Motivated Closed-Mindedness Mediates the Effect of Threat on Political Conservatism

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In this article we synthesize theory and research from several areas of psychology and political science to propose and test a causal model of the effects of threat on political attitudes. Based in part on prior research showing that fear, threat, and anxiety decrease cognitive capacity and motivation, we hypothesize that under high (vs. low) threat, people will seek to curtail open-ended information searches and exhibit motivated closed-mindedness (one aspect of the need for closure). The subjective desire for certainty, control, and closure, in turn, is expected to increase the individual’s affinity for political conservatism, insofar as resistance to change and adherence to authority figures and conventional forms of morality are assumed to satisfy these epistemic motives more successfully than their ideological opposites. Consistent with this account, we find in Studies 1a and 1b that putting people into a highly threatened mindset leads them to exhibit an increase in motivated closed-mindedness and to perceive the world as more dangerous. Furthermore, in Study 2 we demonstrate that a subtle threat manipulation increases self-reported conservatism (or decreases self-reported liberalism), and this effect is mediated by closed-mindedness. In Study 3, we manipulated closed-mindedness directly and found that high (vs. low) cognitive load results in a greater affinity for the Republican (vs. Democratic) party. Finally, in Study 4 we conducted an experiment involving political elites in Iceland and found that three different types of threat (to the self, group, and system) all led center-right politicians to score higher on closed-mindedness and issue-based political conservatism. Implications for society and for the theory of ideology as motivated social cognition are discussed.

KEY WORDS: cognitive load, closed-mindedness, fear, need for closure, political ideology, political conservatism, threat
“Alas,” said the mouse, “the whole world is growing narrower every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls have narrowed so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap that I must run into.”

“You only need to change your direction,” said the cat, and ate it up.

Franz Kafka, “A Little Fable”

Shrewd and opportunist politicians, like Kafka’s cat, have long recognized the power of fear and threat to influence their constituency (e.g., Bennett, 1995; Mack, 2004; Robin, 2004). Machiavelli advised his prince in the sixteenth century that it was “better to be feared than loved” (Machiavelli, 1999/1513). Deep into the Great Depression in 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt famously declared to the American public that “we have nothing to fear but fear itself,” which he described as a “nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.” The program of research on which we report here aims to elucidate the often noted but seldom understood psychological process by which threat exerts its influence on political attitudes.

Threat and Political Attitudes

Research in the social and behavioral sciences has consistently found that threat is associated with certain manifestations of political conservatism (e.g., Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). In this prior research, the operationalization of both constructs has varied widely. Threat has generally been operationalized in terms of threatening societal periods, threats to the legitimacy or stability of the social system, the salience of terrorism, rising immigration, and a host of other threatening stimuli, including thoughts about one’s mortality. Conservatism has been gauged in terms of self-reported political orientation, voting behavior, support for right-wing authoritarianism, and endorsement of various issue positions that are typically associated with conservatism or right-wing politics (for a review see Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009).

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism was perhaps the first ideological construct to be linked theoretically and empirically to a personal sense of threat (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Fromm (1941) theorized that people

1 Authoritarianism is a syndrome characterized by overemphasis on submission and identification with strong leaders, rigid conformity to conventional norms and rejection of those who violate them, cognitive rigidity, ethnocentric prejudice, right-wing orientation, and rejection of the subjective and tender-minded (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1998; Napier & Jost, 2008).
want to “escape from freedom” and embrace authoritarianism when confronted with a threatening, uncertain world. Consistent with this theoretical tradition, Lavine and colleagues showed almost 60 years later that people who score high on authoritarianism tend to be more sensitive to threatening words and messages in comparison with low scorers (Lavine, Lodge, Polichak, & Taber, 2002). Archival studies have also supported the link between fear and authoritarianism by demonstrating that authoritarianism in the general population increases under high (vs. low) societal threat periods (e.g., periods of unemployment, crime, and war; Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Sales, 1973; Stenner, 2005).

Several studies conducted in the aftermath of 9/11 indicate that the more threatened or concerned people are about their security following terrorist acts, the less supportive they are of civil liberties (Cohrs, Kielmann, Maes, & Moschner, 2005; Davis & Silver, 2004; Huddy, Khatid, & Capelos, 2002). Duckitt and Fisher (2003) found that presenting participants with a threatening scenario (in which their country’s crime rate, economy, and general prosperity were depicted as worsening in the future) increases their affinity for authoritarianism. Studies on individual differences reveal a strong correlation between the tendency to perceive the world as dangerous and right-wing authoritarianism, as measured with the RWA scale (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998). Thus, an empirical connection exists between threat—whether measured or manipulated as a state or trait variable—and authoritarianism.

Support for Politically Conservative Leaders and Opinions

Research on the effects of threat in the political realm has extended far beyond authoritarianism to a variety of politically relevant attitudes. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City and the 3/11 attacks in Madrid launched a new wave of studies on the effect of fear on political attitudes. Willer (2004) showed, for instance, that whenever the department of Homeland Security raised the national terror alert level, President Bush’s approval ratings rose. Bonanno and Jost (2006) found that high-exposure survivors of the attack on the World Trade Center buildings became more conservative and more authoritarian in the 18 months following 9/11, regardless of political party affiliation or previous voting decisions (see also Echebarria & Fernández, 2006; Nail & McGregor, 2009).

Experiments that evoke fear by asking people to contemplate their own mortality have shown that death anxiety increases support for conservative opinions and leaders, including President George W. Bush (e.g., Cohen, Ogilvie, Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2005; Gailliot, Schmeichel, & Baumeister, 2006; Landau et al., 2004b). Jost, Fitzsimons, and Kay (2004) demonstrated that mortality salience also increases endorsement of politically conservative opinions with respect to several issues, including taxation, capital punishment, and stem cell research (see also Nail & McGregor, 2009). The basic finding that threatening situations increase one’s affinity for politically conservative opinions has been
replicated using several different experimental paradigms and is probably not limited to manipulations of mortality salience (e.g., see Eibach & Libby, 2009; Lambert et al., 2010; Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, & Thompson, 2009).

**Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition**

In 2003, Jost and colleagues surveyed a wide range of studies on the psychological predictors of political attitudes published between the years 1958 to 2002 (including some studies mentioned above). Based on nearly 90 studies, they concluded that political ideology should be understood as reflecting motivated social cognition and that people who embrace conservative, right-wing ideologies do so in part because it serves their (chronically or temporarily heightened) needs to manage uncertainty and threat. Subsequent research has supported this general model of politically conservative attitudes (e.g., see Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008; Jost et al., 2004; Nail & McGregor, 2009; Nail et al., 2009; Thórisdóttir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007). For instance, Jost et al. (2007) conducted three studies in which they found that psychological needs to reduce uncertainty (e.g., need for order, intolerance of ambiguity, and lack of openness to experience) and threat (e.g., death anxiety, system threat, and perceptions of a dangerous world) each contributed independently to self-reported political conservatism (vs. liberalism), even after adjusting for the effects of ideological extremity. No support was obtained for the alternative hypothesis suggested by Greenberg and Jonas (2003) that uncertainty and threat management would be associated with extreme liberalism as well as extreme conservatism.

Recent work suggests that differences between liberals and conservatives in terms of orientations toward uncertainty and threat may even be instantiated at the level of neurophysiological functioning. Specifically, Amodio, Jost, Master, and Yee (2007) found that politically liberal participants performed better than conservatives on a computer task requiring cognitive flexibility, conflict monitoring, and the ability to override habitual response patterns. During a “go/no-go” task, liberals also showed stronger neural activity in the anterior cingulate cortex (as measured in terms of event-related potentials), indicating greater neurocognitive sensitivity to potentially conflicting pieces of information. With regard to threat sensitivity, Oxley and colleagues (2008) observed that participants who strongly endorsed conservative attitudes on a range of issues (e.g., military spending, capital punishment, gun control, foreign aid, immigration, etc.) exhibited stronger startle blink responses and galvanic skin response conductivity (both classic physiological measures of threat sensitivity), as compared with participants who endorsed liberal attitudes on these issues. Thus, studies indicate that individuals’ orientations concerning threat and uncertainty, whether measured behaviorally or physiologically, are correlated with political orientation. One of the major goals of the current research program is to more fully explicate the nature of the
relationship between these two distinct but related motives of threat and uncertainty management, that is, the connection between existential and epistemic motives in producing ideological outcomes.

There are at least two important characteristics of political conservatism as an ideology that may help to explain its special appeal under circumstances of threat and uncertainty (see also Jost, 2006; Jost et al., 2003, 2007, 2009). One of these, which can be traced back to the writings of Edmund Burke (1790/1999) is overt resistance to the notion that societal arrangements and systems should be deliberately changed according to contemporary ideals (Kirk, 1982; Lipset & Raab, 1978; Minogue, 1967; Muller, 2001). The status quo, no matter how aversive, is a known condition and is therefore easier to predict and imagine than a potentially different state of affairs that could be either better or worse. As Kirk (1982) put it, conservatives “prefer the devil they know, to the devil they don’t know” (p. xv). Thus, status quo conservatism offers more familiarity and certainty than do alternative ideologies that are characterized by preferences for social change and innovation; for this reason, it is likely to be more accessible and attractive when people are seeking stability and security.

Political conservatism is also characterized by deference to authorities, both religious and political (e.g., Burke, 1790/1999; Haidt & Graham, 2007). This may help to explain why conservatives are more enthusiastic about hierarchy and less enthusiastic about social and economic equality, in comparison with liberals (e.g., Bobbio, 1996; Jost et al., 2003; Laponce, 1981; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Aligning oneself with conventional traditions and deferring to authority figures takes less mental effort than conceiving of alternative social arrangements and is generally less cognitively taxing and therefore more beneficial when the motivation for cognition is reduced than when it is not. Thus, to the extent that threat reduces the desire for open-ended information search and processing, it should increase the psychological affinity for political conservatism.

Psychological Responses to Threat

Research has yet to specify precisely the psychological processes by which threat may affect ideological preferences (but see Lambert et al., 2010 for several studies highlighting the role of anger). When process explanations are fully developed, they will need to take into account the physiology of the threat response as well as downstream effects on cognition, motivation, and political preferences. The literature in political psychology has rarely been very exact in its conceptual or operational definitions of threat, at least compared to cognitive neuroscience and related fields (Spezio & Adolphs, 2007). This difference can be partially attributed to the fact that the two subdisciplines emphasize quite different levels of explanation or analysis. In this article we focus on the cognitive, motivational, and behavioral consequences of threat.
Effects of Threat on Cognitive Capacity and Motivation

Threat and its typical emotional consequences, namely fear and anxiety, have been found to result in a number of cognitive, motivational, and behavioral implications, including risk aversion, attentional biases, and impaired performance on a variety of working memory and decision-making tasks (e.g., Jameson, Hinson, & Whitney, 2004; Mogg, Mathews, Bird, & Macgregor-Morris, 1990; Preston, Buchanan, Stansfield, & Bechara, 2007). For one thing, rumination and worry constrain the availability of mental resources required for memory and cognition (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992; Mathews & Mackintosh, 1998; Miu, Heilman, & Houser, 2008; Preston et al., 2007). Fear also leads to narrow, selective attention focused on threatening stimuli (Easterbrook, 1959). This can improve performance on a task such as the Stroop task in which there is a good match between the narrowed attention and the optimal response (Chajut & Algom, 2003).

Under many circumstances, however, such “cognitive narrowing” will result in suboptimal performance. For instance, Keinan (1987) found that when faced with the threat of electric shock, people engage in less systematic scanning of alternatives on a multiple choice analogy task. This results in hasty, inferior decisions made under high versus low threat. Threatening research participants by communicating (false) negative performance feedback impairs their digit span memory (Hodges & Spielberger, 1969) and reduces message elaboration in persuasion (Sengupta & Johar, 2001). Hillier, Alexander, and Beversdorf (2006) showed that an auditory stressor (90 dB white noise) reduced cognitive flexibility on a word association task.

