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# The twin taboos of discussing religion and politics : a study of six "basic" emotions and interpersonal relationships in response to Rick Perry's "Strong"

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THE TWIN TABOOS OF DISCUSSING RELIGION AND POLITICS: A STUDY OF SIX  
“BASIC” EMOTIONS AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN RESPONSE TO RICK  
PERRY’S “STRONG”

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This will not be a normal acknowledgements page. The situation surrounding me and my family over the past two years—just about the time I started this project—has been anything but normal. As I write these acknowledgements, the one year anniversary of my mother’s passing from cancer approaches—a disease she was diagnosed with just a few months after I started researching this dissertation. A mere two weeks before her passing in late 2012, I found out that my father was dealing with his own medical nightmare—a fatal disease for which there is no cure and very little treatment. As I write he is getting weaker—still there in mind, however, and anxiously awaiting a resolution to my graduate school experience. But the effects of my dad’s disease are noticeable and devastating. I don’t include these circumstances involving my family to garner sympathy but rather to state that including a simple “thank you” to my parents seems inadequate. Truth be told, anything I could write about my parents now would seem trite or insufficient. They have been my support system over the past six years—at some times financially and at all times emotionally. I come from a close-knit family. I want people to know that. I am grateful for every moment my mom, dad, and I had, and hopefully still have, together.

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would be fair. I'd inevitably leave someone out—unintentionally, of course. So, instead, I'll simply say that if over the past six years I've made you smile or laugh—and if you've done the same for me—then thank you. Friendships come and go, but if I had any frequent interaction with you I am sure I am better off and perhaps wiser for it, and I hope you remember time we may have spent together fondly as well. I would like to offer special thanks, though, to Andrea Vickery for all her help in the computer lab in Coates Hall. And last, but not least, I must thank Lauren Leist for helping to keep me sane over this past year.

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## ABSTRACT

A fear appeal has become a common way to describe a message created by individuals, groups, or entities to achieve an array of social and political goals. For instance, law firms may use fear-based advertisements on television by listing several debilitating diseases to educate potential clients about the side effects of certain drugs. In the realm of politics, candidates may use fear-based appeals in their messages as well: certain Republican candidates use the fear of attacks similar to the ones of September 11, 2001, to “scare” the American people into voting for the candidate who would best protect the country from another tragedy. On the other side of the political aisle, Democrats tap into elements of fear promoting the idea that their political opponents are encouraging a “war on women” or an elimination of the middle-class due to favorable economic policies aimed at the wealthy. Are these messages, however, actually producing “fear” in audiences? Results of this dissertation, specifically those results gathered in Chapter IV, suggest that fear is the primary emotion respondents report after viewing a threat-based political advertisement.

In this dissertation, I explore studies of demographics and emotions to see how much of a role, if any, group affiliations play on respondents’ reports of felt emotions, specifically the emotion of fear. I also examine a prominent political advertisement from the 2012 Republican primaries designed to instill fear, worry, or anxiety in its audience. I argue that audience responses to so-called fear appeals are based more in socialization and group affiliation than due to a biological reaction of fear to a certain stimulus brought about in the message. In fact, much more so than fear, disgust is the primary emotion respondents report feeling in response to



watching the infamous political advertisement from the 2012 U.S. presidential campaigns referred to above. Limitations of the study and areas for future research are discussed in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A controversial 2012 documentary critical of President Barack Obama and his plans for a second term served as the catalyst for a recent enlightening if not uncomfortable conversation I had with an undergraduate public speaking student of mine. Through no prodding of my own, this student approached me to explain how she had learned through small-group discussions with some of her classmates that her political and religious beliefs were not shared by many of the other students in my class. Intrigued by her summation, but careful never to cross what I long ago deemed a personal boundary (discussing the specific religious beliefs and political leanings of my students), I delicately asked what differences she noticed in her philosophies of life compared with those of her classmates. My student proceeded to volunteer a plethora of information (probably more than I needed to know) about her conservative political ideology and non-denominational, evangelical Christian beliefs. She spoke with a mixture of ignorant pride (she admitted she wasn't sure exactly what principles a conservative stood for; nor, she told me, had she read a single word of the Bible) and frightened amazement that not everyone in the class, including her non-religious instructor (she asked; I answered honestly), shared her views of the United States and the world.

I came to realize a bit later in our conversation that the reason for her sudden interest in her classmates' and my religious and political opinions was the aforementioned conservative documentary she had watched the previous night. What was it about this particular documentary that could have led my student not to question her own beliefs and assumptions about the world, but instead worry about those around her whom she came to realize did not share her personal convictions? In order to answer this question an examination of the documentary was in order.

## **2016: Obama's America**

*2016: Obama's America* is the brainchild of conservative gadfly Dinesh D'Souza and peddles many theories about Obama's motives for his policies and plans for 2013 and beyond (mostly dangerous bordering on nefarious in D'Souza's opinion). D'Souza begins his documentary innocently enough—discussing his birthplace of India and contrasting it with both his idealized version and eventual impressions of the United States upon moving to New Hampshire to attend Dartmouth College. D'Souza makes use of common conservative tropes extolling the values of the United States: the ability for anyone despite race or creed to pursue the “American Dream”; the dismissal of racism as an overriding factor in stopping an American from achieving success. D'Souza also focuses on some, as he calls them, questionable decisions by Obama during his first presidential term: delaying the construction of the Keystone Pipeline; putting a moratorium on American offshore drilling while donating money to Brazil for the same task. Despite his obvious disagreements with some of Obama's political decisions, D'Souza sees quite a bit of himself in the president, especially in their respective backgrounds. For the first thirty minutes of his movie D'Souza seems content to compare his upbringing with that of President Obama's—both of them being products of what D'Souza calls neo-colonialism, namely the British influence in both D'Souza's India and Kenya, the native land of the President's father. One stark contrast, as hypothesized by D'Souza, and, indeed, the general crux of his argument, is that while he and President Obama come from similar upbringings, D'Souza embraced his adopted homeland of the United States while the President turned his back on what D'Souza claims to be traditional American ideals and has, instead, embraced the slow implementation of the values of Obama's youth—namely those anti-colonial beliefs he allegedly acquired while living in Indonesia or inherited from his Kenyan-born father.

