International	US	8	4	46	39	3	88
		EC	11	2	35	43	9	106
		FC	7	7	42	42	2	109
	National	US	7	6	56	28	3	109
		EC	7	5	25	49	14***	92
		FC	12	12	34	40	2	87
War	International	US	17	13	18	44	8	104
		EC	12	6	4	69	9 **	91
		FC	11	15	9	62	3	127
	National	US	18	7	33	39	3	91
		EC	5	5	18	58	14***	107
		FC	8	10	7	69	6	73
Government	International	US	15	12	32	36	5	112
		EC	17	1	15	62	5 ***	95
		FC	11	17	8	60	4	84
	National	US	7	11	36	41	5	82
		EC	7	6	11	64	12***	101
		FC	7	15	7	70	1	115
Economics	International	US	21	14	19	42	4	94
		EC	10	8	8	63	11***	98
		FC	12	12	6	61	9	112
	National	US	12	20	13	46	9	99
		EC	11	17	10	55	7	89
		FC	7	17	5	64	7	85
Race	International	US	27	16	16	30	11	157
		EC	23	15	4	35	23***	148
		FC	19	17	6	44	14	162
	National	US	24	16	22	33	5	37
		EC	7	20	10	46	17	41
		FC	16	24	6	46	8	37
Patriotism	International	US	23	10	19	37	11	80
		EC	16	7	13	55	9 *	68
		FC	11	11	13	64	1	72
	National	US	14	8	38	39	1	110
		EC	6	8	18	59	9 ***	124
		FC	7	14	5	68	6	121

* p<.05
** p<.01
*** p<.001