Thus, it seems likely that threat—like cognitive load (Ford & Kruglanski, 1995; Gilbert & Osborne, 1989)—reduces both the motivation and capacity for information processing. In many situations, the two effects may be inseparable. Studies show that fatigue, time pressure, and exposure to loud noises all decrease the motivation to engage in extensive information searches and to perform elaborate cognitive operations (e.g., Kruglanski, 2004; Roets, van Hiel, Cornelis, & Soetens, 2008). Emotions research suggests that threat is experienced as aversive at least in part because it leads people to perceive that they lack both control and certainty (e.g., see Dechesne & Kruglanski, 2004; Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999; Tiedens & Linton, 2001). As a consequence, when people feel threatened they should be highly motivated to restore a subjective sense of certainty and control. As a result, they might resort to various cognitive-motivational “strategies” that, according to Kruglanski (2004), are tantamount to “closed-mindedness.”

Motivated Closed-Mindedness

Lay epistemic theory offers a useful way of linking what is known about the effects of threat on human cognition to social and political outcomes (Kruglanski,
1990, 2004). According to this theory, people vary (for dispositional as well as situational reasons) on a single motivational dimension ranging from a strong need to avoid cognitive closure to a strong need to reach closure. High need for cognitive closure represents a desire for “an answer to a question on a given topic, any answer . . . compared to confusion and ambiguity” (Kruglanski, 1990, p. 337), and it often leads to “black-and-white” thinking. The need for closure increases the tendency to “seize” and subsequently “freeze” on highly salient or accessible information when making decisions (Kruglanski, 1990). It arises when extended information processing is perceived to be costly or when the perceived benefits of possessing closure are high.

We propose that because threat reduces cognitive capacity and motivation and is associated with feelings of uncertainty and a lack of control, it should increase the perceived benefits of reaching closure. Consistent with this proposal, scores on an individual difference measure known as the Need for Cognitive Closure scale (NFCS; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) correlate fairly highly with both state and trait measures of anxiety (Colbert, Peters, & Garety, 2006). Kruglanski (2004) also noted that many of the effects of inducing mortality salience (i.e., increasing death anxiety) mimic the effects of inducing cognitive closure through time pressure, mental fatigue, or environmental noise. Furthermore, as we have seen with regard to fear, threat, and anxiety, the need for closure is often associated with a decrease in systematic information processing (e.g., DeDreu, Koole, & Oldersma, 1999; Kruglanski, 2004).

The NFCS possesses five subscales that were designed to capture slightly different aspects of epistemic motivation: need for order, ambiguity intolerance, decisiveness, predictability, and closed-mindedness. Several psychometric studies on the NFCS have suggested that the five subscales do not always relate uniformly to each other or to other constructs (Kossowska & van Hiel, 2003; Neuberg, Judice, & West, 1997; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Specifically, the closed-mindedness subscale correlates weakly with the other four subscales and rarely loads on a second-order latent factor along with them (Mannetti, Pierro, Kruglanski, Taris, & Bezinovic, 2002; Neuberg et al., 1997). It also appears to correlate more strongly (and negatively) with measures of cognitive complexity and the personal “need for cognition” (e.g., Houghton & Grewal, 2000; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994).

Items on the closed-mindedness subscale are quite general, relatively context-free, and focused on motivation rather than skill per se. They include the following: “I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view,” “I prefer interacting with people whose opinions are very different from my own,” and “When thinking about a problem, I consider as many different opinions on the issue as possible.” In terms of face validity, the items seem appropriate for tapping into motivational effects of threat, and—unlike measures of authoritarianism (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998)—their content is not overtly political in any way. Thus, any observed association between closed-mindedness and
political orientation would provide clear support for the theoretical model of ideology as motivated social cognition and could not be dismissed as spurious due to item content. There are both conceptual and empirical reasons, then, to think that the deleterious effects of threat on epistemic motivation (i.e., a decreased desire to engage in extensive information search and processing) could be detected by the closed-mindedness subscale of the NFCS and that closed-mindedness is a theoretically plausible mediator of the threat-conservatism link.

Prior research has connected the need for closure to social and political strategies that are likely to increase the subjective sense of control and certainty. These include the rejection of opinion deviates, the encouragement of autocratic (vs. democratic) leadership, and preferences for opinion uniformity within the group (e.g., Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & De Grada, 2006). There is evidence that time pressure and cognitive load produce “conservative shifts” in political opinion, even among liberal respondents (Hansson, Keating, & Terry, 1974; Skitka, Mullen, Griffin, Hutchinson, & Chamberlin, 2002). Individuals’ scores on the NFCS are significantly and positively correlated with right-wing authoritarianism (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) and political conservatism (Chirumbolo, Areni, & Sensales, 2004; Jost et al., 2003). The need for cognitive closure is also associated with support for the death penalty and for military action against Iraq following 9/11 (Federico, Golec, & Dial, 2005; Jost, Kruglanski, & Simon, 1999). Thus, we hypothesize that motivated closed-mindedness would mediate the effect of threat on political orientation.

Overview of Research

In four experimental studies involving both university students and political elites, we investigated the possibility that situational manipulations of perceived threat would increase motivated closed-mindedness. That is, threatened individuals should be narrowly focused (like Kafka’s mouse) to restore a subjective sense of certainty and control, in comparison with nonthreatened individuals. Motivated closed-mindedness, we also hypothesized, would be associated with an increased affinity for politically conservative (vs. liberal) labels (i.e., self-identifications) and opinions. These studies, when taken in conjunction, help to illuminate the psychological processes by which threat facilitates increased conservatism (e.g., see Jost et al., 2003, 2007).

Study 1a: Effects of Threat on Need for Cognitive Closure

In our initial study we sought to demonstrate that a situational manipulation of threat would increase motivated closed-mindedness. To our knowledge, no published study to date has sought to capture situationally induced changes in epistemic motivation through the use of questions from the NFCS. This was our goal in Study 1a, focusing especially on the closed-mindedness subscale.
Method

Participants. Participants were 48 undergraduates (28 females and 20 males) at New York University who participated in the study for partial course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (high vs. low threat).