Whether D'Souza's purpose in creating this film was to promote the truth as he views it or to rile up the conservative base for profit and political change, the effect it had on my student was clear: she was legitimately worried of a future United States controlled by terrorists (however vague this label was to her) whose main purpose was to combine forces with President Obama to weaken or destroy the United States as we know it. The president and his evil allies from "over there" (her words) were to go about achieving the destruction of the United States by eliminating much of the country's nuclear arsenal and eschewing the—in my student's opinion—founding religious principles that made the United States the international power it is today, namely principles that put the teachings of and salvation through Jesus Christ at the center of political and social decision-making. And while the fear that my student admitted to feeling after viewing this documentary was not powerful enough to stop her from carrying on with the mundane actions of everyday life, she still felt powerful enough emotions to gauge the opinions of her classmates and instructor to see if we shared the same concerns she did as to the future direction of the United States.

With our conversation lasting nearly an hour, my student and I were able to more rationally discuss the documentary and, even though I had yet to see it, frame it within the realm of a possibly slanted piece of political-entertainment rather than a fact-based prediction of a dystopian America. Our discussion reached its conclusion and my student, calmed a bit, readied herself for her next class of the day. There was still, however, a disconnection between her and me. Her perception of the world was formed in part through friends and family members who raised her in a predominantly religious environment, just as my worldview was formed through the people in my life who had little use for religious teachings or services. As our conversation ended it was difficult to decipher if my student's fear or anxiety was truly due to this

documentary or the fact that few people she had encountered at college shared her concerns for the future of the United States and the current state of Christianity. Perhaps the more salient question: were her fears more prominent because of the way she was raised? In other words, did the religious and social values—and lack of worldly experience and education concerning other cultures—that created the environment in which she grew up condition her to feel this fear about the world, this distrust of other cultures and religions? Was D’Souza’s documentary nothing more than a trigger that brought forth some powerful basic emotions in my student—emotions that all of us experience through evolutionary biology but that are perhaps more powerful in my student because of her upbringing and the troubling stimulus of a documentary and subsequent conversation with others about the documentary? This is the nature of the fear appeal: a message that relies on the promotion of unsettling emotions, as the following paragraphs explain.

### **What is Fear?**

Fear and fear appeals are constant subjects of study for scholars who focus on a variety of topics from health communication (Witte, Cameron, McKeon, & Berkowitz, 1996; Parrott, 2004) to the biological and cognitive make-up of fear (LeDoux, 1996). Groups and individuals use fear to promote everything from sexual abstinence and anti-vaccination movements to the selling of political candidates (Curnalia, 2007). One of the six basic types of emotions, according to Ekman’s (1972) pioneering research on emotion prototypes, fear is labeled as such in part because it is a biological response to environmental stimuli, at least according to one prominent neuroscientist. This neuroscientist, Joseph LeDoux, claims fear is a defensive reaction brought about by a combination of brain activity that relies on both emotion and logic (1996). Fear is not precisely the same emotion as anxiety, which LeDoux (1996) calls “a brooding fear of what might happen” (p. 130). Another definition LeDoux (1996) provides for anxiety is that of

“unresolved fear” (p. 228). Anxiety is an extension of fear. Many of the common fear appeals used today in political communication may be better labeled as “anxiety appeals.” From a communication standpoint—specifically a health communication perspective—fear is defined by Witte, et al. (1996) as “an internal emotional reaction comprising psychological and physiological dimensions” (p. 320). This psychological aspect of emotion traces its roots to initial theories of emotional processes—namely those of William James—which will be discussed later. Continuing with Witte et al.’s (1996) definition of fear, the authors state that in order to experience fear there must be the perception of “a serious or relevant threat” (p. 320). Are these threats Witte et al. (1996) speak of present in political communication?

Politicians and pundits invite us to be afraid of myriad social problems: unemployment, lack of health care, higher taxes, crime, class differences, and education inequality, just to list a few. Former United States Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich claims that Americans vote against their economic interests in part over the fear of losing industry and manufacturing jobs (Reich, 2014). Sociologist Barry Glassner (1999) blames the media for scaring Americans by promoting sensationalistic stories on nightly news programming and, thereby, forcing the American public to spend money on programs designed to eliminate threats that have very little chance of actually occurring. While the issues Reich and Glassner raise are all legitimate concerns, discussions of these issues may promote worry, anger, and anxiety, but perhaps not fear, at least fear in the way that it is commonly defined in the communication, psychology, and neuroscience literature. Indeed, research by Banks and Bell (2013) promotes the hypothesis that anger is the primary emotion politicians target in their political advertisements, especially those advertisements that have a racially-charged element to them. In summary, the emotion of fear is being mislabeled today mostly due to media and politicians incorrectly identifying their

particular persuasive strategies as fear-based. In the often symbiotic relationship between politicians and the media, everyday social and economic issues are reframed in a way to instill a dramatic degree of doom to topics that have been debated for decades.

Fear is instantaneous. Fear is not an emotion one stops to ponder. Instead, fear is an involuntary reaction. One aspect of this study is to counter the notion that what politicians, health care workers, and the media use to persuade an audience toward a particular behavior is a “fear” appeal at all. The aforementioned entities often use facts, statistics, and, sometimes, propaganda to evoke a short-term rise while provoking long-term contemplation and future action—but their messages cannot be considered appeals based on literal fear. If a political candidate speaks of how raising taxes will accomplish nothing more than hurting middle-class families while increasing government spending, that candidate has given his supporters reason to ponder a supposed worrisome future state of economic hardship, but anxiety or anger, not fear, is the emotion the receiver of this political message is most likely feeling. This is not to say, however, that fear is not an emotion that requires extensive discussion and study, as the following paragraphs will discuss.

Most scholars agree that fear is a basic emotion felt by humans. Rogers (1975), paraphrasing the work of Sigmund Freud, describes fear as “an emotional state...produced by some stimulus in the environment and...directed toward mobilizing the organism to effect some change in the stimulus” (p. 96). Rogers’ particular definition of fear, as well as other descriptions of fear in academic literature, poses a problem for those who wish to label political advertisements as “fear appeals”. Political fear appeals do not produce an instantaneous response in their viewers, which leads to the purpose of this project.

The focus of this dissertation will be to examine whether what are commonly referred to as “fear appeals” truly influence our attitudes and behaviors when it comes to which political or cultural issues we support and with whom we choose to discuss these issues. Fear appeals are designed to produce an action or behavior on the part of the receiver of the message in order to minimize the perceived threat contained in the fear message. Discussions of the fear-inducing topic in question with those in their personal networks should be, at the very least, an initial attempt to thwart the threat in question. Since these discussions are often delayed well past the point of initial stimulation from the so-called fear-inducing message, can these advertisements truly be described as causing “fear” in their viewers?