Procedure. To provide a cover story for the manipulation of threat, participants were informed that the experimenter was helping the NYU Wellbeing Center to develop a new relaxation technique. They were told that the Center was collecting student’s real-life past instances of threatening life experiences, and they were asked to volunteer theirs. Everyone agreed. Participants were then asked to fill out a list of either 3 (low threat) or 12 (high threat) instances in which they “felt terrified and/or severely threatened.” Participants were not required to complete the assigned number of instances; if participants asked whether they needed to complete the entire list, the experimenter merely said “just fill out as many as you can.”

Participants were also asked: “How threatened do you feel right now?” Responses, which were given on a scale ranging from 1 (“Not at all threatened”) to 10 (“Very threatened”), served as manipulation checks. They also completed the entire 42-item need for closure scale (NFCS; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994) so that we could analyze the effects of threat on specific subscales. Participants were thoroughly debriefed after the study and probed for suspicion. No one expressed suspicion.

Results

Participants who were assigned to the low-threat condition were asked to write about three threatening instances; all of them generated three instances. Participants in the high-threat condition were asked to write down 12 instances, and they wrote an average of 11.08 ($SD = 2.37$) instances, with 22 out of 26 participants listing all 12. The fact that so many participants completed the list (despite not being required to do so) suggests that they did not find the task to be difficult even when asked to generate 12 instances (cf. Schwarz, Bless, Strack, Klumpp, Rittenauer-Schatka, & Simons, 1991). Examples of typical responses were: “When I was walking home alone at night and someone was following me”; “When my parents used to argue when I was little”; and “When my best friend was in a car accident.”

In response to the manipulation check item, participants assigned to the high-threat condition were somewhat more likely to report feeling threatened ($M = 2.32, SD = 1.82$) than were participants assigned to the low-threat condition ($M = 1.68, SD = .84$). However, self-reported feelings of threat were very low in absolute terms, and this difference did not attain conventional levels of statistical significance, $t(46) = 1.53, p = .13$.

The intercorrelations and reliability coefficients for the subscales of the NFCS are listed in Table 1. Reliability was good for the NFCS as a whole.
(α = 0.88) and for each of the subscales, with the exception of ambiguity intolerance. All of the subscales except for decisiveness correlated significantly and positively with each other and with the overall NFCS. To determine whether scores on the NFCS as a whole or on any of its subscales were affected by the threat manipulation, a series of t-tests were computed. As can be seen in Table 2, random assignment to the high-threat condition caused participants to score significantly higher on the closed-mindedness subscale ($M = 5.00, SD = 0.74$) in comparison with the low-threat condition ($M = 4.55, SD = 0.61$), $t (46) = 2.24$, $p < .05$, two-tailed. No other differences between the two conditions were observed.2

2 We also subjected scores on the closed-mindedness subscale to a principal component analysis to investigate its structure. The analysis resulted in a solution of one component according to a combined estimate from a scree plot and eigenvalues (first-component eigenvalue = 2.88, second-component eigenvalue = 1.24). One item (“I dislike questions that could be answered in many different ways”)
Study 1b: Effects of Threat on Motivated Closed-Mindedness and Perceptions of a Dangerous World

In Study 1b we investigated the hypothesis that a situational manipulation of threat would lead people to (a) exhibit increased closed-mindedness, as in Study 1a, and (b) project their feelings of threat onto society in general. Perceiving society as dangerous carries with it a host of social and political consequences. For example, previous research has shown that perceptions of a dangerous world correlate strongly (approximately $r = .50$) with right-wing authoritarianism, as well as punitiveness, xenophobia, and social intolerance (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002).

**Method**

**Participants.** Participants were 50 undergraduates (37 females and 13 males) at New York University who participated in the study for partial course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (high vs. low threat).

**Procedure.** We employed the same manipulation and cover story for inducing threat as in Study 1a. Participants were again told that the experimenter was helping the NYU Wellbeing Center to develop a new relaxation technique, and they were asked to fill out a list of either 3 (low threat) or 12 (high threat) instances from their past.

In this study participants were also asked to complete eight items from the perception of a dangerous world scale (PDW; Duckitt et al., 2002) and the eight-item closed-mindedness (CM) subscale of the need for closure scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Responses to both CM and PDW items were provided on scales ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 9 (“Strongly agree”). Sample items from the PDW scale ($\alpha = .84$) are: (1) “Despite what one hears about ‘crime in the street,’ there probably isn’t any more now than there ever has been” (reverse-scored), (2) “There are many dangerous people in our society who will attack someone out of pure meanness, for no reason at all,” and (3) “If a person takes a few sensible precautions, nothing bad is likely to happen to him or her; we do not live in a dangerous world” (reverse-scored). For this sample, the 8-item PDW did not reach the conventional .30 loading on the 1st component, but all other items did. When the item was removed from the scale, Cronbach’s alpha rose to .75 (from .71) but results did not change. Participants still scored higher on closed-mindedness in the high-threat ($M = 5.23, SD = 0.80$) versus the low-threat condition ($M = 4.75, SD = .62$), $t(46) = 2.37, p < .05$.

Two items from the original PDW scale were not administered. One of these was worded so strongly that we expected little variability in responses to it (“Any day now chaos and anarchy could erupt around us. All the signs are pointing to it.”). The other fairly apocalyptic item made references to the “end” and God and was therefore excluded to prevent potential confounds due to religiosity or political orientation (i.e., “The ‘end’ is not near. People who think that earthquakes, wars, and famines mean God might be about to destroy the world are being foolish”).
measure of closed-mindedness exhibited low scale reliability ($\alpha = .42$). Participants were thoroughly debriefed and probed for suspicion. No one expressed suspicion.

**Results**

Participants who were asked to remember three previously threatening instances listed on average 2.89 ($SD = .41$) instances, with 26 out of 28 participants listing all three. Participants assigned to the high-threat condition, who were asked to recall 12 instances, listed an average of 9.85 ($SD = 4.17$) instances, with more than half generating 12 instances.

As can be seen in Table 3, participants who were assigned to the high-threat condition scored significantly higher on closed-mindedness than did participants assigned to the low-threat condition, $F(1, 48) = 5.82, p < .05$, two-tailed. This replicates the major finding of Study 1a. People assigned to the high-threat condition also scored marginally higher on perceptions of a dangerous world, $F(1, 48) = 3.60, p = .06$. Scores on closed-mindedness and perceptions of a dangerous world were positively intercorrelated, $r (50) = .46, p < .01$.

**Discussion of Studies 1a and 1b**

Taken in conjunction, Studies 1a and 1b lay the theoretical and methodological groundwork for further inquiry into the role of threat in shaping social and political attitudes. Study 1a provided evidence that scores on the closed-mindedness subscale of the NFCS can be influenced by a situational threat manipulation, and Study 1b replicated this effect. Although the data for the manipulation check in Study 1a was weak, we found in Study 1b that the manipu-

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*Because of the low reliability of the eight-item scale, we subjected the scale to a principal component analysis. Examination of a scree plot and eigenvalues (first-component eigenvalue = 2.00, second-component eigenvalue = 1.27) indicated that a one-component solution was best. Five items loaded higher than .30 on the first component (items 3–8). This reduced five-item scale had a substantially higher reliability ($\alpha = .61$). When all results reported for this study were reanalyzed using the five-item scale, the pattern of results was identical.*

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**Table 3. Effects of Assignment to High- vs. Low-Threat Conditions on Closed-Mindedness and Perceptions of a Dangerous World Scores; Means (with Standard Deviations) and Significance Tests (Study 1b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low-Threat Condition</th>
<th>High-Threat Condition</th>
<th>Difference: $F (1, 48)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closed-Mindedness</td>
<td>3.73 (0.87)</td>
<td>4.26 (0.62)</td>
<td>5.82**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of a</td>
<td>4.12 (1.24)</td>
<td>4.85 (1.47)</td>
<td>3.60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous World</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p < .06  **p < .05. All tests are two-tailed.
lation of high (vs. low) threat did affect participants’ perceptions of a dangerous world. Although individual differences in the perception of a dangerous world have consistently been linked to right-wing conservatism (Altemeyer, 1998), the conclusion cannot be drawn from this study alone that threat leads people to endorse politically conservative opinions and identifications more strongly (but see Jost et al., 2004; Nail & McGregor, 2009; Nail et al., 2009). Our remaining experiments address ideological outcomes more explicitly, in addition to replicating the effect of threat on closed-mindedness and investigating the possibility that closed-mindedness mediates the effect of threat on political conservatism.

**Study 2: Motivated Closed-Mindedness as a Mediator of the Threat-Conservatism Link**

In Study 2, we induced threat with the use of a subtle situational priming technique in which participants were less consciously aware of threat-related thoughts than in Studies 1a and 1b. The manipulation was based loosely on a study by Rothman, Haddock, and Schwarz (2001) in which they manipulated participant’s perceptions of how risky their own sexual behavior was. Participants in that study perceived their own sexual behavior as riskier when they reported their number of previous sexual partners on a scale that was anchored with relatively low (vs. high) numbers. We used an analogous procedure to manipulate a sense of threat. Specifically, we expected that people would feel at least somewhat more threatened when they answered questions about terrorism on a rating scale that was anchored with scale labels assuming a high degree of threat, as compared to scale labels suggesting low or moderate degrees of threat. We hypothesized that random assignment to the high (vs. low) threat condition would lead people to exhibit increased closed-mindedness and, therefore, a stronger affinity for political conservatism.

**Method**

*Participants.* Seventy-one undergraduate students from New York University (52 females and 19 males) participated in exchange for partial course credit.

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5 Rothman et al. (2001) asked participants to indicate their number of sexual partners (an absolute number with objective meaning) on a scale that led them to infer that they were either above average or below average with respect to promiscuity. We manipulated the scale labels in our experiment for a different purpose and made different theoretical and methodological assumptions. For one thing, we were interested in the subjective experience of threat (with no objectively correct answer). For another, we assumed that (only a few years after 9/11) nearly all New York residents would express some degree of concern about terrorism. Thus, we expected that participants would feel more threatened when they were asked to provide their ratings on a scale with high (vs. low) threat labels, insofar as the high-threat labels would invoke a mindset about terrorism that assumed greater minimum and maximum levels of threat.
Procedure and materials. A sense of threat was induced by manipulating the labels of the endpoints on a rating scale for seven questions concerning thoughts about terrorism. Sample questions include: (1) “I worry that terrorists might strike anytime anywhere in the United States,” (2) “I worry that a terrorist attack could happen in the subway system,” and (3) “I worry that terrorists might attack New York City with chemical weapons.” In the low-threat condition, the labels for the scale endpoints ranged from “Not at all” to “Somewhat”; in the high-threat condition, they ranged from “Somewhat” to “To a great extent.” The endpoint labels constituted the only difference between the two conditions; the items themselves were the same.

Following the threat manipulation, participants completed a filler task in which they were asked to write a “to-do” list as if they needed to apply for a job on the following day. This task was assigned in order to divorce the manipulation from the questionnaire that contained the main dependent measures of the study. After the filler task, participants completed the closed-mindedness subscale from Webster and Kruglanski’s (1994) need for closure scale ($\alpha = .61$) and also placed themselves on a left-right ideological continuum ranging from $-5$ (extremely liberal) to $+5$ (extremely conservative). In addition to being highly parsimonious, measuring political orientation with a single left-right ideological self-placement item is both valid and reliable (e.g., see Jost, 2006; Knight, 1999). All participants were thoroughly debriefed and probed for suspicion. None of the participants reported seeing any connection between the terrorism questions and the dependent measures.

Results and Discussion

The mean self-reported fear of terrorism in the high-threat condition, in which the scale labels ranged from “Somewhat” to “To a great extent,” was $3.49$ ($SD = 1.96$). This was not significantly different from the mean observed in the low-threat condition in which the scale labels ranged from “Not at all” to “Somewhat” ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.64$), $t (69) = 1.52$, ns. Thus, any differences between the two conditions in terms of threat and its ideological consequences can be assumed to be nonconscious, at least for some of the participants (cf. Arndt, Greenberg, & Cook, 2002).