In this dissertation I will attempt to answer questions pertaining to if and how fear motivates receivers of political messages. Are the views of politicians and members of the media correct? Does preying on the fears of the American voter actually produce some sort of action? Also, do people who rate themselves as more fearful subscribe more to a particular political or religious philosophy? And if so, which political and religious philosophies are most common among those who rate themselves as more fearful?

Recent studies have supported the connection between voters’ religious affiliations—namely their degrees of religiosity—and their propensity to vote for candidates of a specific political party (Mockabee, Wald, & Legee, 2007). For example, Caucasians who described themselves as “evangelical Christian” tended to vote overwhelmingly for Republican candidates. The same study reports, however, that it is no longer sufficient to simply say that “religious” people behave in similar manners when it comes to supporting political and social issues. For instance, those who claim to be evangelical Christians tend to concern themselves with more individualistic issues, namely those dealing with “personal morality”, such as abortion rights and



gay marriage (Mockabee, et al., 2007, p. 8). While those of a non-evangelical denomination (mainline Protestants, Catholics, etc.) tend to focus more on “communitarian” issues, namely those involving the welfare of society (Mockabee, et al., 2007).

In addition to studying the twin taboos of religion and politics, there is also justification for studying political party affiliation and self-reported emotions. For example, a 2008 Pew study indicates that self-professed Republicans are on average happier than self-professed Democrats. Could this be an indicator that Republicans’ self-reported happiness makes them less likely to fear political messages that counter their worldviews, or are those who claim to be the happiest the quickest to anger or become fearful or anxious when they perceive a threat to their way of life?

The goal of this study is to further the research of fear but also to widen the scope of the examination of fear to include political and religious messages and susceptibility to supposed fear-inducing messages. Religion seems an obvious target for study since politicians often cater their messages toward appealing to voters’ core values, which often include religious beliefs. Also, the particular political message I will be examining in later chapters appeals specifically to voters’ religious beliefs and identities. In addition to studying the susceptibility to fear-inducing messages, I will also attempt to show that the responses American voters have to political “fear” appeals are based mostly in socialization, not simply biology (which is perhaps the main reason the advertisements cannot be referred to as basic “fear” appeals). I am not arguing that all human fear-based reactions are social in nature, but I am contending that human responses to political messages—especially those intended to elicit fear in viewers—are too complex to simply label as “fear appeals”. There are simply too many social and demographic variables—

and too many other emotion—at play to deduce that humans’ reactions to political messages are based only on a biological fear of the initial message.

Some of these demographics include our political leanings and religious beliefs. Our attitudes toward certain political and religious philosophies are shaped early in life, and we tend to hold on to these beliefs and surround ourselves with people who share the same beliefs we do. Political messages, therefore, end up becoming a rallying cry for the party faithful much more so than they serve as a stimulus that creates an automatic response from the message targets. I hope to find out if there is a relationship between the degree of emotion one may feel after listening to or viewing a political fear message and the chance that a person will share his or her opinion of that message with an interpersonal relation (family member, close friend) or behave in some other way in order to alleviate the negative emotion the ad may induce.

### **The Role of Fear in Political Advertisements**

Fear will be the primary emotion examined in this study (although I would imagine that many of the basic emotions will play a role, especially anger, sadness, and disgust). Discussions of fear, however, dominate the media airwaves and internet. American politicians on both sides of the political aisle are constantly accused by journalists, the American public, and, of course, other politicians of relying on fear messages and emotional appeals to convince the public to take a particular course of action; this action (or inaction as the case may be) may involve refusing to vaccinate one’s child based on dubious reports of the possible side effects of certain vaccines or voting for or against a particular political candidate based on the implication that one’s vote will help stop a present or future threat to society. As one example of a political fear message, one-time 2012 Republican presidential candidate Rick Perry ran an advertisement extolling his Christian values while at the same time painting a picture of a dystopian (at least in his mind)

America in which gay marriage is legal and children are no longer able to pray in public schools. The message in the ad is not so subtle: a vote for Perry will ensure the country is governed by whatever values Perry and his supporters view as truly American in nature -- namely pro-Christian.

In addition to politicians, journalists themselves appear to be just as guilty at using emotional appeals in their nightly newscasts by emphasizing stories of terrorist plots, soaring unemployment, and controversial economic decisions that will have lasting negative financial impact on much of the viewing audience. But how do these appeals work? And is it actually fear that journalists and politicians employ as their main tactic of persuasion, or do the effects of these types of ads elicit other emotions in people, such as anxiety, sadness, or disgust? One important question I will ask in this dissertation is, are fear appeals really based on “fear”? Or is a “fear appeal” just a catchy name for a particular message that foments a multitude of emotions in order to elicit a “frightened” message receiver toward a particular action?

The aim of this dissertation is to, first and foremost, help answer these questions but to also redefine what constitutes a “fear message”, “fear appeal”, or more generally, an “emotional appeal” as they are defined in the common lexicon. My central argument will be that fear messages rely less on causing instantaneous behavioral responses to a given stimulus and more on targeting our already existing social biases through careful manipulation of words and phrases.

### **Preview of Dissertation Chapters**

To focus on previous research on emotions and fear, Chapter II of the dissertation will consist of a thorough review of the literature surrounding the studies of emotions in general and fear specifically. Also, I delve into the subjects of “fear appeals” as they are used in politics and

add a section on persuasion and compliance-gaining techniques. Finally, I end Chapter II by discussing theories of communication and mass media that frame some of the arguments in this dissertation. Specifically I will discuss the work of George Gerbner on Cultivation Theory and the idea of the “Mean World Syndrome”, as well as the work of Cass Sunstein and the “daily me”—the idea that we make our own “news” and reinforce our preconceived notions of society by seeking out information that already conforms to our worldviews. The concept of the “daily me” also fits nicely with discussions of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s (1993) Spiral of Silence Theory, specifically that we ignore information contrary to the prevailing opinions of our social groups and engage in conversation that supports the dominant group mentality.

In order to begin the study of emotions in relation to demographics, Chapter III will consist of an analysis of a 2008 data set collected by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. The study, entitled The Early October Social Trends Survey, looks at several different demographic and sociological variables and relates them to respondents’ levels of self-reported happiness. My goal with this chapter is to provide a rationale for studying demographic categories like “religious beliefs” and “political affiliation” with a scale measure of a self-reported emotion, in this case “happiness”. Results of my analysis of this data set will show a need to study emotions as they relate to how affiliation with certain groups can have an impact on which emotions we report feeling and to what degree we feel these emotions.