As hypothesized, participants assigned to the high-threat condition scored significantly higher on closed-mindedness ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.89$) than did those assigned to the low-threat condition ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.94$), $t (69) = 2.18$, $p < .05$. This finding replicates the results of Studies 1a and 1b. Furthermore, participants who were assigned to the high-threat condition also identified themselves as more

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6 A principal component analysis was conducted again on the eight items. This time, all items loaded higher than .30 on the first component and the highest reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .61$) was obtained using all eight items.
conservative (or less liberal) on the ideological self-placement item ($M = -0.75$, $SD = 2.38$), compared to those participants who were assigned to the low-threat condition ($M = -1.84$, $SD = 2.01$), $t(68) = 2.09, p < .05$. This finding supplements the results of prior research in which threat was found to increase politically conservative opinions (Jost et al., 2004) and support for a conservative leader (Landau et al., 2004b; Willer, 2004).

Finally, we conducted a bootstrap bias-corrected mediational analysis (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) using AMOS software to examine a model in which the effect of high (vs. low) threat on liberal-conservative self-placement was mediated by closed-mindedness (see Figure 1). The analysis indicated mediation for the effect of threat on ideological self-placement, insofar as the direct effect was no longer significant after adjusting for closed-mindedness ($b = .82$, $SE = .52$, ns), whereas the indirect effect was significant ($b = .27$, $SE = .19$, $p < .05$).

Threat significantly predicted closed-mindedness in the mediational model ($b = .48$, $SE = .22$, $p < .05$), and it, in turn, predicted ideological self-placement ($b = .56$, $SE = .28$, $p < .05$).7

Thus, Study 2 demonstrated that participants who are subtly primed with high (vs. low) threat subsequently identify themselves as more conservative (or less liberal) on the ideological spectrum. Importantly, the relationship between threat and conservative self-placement was statistically mediated by closed-mindedness, as hypothesized. This study, therefore, corroborates the notion that when people are threatened, they are less motivated to elaborate on their cognitions, and this, in

7 We also analyzed a reverse-mediation model in which the effect of threat on closed-mindedness was mediated by political orientation. Results from this reversed mediation model revealed a marginally significant indirect effect ($b = .11$, $SE = .07$, $p = .05$), but the effect was considerably weaker than the effect obtained for the hypothesized causal order.
turn, draws them toward conservative ideology (or away from liberal ideology). It is worth noting that the findings from Study 2 contradict expectations derived from terror management theory (Anson, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2009; Greenberg et al., 1992; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003), which suggests that when people experience existential anxiety, they should seek to reaffirm their existing values, whether liberal or conservative. Because participants in this study were quite liberal on average, terror management theory would predict that the threat manipulation should have made most of them more liberal rather than more conservative. Instead, we found that participants on average exhibited a “conservative shift” (Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Nail & McGregor, 2009), consistent with the notion that certain characteristics of conservative ideology make it more attractive than liberal ideology under conditions of threat (see also Jost et al., 2003, 2004, 2007).

**Study 3: Manipulating Motivated Closed-Mindedness Directly**

Study 2 provides solid statistical evidence consistent with the causal chain we have proposed, linking threat to closed-mindedness and, in turn, political conservatism. Spencer, Zanna, and Fong (2005) have pointed out, however, that when it comes to causal claims, experimental studies in which the hypothesized mediator is directly manipulated and the dependent variable is measured are methodologically superior to statistical analyses of mediation alone. This is because mediational analyses (such as the analysis reported in Study 2) rarely fulfill two important requirements of causality, namely temporal order and isolation. In Study 3, we directly manipulated the proposed mediator, closed-mindedness, in order to investigate its impact on political self-identification.

**Method**

Thirty-one undergraduate students (24 females, 7 males) from Princeton University were randomly assigned to either a high or low cognitive-load manipulation adapted from procedures used by Gilbert and Osborne (1989) and Ford and Kruglanski (1995). In the high-load condition, participants were given 10 seconds to memorize a fairly difficult eight-digit number (29364095) and instructed to keep it in memory while they filled out several questionnaires (about 10 minutes). In the low-load condition the number was an easy two-digit number (22). After completing several questionnaires pertaining to another study, participants answered two questions pertaining to political orientation. Specifically, they located themselves on a left-right ideological self-placement item ranging from −4 (Liberal) to +4 (Conservative) and also indicated the strength of their party affiliation, ranging from −4 (Strong Democrat) to +4 (Strong Republican). Responses to these two items were positively intercorrelated, $r(31) = .79$, $p < .01$. 
Results and Discussion

Participants who were randomly assigned to the high cognitive-load condition rated themselves as slightly more conservative (or less liberal; \( M = -.94, SD = 1.81 \)), in comparison with those who were randomly assigned to the low cognitive-load condition (\( M = -1.53, SD = 1.46 \)), but this difference did not reach statistical significance, \( t(29) = 1.01, \text{ ns} \). With regard to party affiliation, however, the difference between the two conditions was statistically significant. Participants assigned to the high cognitive-load condition were, on average, less enthusiastic about their identification with the Democratic party (\( M = -.94, SD = 1.34 \)) than were participants assigned to the low cognitive-load condition (\( M = -2.00, SD = 1.51 \)), \( t(29) = 2.07, p < .05 \). Thus, a direct experimental manipulation of the proposed mediator was generally successful at increasing the extent of conservative self-identification (or, in this case, undermining liberal self-identification).

Study 4: A Study of Political Elites

Whereas Studies 1–3 were conducted with samples of predominantly liberal college students in the United States, Study 4 investigated the effects of threat on the social and political attitudes of conservative (center-right) political elites (i.e., party delegates) in Iceland. This provided an excellent opportunity to evaluate the generalizability of our findings. Study 4 also afforded a theoretical opportunity to investigate three different types of threats (i.e., threats to the self, group, and system) to determine whether their effects on closed-mindedness and political conservatism would be similar or dissimilar. Among other things, we were able to examine whether threats to the economic system or to the party’s political success would exert ideological effects that were comparable to those elicited by mortality salience threats in other experiments.