Once the rationale for studying emotions and politics is in place I will transition into Chapter IV, which will look at a particular political advertisement and its attempts to evoke a sense of fear, anxiety, or some other emotion in the American public through the use of these so-called political fear appeals. Specifically, I will examine responses to Texas Governor Rick Perry’s political advertisement entitled “Strong”, which was used in spring 2012 during Perry’s

failed run at the Republican presidential nomination. Chapter V will follow with an overall discussion of the project along with the findings, limitations, and areas for future research.

## **Conclusion**

From examinations of the fear appeals and the respondents' reactions to them, I hope to glean some sense of whether or not these ads actually provoke "fear" in respondents. If not "fear", do these advertisements engender any kind of emotion whatsoever? I also will examine demographic information of the respondents who view these ads to test for any relationship between certain variables like religious affiliation, political party affiliation, age, and relationship status with self-reported degrees of felt emotion, like fear. It is perhaps the paramount question of this dissertation as to whether or not our group affiliations, and worldviews that are entailed within these groups, play the main role in how human beings respond to political advertisements. To put it succinctly, fear appeals do not promote the emotion of "fear" at all. But in order to study exactly what fear is and how it may or may not influence us toward certain behaviors and interpersonal goals, a clear definition is needed of not just fear but emotions as well. In order to better understand fear and any other emotions this project leads me to study, I will begin Chapter II by explaining the differences in the three classifications of emotions: discrete, dimensional, and prototype.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Theories of Emotion

Literature relating to emotions has focused on both the attempt to define what emotions are and the different ways in which to classify them, namely discrete, dimensional, and prototype. Kang and Capella (2008) define an emotion as “intense, targeted and often relevant to specific messages or targets” (p. 41). In other words, one comes across a snake in the woods and freezes due to the emotion of fear; the intensity of the emotion causes the person to freeze, and the target of the emotion is, of course, the snake. According to Plutchik (1992) emotions serve two purposes: communicating our intentions and increasing our chances of surviving emergencies. These definitions serve as all-encompassing explanations of what emotions are but do not quite explain all the different types of emotions one might feel.

For the most part there has never been a general consensus among scholars as to which feelings actually constitute *the* set of basic emotions. Guerrero, Andersen, and Trost (1998) discuss the emotions of anger, happiness, sadness, and fear as perhaps the most widely agreed upon set of emotions. Zillmann (2003) counters that there is only “true consensus” for the emotions of anger and fear. He does concede, however, that the existence of happiness and sadness are mostly agreed upon by scholars, even though these two particular emotions have been called by other names (*joy* and *pleasure* for happiness; *depression* and *grief* for sadness). There still exists some disagreement, however, as to how one experiences these emotions and how to label the experience itself.

The idea behind discrete, or basic, emotions is that a handful of emotions exists that humans experience that are clearly distinct from one another. For instance, Fehr and Russell (1984) tested this idea of which emotions could be counted as basic or discrete by simply having

respondents list all the words that they believed represented emotions, with seven emotions showing up most regularly: fear, anger, happiness, sadness--the same four listed by Guerrero, et al. (1998)--love, hate, and joy. Ekman (1984), however, looked at love and hate as two affective states that, while they certainly can be felt by a person, in order to be experienced must be directed toward at least one other person. Based on this reasoning, according to Ekman (1984), love and hate were not emotions; they were “multi-person plots”. Years earlier, Ekman (1972) put forth what he thought were basic emotions by studying the facial expressions of subjects. Through this study of facial expressions, Ekman (1972) listed what he felt were six basic emotions: fear, anger, happiness, sadness, surprise, and disgust. While labels certainly help to identify which emotions one may feel, the labels themselves do not fully explain the process one goes through when confronted with an emotion-inducing stimulus.

LeDoux (1996) believes that any emotional experience begins first with the appraisal and labeling of a particular stimulus. The work of Joseph LeDoux on the brain’s role in emotion has been a major influence on the current understanding of how emotional experiences play out. The “emotional brain” as LeDoux (1996) calls it is a complex system of communication between different parts of the brain, including neurons (brain cells) that carry messages across synapses (the connections between neurons) to and from these cells. The main component of the brain responsible for emotional reactions is the amygdala. Early parts of brain science and emotion studies looked at whether emotions were purely biological phenomena or social constructs.

Studies of emotion began with William James (1884). His theory stated that the behavior elicited by the stimulus was the emotion. In other words, if one is walking through a dark alley at night, hears gunshots and runs away, that individual feels fear because he runs—he doesn’t run because he is afraid. James’ notion was that these cognitive abilities that humans use to label

particular feelings and behaviors as emotions are not as quick to respond as the muscles that help humans achieve the defensive behavior. The muscles in our legs respond more quickly to the sounds of gunshots than our minds can label the fact that we are scared of said shots, or even that the noises we are hearing are gunshots at all. Later studies, however, disputed James' views of emotional responses and labeling.

### **Two-Factor Theory of Emotions**

Building off James' contributions to emotions studies, Schachter (1964) claimed that the internal reactions were too commonplace to specify one emotion alone. Many emotions shared similar internal responses. One could not distinguish between fear and anger based on a racing pulse or rapid heartbeat alone. One had to pay close attention to the external stimuli to truly understand the particular emotion one was experiencing. In introducing their two-factor theory of emotions, Schachter and Singer (1992) claimed that only by examining one's external environment could a person truly understand what particular emotion he or she was experiencing. The two-factor theory of emotion, or Schachter–Singer theory as it has been referred to, states that emotion is a function of both cognitive factors and physiological arousal. According to the theory, human beings search the immediate environment for emotionally relevant cues to label and interpret unexplained physiological arousal. The two-factor theory reversed the importance of stimuli nearly a century before by William James. The observations of the outside world were more important in labeling our emotions than our involuntary reactions.

The two-factor theory is based off a Schachter and Singer (1962) study on 184 college students. Participants were given a shot of epinephrine (adrenaline). The researchers then organized the participants into three groups based on the information given to participants about



the study: epinephrine informed, epinephrine ignorant, and epinephrine misinformed. Schachter and Singer wanted to determine whether or not the dose of epinephrine caused more sympathetic nervous system responses (SNS) than those who received a placebo. Results of the survey showed an increase in SNS responses amongst the group that received the epinephrine shot. Those participants in an increased state of arousal tended to label emotions based on cues in their environment. What Schachter and Singer's study contributed was the idea that humans use both their internal feelings and external cues to label their emotions. Admiring this theory but feeling that it did not fully explain the emotions process, Dolf Zillmann (2003) added a crucial third factor to Schachter's theory: excitation, which is explained in the ensuing section.

### **Excitation Transfer Theory**

Zillmann's main concern with Schachter's theory was that a person might be quick to misattribute a biological reaction to only one particular stimulus. Zillmann claimed that residual "excitation" from previous stimuli could cause delayed emotional reactions upon introduction to newer stimuli. For instance, following a heated argument with a close friend early in the day, one may experience residual emotion from that experience when he encounters an unpleasant situation later in the day. Being cut off in traffic, for example, could cause this hypothetical person to react more angrily than he normally would due to the leftover emotion from the earlier unpleasant encounter with the close friend. Zillmann's central argument with his excitation-transfer theory of emotion is that humans often overestimate their emotional responses and base them off one stimulus and one stimulus alone, thereby ignoring the effects earlier stimuli may have had on their current emotional state. Zillmann's theory, much like that of Schachter's, put the cognitive evaluations of certain physiological changes at the forefront of emotions research.

Later studies continued the example set by Zillmann and examined how humans link their physiological responses with cognitive labeling.

Zillmann's work on excitation-transfer theory began in the 1960's and is based in large part on Clark Hull's notion of residual excitation (i.e., drive theory) and Schachter's two factor theory of emotion. As Bryant and Miron (2003) stated:

Zillmann collapsed and connected Hull's drive theory and Schachter's two-factor theory, which posited an excitatory and a cognitive component of emotional states. In contrast to Hull's hypothesis that excitatory reactions "lose" their specificity under new stimulation, Schachter claimed that emotional arousal is nonspecific, and the individual cognitively assesses the emotion he is experiencing for the purpose of behavioral guidance and adjustment. Zillmann adopted and modified Schachter's view on this (p. 35).

The ambiguity of emotions lies at the heart of excitation-transfer theory. As Zillmann (2006) stated, "Residual excitation from essentially any excited emotional reaction is capable of intensifying any other excited emotional reaction. The degree of intensification depends, of course, on the magnitude of residues prevailing at the time" (p. 223). Excitation-transfer theory begins to explain how emotions can suddenly change based on previous experiences. While Zillmann's theory can be used to study any number of communication aspects, it was primarily used to understand how media can influence one's emotional responses. Bryant and Miron (2003) state, "Growing concern about the increasingly violent media content in the late 1960s and early 1970s spurred debate over the possible effects of such content on the real-life behavior of media consumers" (p. 32). This dissertation will explore whether fear-based political advertisements deserve the same level of exploration as the violent media studied by Zillmann and his colleagues.

## **Relevance to Political Communication**

Excitation transfer theory could serve as the ideal theoretical basis for the study of political advertisements. The number of hours one spends viewing political information on television or perusing political information online could influence the effect a political advertisement has on a person. If one exposes him or herself to a multitude of political information online, or via television or radio, then that person's baseline excitation level may likely rise when he reads, views, or hears a political advertisement attacking his core political and social beliefs or an admired figure, such as a politician. Aust (2003) states that a person may gather extensive information on a famous figure they admire, such as a politician or athlete. If one admires a famous figure enough, he or she will be more inclined to believe positive information and less likely to believe negative information regarding the celebrity. This tendency to filter in positive information and filter out negative information regarding well-known figures one admires is one aspect of disposition theory.

The basis of disposition theory, which stems from Zillmann's three-factor theory of empathy, is that human beings first observe others and their behaviors. Humans then decide upon their initial observations if the observed party's intentions are noble or ignoble. Positive affect toward the observed party results from a positive judgment of that person's actions; negative affect toward the observed party results from a negative judgment of that person's actions. It follows, then, that a political candidate would try her best to paint herself in a positive light, while portraying opponents as possessing all the negative qualities that a concerned and intelligent voter would not want in a candidate.

In order to increase her own likability or, for lack of a better term, the "dis-likability" of an opponent a politician may record a political advertisement using exemplars. Exemplars are

commonly used by journalists when crafting news reports but have certainly found their way into political advertisements as well. These exemplars are often emotionally-charged “human interest” stories revolving around a specific topic. For instance a politician may focus an advertisement—much like a journalist will focus a news report—on one unemployed member of a community to highlight how rampant the unemployment rate is. This focus may be misguided, however. According to Sundar (2003) viewers of news are likely to focus more on exemplars than they are on hard data, even if the two contradict. Therefore, even if the data show that unemployment is not much of a threat to a community, news viewers who are shown an interview with an unemployed person may believe the jobless problem is much worse than it really is. One could extend this analogy to political advertisements. Even if a viewer of a political advertisement is exposed to hard data that contradicts a politician’s exemplar, the viewer will more than likely believe the advertisement due to the human-interest aspect of the message. Oftentimes one person’s story of misfortune leads to a gross overestimate of a societal problem, even in the face of contradictory data.

Since there is an emotional aspect to political messages, often because of the human interest appeals used by politicians, those viewers who are more emotionally affected by a political advertisement may spend time discussing political issues in their like-minded social networks, perhaps due to a residual excitation lingering from the number of political advertisements, news, and messages one has observed throughout an extended period of time. With the excitation-transfer theory of emotions, one clearly sees an explanation for emotions that results more from biological aspects than cognitive ones. Other scholars, however, have stated their belief that the way humans experience emotions has more to do with the labels we as

human beings assign to feelings rather than the feelings themselves, which is the focus of cognitive theories of emotion.

### **Cognitive Theories of Emotion**

Studies by Ortony and Turner (1990) clearly labeled emotions as psychological functions, mainly because the human physiological response to emotions was the same across different emotions. In fact, Kang and Capella (2008) state that there is not a physiological or psychophysiological response for the emotion of fear, and this statement could easily explain human reactions to other emotions as well. For instance, humans may cry when they experience sadness, happiness, or anger—to name just a few emotions—but it would be difficult for that person to determine which emotion he or she is experiencing based on the physiological response alone. One would need to factor in the stimuli, the external environment, and the cognitive labels in order to properly identify the felt emotion. Ortony and Turner (1990) argued that this similar reaction was based off a cognitive interpretation of emotions. In other words, humans are conscious of the emotions we experience and respond appropriately based off the labels we give to emotions and the appropriate behaviors we have learned in response to these emotions. LeDoux (1996), however, counters this approach to understanding emotions by arguing that emotional experiences and responses can be both biological and cognitive. In fact, LeDoux's main premise is that the cognitive portion of the brain (located mainly in the hippocampus) and the emotional regulator of the brain (the amygdala) work in unison to form an emotional experience.