Method

Participants. Participants were official delegates of the Icelandic Independence Party’s national convention in 2005. The Independence Party is a center-right party that espouses probusiness, procapitalist policies as well as liberal “Scandinavian style” positions on cultural, gender, and welfare issues. The study was conducted over the Internet using createsurvey.com. We received 481 valid responses (a 45.4% response rate). The gender distribution of respondents closely reflected that of the delegates as a whole (72% male and 28% female).

Materials. Delegates were randomly assigned to one of four conditions, including three different high-threat conditions in which they were asked to read and reflect on a 90-word passage that described a threat to (a) the economic system of Iceland, (b) their group (the Independence Party), or (c) their personal well-being. For example, the system threat passage read as follows:
Although most people agree that Icelanders have done very well for themselves since gaining independence in 1944, we always live in the shadow of a great variety of threats to our independence and economy. We still rely first and foremost on a single natural resource to create the majority of our national income which makes our economy unstable. The Icelandic currency, although remarkably strong right now, is after all very small and vulnerable in the international context. Finally, foreign investors could start large scale investing in Icelandic companies, threatening our autonomy.8

Delegates assigned to the control condition were not exposed to any passage prior to answering the remaining questions. All participants completed the closed-mindedness subscale from the NFCS, a measure of issue-based liberalism-conservatism, and an ideological self-placement scale that ranged from 1 (extremely left-wing) to 11 (extremely right-wing). For this study, we calculated mean scores on closed-mindedness based on responses to the best five items from that subscale (α = 0.59).9,10

To make the questions more suitable to the contemporary Icelandic context, the items used to measure issue-based liberalism-conservatism were selected and modified from Sidanius and Ekehammar’s (1980) S-Scale, which was originally designed to gauge social and political attitudes in the Swedish context. On a 7-point scale ranging from “very negative” to “very positive,” respondents indicated how positively or negatively they felt about 16 specific ideas or statements, namely: (1) “Affirmative action in job hiring where one gender is underrepresented” (reverse-scored); (2) “Increased taxation of the richest” (reverse-scored); (3) “Privatization of the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service”; (4) “State supported agriculture” (reverse-scored); (5) “Greater equality in salaries” (reverse-scored); (6) “Privately run elementary schools”; (7) “Increased aid to the lowest wage earners” (reverse-scored); (8) “Completely government funded national health care” (reverse-scored); (9) “Legalization of marijuana” (reverse-scored); (10) “Capitalism”; (11) “Libertarianism”; (12) “Privatization of state owned businesses”; (13) “Lower taxes on companies”; (14) “Privately run health care industry

8 This study was conducted three years before the collapse of the Icelandic economy in late 2008, well before the first signs of trouble started to emerge in the banking industry.

9 An examination of the seven closed-mindedness items revealed that most of them had a skew statistic above 1.0, indicating a positive skew high enough to potentially violate assumptions of normality. The skewness was adjusted for by square root transformation. All means and regression coefficients reported in the results section are expressed in the variable’s original metric for ease of interpretation, but all statistical tests and the path model were conducted using the transformed variable.

10 A principal component analysis of the closed-mindedness subscale resulted in one component, according to a joint examination of a scree plot and eigenvalues (1st component = 1.98, 2nd component = 1.14). Five of the seven items loaded higher than .30 on the first component. The two items that were dropped were: “I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways,” and “I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes.”
(but publicly funded); (15) “Adoption of tuition at the college level”; and (16) “Iceland being on the ‘coalition of the willing’ list.” The resulting scale was internally reliable ($\alpha = 0.81$) and composite scores correlated significantly with ideological self-placement on the left-right scale ($r = .39, p < .01$).

**Results**

The descriptive statistics for closed-mindedness, issue-based liberalism-conservatism, and left-right self-placement for each of the four conditions are listed in Table 4. Delegates assigned to the three experimental (high threat) conditions were significantly more likely than delegates assigned to the control condition to endorse politically conservative opinions on the composite measure of issue-based conservatism, $F (3, 478) = 4.29, p < .01$. None of the means in the three high-threat conditions differed from each other, but all were significantly different from the control condition.

The effects of threat on ideological self-placement did not attain conventional levels of significance in this study, $F (3, 478) = .67$, ns, presumably because all delegates were already strongly and self-consciously identified with the right wing (approximately 8.90 on a scale from 1 to 11). When closed-mindedness scores were pooled for those delegates assigned to the three high-threat conditions, the resulting average ($M = 3.08, SD = 1.26$) was significantly higher than the average score for those delegates assigned to the control condition ($M = 2.82, SD = .05$), $F (1, 480) = 5.23, p < .05$.

To investigate the possibility that closed-mindedness mediated the relationship between threat and political attitudes, we conducted a bias-corrected media-

| Table 4. Effects of Assignment to Self, Group, or System Threat Conditions on Closed-Mindedness, Issue-Based Conservatism, and Right-Wing Self-Placement; Means (with Standard Deviations; Study 4) |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                              | No Threat/Control | Self Threat    | Group Threat    | System Threat   |
| Closed-mindedness            | 2.82$^a$         | 3.10           | 3.10            | 3.04            |
|                              | (1.10)           | (1.25)         | (1.25)          | (1.27)          |
| Issue-based conservatism     | 4.56$^b$         | 5.00$^b$       | 4.88$^c$        | 4.89$^c$        |
|                              | (0.95)           | (0.97)         | (0.89)          | (1.00)          |
| Right-wing self-placement    | 8.74$^d$         | 8.93           | 8.90            | 8.93            |
|                              | (1.33)           | (1.18)         | (1.05)          | (1.43)          |
| $n$                          | 129              | 110            | 123             | 116             |

$^a$Although pairwise comparisons were nonsignificant, closed-mindedness scores were significantly lower (on average) in the no threat/control condition than in the three threat conditions (combined; $M = 3.08, SD = 1.26$), $F (1, 480) = 5.23, p < .05$.

$^b$Issue-based conservatism was significantly lower (on average) in the no threat/control condition than in any of the three threat conditions ($p < .05$), which did not differ from one another.