In other studies of reason and emotion, Brader (2005) states that both psychologists and sociologists have argued that emotion actually enhances reasoning and rationality. Perhaps “emotional” individuals can make clear and reasoned decisions after all. In fact, Richards (2004)

states that emotion and reason are “far from being an oppositional dichotomy” (p. 340) and that he and other researchers believe that emotions and feelings are key components to logical and rational thought and debate. Although, human ability to make such logical decisions even while experiencing certain emotional states can be traced to changes over time in the make-up of the human brain. According to LeDoux (1996), brain evolution is at the point where even though a partnership exists between the two brain components involved in emotion, the amygdala still plays a dominant role over the hippocampus and logical reasoning in emotional processing. LeDoux, however, is hopeful that the brain will eventually evolve to the point where the amygdala and hippocampus can work as equal partners and humans will be able to contemplate a potentially dangerous situation with equal amounts of both reason and emotion.

Most recently, however, LeDoux (2013) has stated that while the amygdala may be the central part of the brain most responsible for eliciting responses to emotions-inducing stimuli (namely the fight or flight response) we are, perhaps, over-estimating the role of the amygdala in physiological responses to threats. For instance, LeDoux (2013) explains that different circuits of the amygdala are activated for different threats. In fact, there are certain threats that do not even activate any systems in the amygdala, especially threats that are either well-learned or unpredictable (LeDoux, 2012, p. 155). While the amygdala remains a well-studied aspect of emotionally-charged responses, perhaps future research will focus more on specific parts of the amygdala and the specific emotional defenses and behaviors that are brought on when different portions of the amygdala—and even other parts of the brain, for that matter—are activated.

In addition to his work concerning the brain and its role in emotional processing, LeDoux (1996) has made significant contributions to the study of fear and believes that fear is more of a defense mechanism that has evolved through species than it is an emotion of which we are

cognitively aware. Instead of a conscious reaction to a stimulus, fear is more of an automatic response related to Darwin's theory of natural selection. The defensive responses that have best served a particular species survive over time. For instance, recoiling when one comes across a snake or freezing when one encounters a bear is simply an evolved defense mechanism. This automatic response, according to LeDoux (1996), is what we should call fear. So a true fear appeal, if we are to use LeDoux's definition of fear, should leave its receiver involuntarily responding to a particular message in an instantaneous fashion. Fear is often an emotion that is easily dissipated. If one encounters a possibly rabid dog but is able to make it back to the safety of one's car or home, then the threat has been alleviated. I will argue that what political pundits refer to as fear appeals do little in the way of provoking an instantaneous response from viewers. Instead these appeals provoke long-lasting emotions such as anger and anxiety. Therefore, a fear appeal as a category of persuasive appeal is misleading.

As one study shows, the production of fear does not necessarily correlate with a behavioral change in a respondent. Mewborn and Rogers (1979) studied heart rate and skin conductance in relation to viewing a film with high fear appeals, but the increase in physiological response coupled with viewing the film did not correlate with a behavioral intent on the part of the respondents to change whatever negative outcome was presented in the film. What is interesting about fear appeals is that they tend to target a number of different emotions. The messengers behind these appeals often focus on inducing an emotional process in their subjects that involves targeting different emotions in order to affect intensity and duration. The fact that emotions can be both intense and long-lasting is best summed up by a few models of emotions that scholars have developed over the years.

Much like with communication itself, scholars have tried to explain the processes behind emotions by creating models that best illustrate how emotions may form and intensify, in addition to studying which components make up emotions. First among the many models of emotion is the circumplex model (Russell, 1978), which is a grid-like structure that separates many emotions based on two categories: whether the emotions are active or passive and the positive or negative valence of the emotion. The grid is arranged in a cross, creating four quadrants. The top two quadrants consist of all the active emotions; the bottom two quadrants contain all the passive emotions. The right two quadrants consist of all the positive emotions while the left two quadrants contain all the negative ones. Each emotion's inverse can be found by drawing a diagonal line from that particular emotion to its corresponding inverse across the model (for instance misery and delight are inversely related). Positive correlations exist when two emotions are paired closely together (for instance contentment and calmness are next to each other in the low activity, positive quadrant). What Russell focuses on in his model is a two-dimensional perspective on emotions—namely that people cognitively assess emotions in terms of whether or not they think the emotion to be positive or negative, and to what degree. The second dimension is how much of a physiological response and arousal goes into feeling the particular emotion (whether the emotions cause a high or low level of activity in a person). It is this study of activity that will help me to determine how much of an impact a political message has on a particular person and what types of behaviors that emotion may encourage.

Several years after Russell's initial model of emotions Daly, Lancee, and Polivy (1983) added the dimension of intensity to the existing two-dimensional model of the conceptualization of emotions. What differentiates intensity from the activity dimension of the previous 2-D models is that intensity, according to Guerrero et al. (1998), relates more to a change in an



individual's non-emotional state, measured in degrees from a baseline neutral state; whereas, activity relates more to a deviation from a normal physiological state. Perhaps the first political advertisement that was accused of eliciting intense emotional reactions in its viewers was President Lyndon B. Johnson's "Daisy Girl" ad during the 1964 presidential elections. I will discuss this ad in greater detail later in this dissertation, but suffice it to say that this minute-long piece was a politician's first real televised attempt to scare citizens into voting for him or face the possibility of a dire future, in this case a future of nuclear apocalypse. But how is intensity mapped out on basic models of emotions? Scholars have provided clear examples of how emotions can vary in intensity and activity.

## **Models of Emotion**

### **Plutchik's Model**

Two prominent examples of 3-dimensional models of emotions are Plutchik's (1984) cone-shaped model of emotions and the prototype model of emotions, based off work by Rosch (1977). First, an explanation of Plutchik's (1984) model is in order. Plutchik writes of eight basic emotions and arranges these emotions on a wheel-like model. He posits that these eight emotions are the building blocks from which all other emotions are developed. The eight basic emotions Plutchik writes of include anger, disgust, sadness, surprise, fear, acceptance, joy, and anticipation. While the emotions of "acceptance" and "anticipation" may seem like odd inclusions, Plutchik (1982) offers an explanation for why he lists each as an emotion. First, acceptance is as a synonym for trust and affiliation—the feeling one gets during times of bonding with another person. Anticipation, according to Plutchik (1982), is the feeling one gets when examining or discovering new territory—perhaps upon visiting a foreign country for the first time. Each of Plutchik's primary emotions, and their secondary and tertiary correlates, is

arranged on a wheel so that an emotion's polar opposite is placed directly across from it (for instance, joy and sadness appear opposite one another on this emotional wheel). The cone shape of the model (one may think of it as a child's spinning-top toy) comes from Plutchik arranging the resulting secondary emotions that stem from degrees of intensity associated with each of the basic emotions. Plutchik accounts for one greater and one lesser degree of intensity for each of the basic emotions. For instance, a more intense version of fear would be terror; a less intense version of fear would be apprehension. Plutchik's discussions of intensity could relate to this dissertation topic if more intensely-felt emotions cause stronger attempts at interpersonal influence by those who hear emotionally-arousing political messages.

### **Prototype Model**

One other key model of emotions is the prototype model, based on research by Rosch (1977). The prototype model combines the discrete approach with the dimensional approach by representing "families of emotion". These "families" are arranged on a two-dimensional model (a horizontal and vertical dimension) with three separate levels within the vertical dimension. First, the vertical dimension levels are made up of a superordinate level, a level of core emotions, and finally a subordinate level. The superordinate level relates to whether or not the emotion and emotion family elicits positive or negative valence. The core level is the basic emotion itself, and the prototype model consists of six basic emotions: joy, anger, surprise, love, fear, and sadness (Notice the inclusion of "love" as opposed to the more commonly accepted basic emotion of disgust.) The subordinate level consists of the emotion family (all secondary emotions that relate to the prototype, or core, emotion). For instance, more secondary emotions like lust, arousal, and desire relate to the core emotion of love.

With all the different models and theories constructed to try to explain what an emotion is, the truth remains that emotions are difficult to classify. Certainly scholars have attempted to create categories that explain the intensity of certain felt emotions. In addition, much agreement exists over which particular emotions constitute the “basic” ones. But instead of trying to identify which “feelings” can be called emotions or which categories certain emotions fall into, I hope to explore if and how particular emotions motivate us to certain actions. Are we more likely to take a specific action based on our emotional reactions to certain messages, or are we more likely to base our behavior off social influence and the opinions of those we feel closest to?

This study hopes to support the argument that fear appeals are less about causing immediate behaviors based off fear and more about using key words and phrases as rallying cries to promote conversation amongst like-minded individuals, conversations that may someday lead to action. Political advertisements are filled with key words chosen directly from the platforms of politicians or the platforms of their political parties. Since emotions themselves are difficult to classify based on internal feelings alone, it is not accurate to say that political fear appeals motivate voters by actually making them afraid. Potential voters are more than likely moved to respond to these so-called fear appeals due to their recognition of certain words or phrases strategically placed by the candidate within the advertisement. The reasons would-be voters are influenced by a particular advertisement will have more to do with their social and demographic influences, such as which political party they identify with or which religion they follow. Of course, there are elements of social influence in all of us due to basic socialization processes, which can best be explained through symbolic interactionism.

## **Symbolic Interactionism**

The concept of symbolic interactionism states that individuals gain a sense of self through their encounters with others. Human beings construct their own realities through symbols; the meanings of these symbols are mutually agreed upon by the individual and his or her personal networks and larger societal identifications. Our social realities are then based on interactions with significant or generalized others and the judgments and feedback these others offer us in relation to our interactions with a symbolic world. Much literature on symbolic interactionism dates back to the work of George Herbert Mead and his seminal work *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934). According to Crable (2006), “[t]he self, for Mead, is created through symbolic exchange, as an individual becomes aware of herself as an object” (p. 2). Although Mead himself did not label his studies symbolic interactionism, the ideas behind what would later be labeled symbolic interactionism took flight thanks to Mead’s work. In fact, the theory of symbolic interactionism has been an important basis for much work in communication literature. Littlejohn (1977) states that symbolic interactionism is an over-arching concept that has given birth to further communication research from role theory to reference group theory. Since human beings are social creatures, it makes sense that individuals would respond to specific symbolic messages in order to create bonds and form relationships with others. Because of these bonds with social others, people react in particular ways when presented with information that may run counter to their ideals. The information that causes cognitive dissonance in message receivers is often simplified by politicians and media members alike who refer to these messages as fear appeals. Having reviewed conceptions of emotions, I now discuss how fear appeals prey on people’s emotions.

## **Fear Appeals**

A “fear appeal” is defined by Witte (1994) as a “persuasive message” that relies less on logic and rationality and more on “depicting a personally relevant and significant threat” (p. 114). But a true fear appeal does not end only with a particular threat offered to an audience. Witte (1994) goes on to explain that the threat is then followed by “recommendations presented as feasible and effective in deterring the threat” (p. 114). Witte (1994) believes “fear” is less of a motivator than a threat is and that one’s response to a fear appeal depends on what degree of efficacy one feels toward the threat. In other words, if a person feels he or she can take some measures to keep the threat at bay (for instance one can develop an evacuation plan in event of a hurricane) then the fear appeal worked—the person at whom the appeal was targeted changed his or her behavior. If, however, the target feels he or she has no control over the threat (for instance a person is told that the threat of global warming is real and there is very little the human race can do to stop its advancement) then the fear appeal will more than likely fail, and the target will not even attempt to change his or her behavior.

This explanation of Witte’s (1994) brings up an interesting point concerning fear messages in politics. To use a timely example, the threats of “fascism” and “death panels” offered by politicians in rebuke of President Obama’s 2010 healthcare plan certainly fall under the guidelines of Witte’s definition of a fear appeal because each threat is followed up with a behavior that could curb the threat—namely voting those responsible for the healthcare bill out of office and voting in those who would repeal the measure. While the target of the appeal is aware of the threat, he or she also feels self-efficacy over the situation and can rectify the “problem” by taking action at the ballot box. A study of fear messages and fear appeals by Kang and Capella (2008) focuses on how subjects report feeling fear when a stimulus is “novel,

unpleasant, and not conducive to goals” (p. 50). Certainly Obama’s healthcare plan is “novel” to a multitude of Americans who are used to getting their insurance as part of deals offered by their employers. Also, there is an “unpleasant” aspect concerning the healthcare plan considering many who oppose the President’s proposal have gone to great lengths to label so-called “Obamacare” as a socialist program rolling down a slippery slope toward communism. Finally, for those who opposed Obama’s healthcare plan or are fearful at the concept of it, there is the perception that this new healthcare law will obstruct the average American citizen from attaining his or her goals, namely the freedom to choose his or her own healthcare plan without government interference. Fear campaigns, however, are not only common in the United States. In another study concerning mass media and health communication, Green and Witte (2006) look at fear campaigns as they relate to messages involving the spread of HIV and AIDS in Ethiopia.