$^c$No significant differences in right-wing self-placement were observed between the no threat/control condition and the other three condition, possibly because of restricted range (see text).
tional analysis using AMOS (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The three threat conditions (self, group, and system) were combined and compared to the control condition to create a binary independent variable suitable for a path analysis (0 = no threat, 1 = threat). As illustrated in Figure 2, threat (vs. no threat) predicted closed-mindedness ($b = .26, SE = .13, p < .05$), which in turn predicted the endorsement of more conservative political attitudes ($b = .07, SE = .03, p < .01$). The direct path from threat to political attitudes was reduced slightly from $b = .33, SE = .10$, to $b = .31, SE = .10$. Accordingly, there was a significant, albeit small indirect effect of threat on political attitudes ($b = .02, SE = .01, p < .05$), providing evidence for partial mediation.

**General Discussion**

In several experiments, we have shown that laboratory manipulations of threat serve to increase motivated closed-mindedness and, in so doing, to increase the psychological affinity for politically conservative opinions and identifications. This overall pattern of results was observed with respect to American and European research participants, college students and political elites, and in predominantly liberal as well as predominantly conservative samples. Taken as a whole, these findings provide reasonably strong support for Jost et al.’s (2003) theory of political conservatism as motivated social cognition and contradict the notion that threat increases individuals’ adherence to their own political ideology, even if that ideology happens to be a liberal one (e.g., see Anson et al., 2009; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003). Because the experiments here employed situational manipulations of threat to document “conservative shift” (see also Bonanno & Jost, 2006, for a longitudinal field study), our results complement those gleaned from personality

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**Figure 2.** Mediational analysis illustrating the direct and indirect effects of threat on motivated closed-mindedness and issue-based conservatism in a sample of political elites (study 4). The figure displays unstandardized regression coefficients (and standard errors). The numbers in brackets represent the coefficients after adjusting for closed-mindedness.

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level.
or dispositional studies in which individual differences pertaining to threat sensitivity and uncertainty reduction have been shown to be associated with politically conservative (vs. liberal) orientation (e.g., Amodio et al., 2007; Jost et al., 2007; Oxley et al., 2008). Thus, dispositional and situational variables seem to exert parallel effects on ideological outcomes.

One of the most important empirical contributions of this set of experiments is the demonstration that motivated closed-mindedness statistically mediates the relationship between threat and political conservatism. This does not mean, however, that closed-mindedness is the only mediator of the threat-ideology link, especially in light of the relatively weak indirect effect observed for political elites in Study 4. It seems likely that threat exerts other psychological effects in addition to reducing epistemic motivation and that these can also affect political ideology. Along these lines, Lambert et al. (2010) provided evidence suggesting that the emotion of anger may also play an important role. We think that future research would do well to consider the possibility that threat elicits anxiety, which, in turn, reduces cognitive capacity and increases the need for cognitive closure, ultimately leading to an increased affinity for conservatism. Unfortunately, we did not include any direct measures of anxiety, so we were unable to assess this possibility with the present set of studies. By demonstrating that closed-mindedness mediates the effect of threat on conservatism, however, we have shed further empirical light on the complex relationship between existential motives to manage threat and epistemic motives to reduce uncertainty (e.g., Dechesne & Kruglanski, 2004; Hogg, 2007, pp. 108–110; Landau et al., 2004a; van den Bos et al., 2005). Previous research has shown that each motive contributes significantly and independently to political conservatism (Jost et al., 2007). In the research program summarized here, we have found that a causal relationship also holds between the experience of threat and the need to reduce uncertainty, again with the end result of increased conservatism.

To be clear, we do not assume that threat will always make people more conservative (cf. Weise et al., 2008). Although we observed no evidence of liberal shift in these experiments, we did not observe conservative shifts for every measure of political orientation that we administered (see also Nail & McGregor, 2009). We think that threat is especially likely to yield conservative results when people are relatively unaware of the connection between their own emotional and motivational states (e.g., fear, anxiety, anger, and closed-mindedness) and their self-proclaimed political attitudes. However, when people are made explicitly aware of such connections—as when Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE) criticized the speeches of fellow presidential hopeful Rudy Giuliani (R-NY) as containing only “a noun, a verb, and 9/11” during the 2008 electoral campaign—they may be significantly less prone to exhibit increased conservatism. Under such circumstances, processes of psychological reactance are probably more likely to produce ideological polarization rather than a general conservative shift (e.g., see Brehm & Mann, 1975).
In the present set of experiments, epistemic motivation was measured using scores on the closed-mindedness subscale of the NFCS (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Although attempts to capture situationally induced changes in epistemic motivation with the NFCS have not (to our knowledge) been reported previously in the literature, it turned out to be a successful method, insofar as the effect of threat on closed-mindedness was consistently observed in four studies. In light of the fact that scores on the closed-mindedness subscale were relatively low in absolute terms, it may be more accurate to suggest that the threat manipulations resulted in decreased open-mindedness rather than increased closed-mindedness. In any case, what is clear is that threat affects epistemic motivation and, in so doing, appears to (temporarily) alter one’s social and political attitudes. Research such as this suggests that ideological belief systems can be “genuine,” “meaningful,” and “consequential,” and yet also subject to some degree of situational malleability or—in the hands of experimental social psychologists or Machiavellian political operatives—manipulation (see also Jost, 2006).

The mouse in Kafka’s parable cited in the epigram of this article was overcome with fear. Initially it was afraid of the vast, uncertain surroundings, and so it welcomed the confining walls to the left and right. By the time the reader happens upon the situation, the mouse’s thinking has narrowed along with the walls. The mouse fails to realize that a change of direction is possible and so continues on an ultimately self-destructive path. The cat understands better but uses the knowledge to its own advantage. The parallels between the lessons of “The Little Fable” and the research described in this article may be indirect, but they are probably not lost on the reader. Human beings, like many other species, are sensitive to threat and experience the lack of certainty and control as highly aversive. Consequently, there is a risk of becoming so preoccupied with relieving the threat that cognitive alternatives simply fall away, and the easiest or most accessible course of thought and action prevails—whether it leads us to a rewarding morsel of cheese or right into the cat’s maw.

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Threat, Closed-Mindedness, and Conservatism