One puzzling contradiction in Green and Witte’s (2006) study is that fear appeals generally work when trying to combat AIDS in Africa, but these same appeals meet with much resistance when used in the United States. Fear appeals, especially as they relate to HIV and AIDS, tend to be rejected by American organizations that raise awareness about AIDS. According to Green and Witte’s (2006) study, a fear appeal may have only a short-term effect on one’s behavior, but in the long term the fear appeal will cause the target to rise up and reject the fear associated with a message. In the United States, those groups raising HIV awareness have tended to put a positive spin on living with the disease, wanting to show that those who have been diagnosed with HIV can still live a normal life, and that the disease itself is not a death sentence. Perhaps too strong a fear appeal will cause a target to lose any sense of self-efficacy that he or she has over the threat. Although, those like Green and Witte (2006) worry that

putting too much of a positive face on this deadly disease may do nothing to decrease behaviors that may lead to HIV and AIDS. In these previous examples of fear appeals offered both by Kang and Capella (2008) and Green and Witte (2006), we see fear being used by a message-creator as a catch-all emotion serving as the basis for influence and persuasion and, ultimately, action by the message receiver. Fear is used in these instances to provoke an instant reaction, but it is also used to promote planning and future action and behavior. In fact studies show that there is no discernible physiological or psychophysiological response to a fear appeal; increase in arousal does not necessarily relate to an increase in adopting a recommended behavior (Ordonana, et al., 2009). Discovering whether people pay more attention to mass-mediated messages or the opinions and beliefs of close interpersonal relationships is a paramount question of this dissertation. To better answer this question, I will now explore the concept of cultivation theory, which should help explain how media impact the formation of ideas in humans.

### **Cultivation Theory**

One particular question concerning the use of fear appeals and social influence is whether people when asked about their political or social opinions offer their true opinions or if they simply repeat what the predominant social group in their life espouses. Whether that social group consists of family, friends, colleagues, or coworkers, how much influence on our personal opinions do groups have? Are our personal opinions even truly personal? Or is there always an element of social influence to even those opinions we hold most dearly and defend most passionately? While social influence certainly comes from those closest to us, such as family members or intimates, in order to more fully understand how opinions get passed down from friends and family members an exploration of the link between mass mediated messages and interpersonal communication is needed.

Work on the link between mass-mediated messages and the formation of social positions and opinions is the primary focus of the scholar George Gerbner. Since the 1960s Gerbner and his colleagues have examined television's role in shaping the opinions of the American public. In summarizing his Cultivation Theory, Gerbner (1998) discusses how television has not only become the dominant form of media in the United States but also how the images heavy viewers of television consume on a daily basis help to create the impression that the United States and, by extension, the world are more dangerous places than violent crime statistics will show. "Cultivation", as defined by Gerbner (1998), involves "the independent contributions television viewing makes to viewer conceptions of social reality" (p. 180). And these "independent contributions" often have a negative effect on the viewing public.

A by-product of Gerbner's Cultivation Theory is the *mean world syndrome*, in which viewers absorb an inordinate amount of violent television programming. This programming, in turn, warps viewers' minds into believing that the amount of violence they watch on television is the same amount of violence that exists in real life. Although, according to Gerbner (1998) "only repetitive, long-range, and consistent exposure to patterns common to most programming" (p. 181) will maximize cultivation's effects on television viewers. Gerbner's findings also indicate that college-level education plays a moderating effect in viewers' opinions of just how violent the world actually is. Those who have had no college, whether they are heavy or light viewers of television, are equally as likely to view the world as a dangerous place. On the other hand, those with some college education who also call themselves light viewers of television tend to score relatively low on Gerbner's scale, the Mean World Index. Since Gerbner's studies deal primarily with television, a look at how the uses of other media may influence the public's perceptions is in order.



Some less reliable by-products of Cultivation Theory have been studies concerning the so-called hypodermic needle effect of mass communication. This explanation for media influence states that certain types of media (be it television programming, music, or political advertisements) can have a direct influence of media consumers, thereby producing a direct effect on consumer behavior. In other words, if a young child sees an instance of violence on TV, he or she, according to the hypodermic needle principle, is more likely to commit a copycat violent act as a result of viewing the violent message. This view of media influence has been largely disproven, however. Studies of media over the decades tend to show that any influence media may have on viewers tends to form after multiple viewings over a long period of time. Based on this logic, a child who views multiple violent programs over a number of months or years is more apt to commit a violent act than a child who simply views one random act of violence on an adult-themed show in the absence of any parental supervision.

The connection can be made between the viewing habits of children and adolescents to those of adults. Generally speaking an adult who views one instance of violence is unlikely to commit that same violent act. Attitudes toward and propensities to commit violence are built up over time. Along those same lines of reasoning, it is unlikely that an adult who views one political fear-message is likely to respond based solely on the message itself. The difference between the impressions messages have on children as opposed to adults is, obviously, that adults have had more time to form impressions of themselves and the world around them. Therefore, one political message is unlikely to suddenly influence a would-be voter to spring into action in support of a political candidate. Instead the advertisement may awaken in the viewer a sense that his or her values are under attack, and instead of providing a catalyst toward political action, the message may just become a topic of conversation for the viewer and like-minded

members of his or her social circle, a way of strengthening social bonds and decreasing any cognitive dissonance that a political advertisement may have caused the viewer.

Gerbner's work in the realm of Cultivation Theory has shown that heavy viewers of television develop a skewed version of how dangerous their world truly is. Perhaps those same results occur when one views a preponderance of political messages. If political messages are formed around common themes (fear of government intervention in everyday life; higher taxes; increased crime rates; loss of individual rights) then it would be expected that viewers of an abundance of similarly-themed political advertisements would develop the perception that whatever future societal ills are presented in political advertisements are bound to become reality unless the viewer takes action by voting for the "correct" candidate come Election Day. To develop my argument further I need to explore not just what types of supposedly fear-inducing messages are disseminated, but I also need to study exactly how these messages are delivered and what parts of the message are specifically designed to influence an audience into either changing their ways of thinking or taking part in some type of individual or collective action. In order to focus on the structure and wording of these political messages, a study of persuasion is in order.

### **Persuasion and Compliance Gaining**

One aspect of persuasion discussed by both Cialdini (1993) and Boster, Shaw, Hughes, Kotowski, Strom, and Deatruck (2009), is that repetition of a message, to a certain degree, increases the chance that a message recipient will follow the suggested behavior of the agent. If Candidate A continually tells viewers that his or her opponent will limit the rights of gun owners, those concerned about that particular issue will, over time, develop a genuine anxiety or anger toward the candidate who they perceive will infringe on their right to bear arms. Political

advertisements, even if they are referred to as fear appeals, are not used to cause fear in their viewers. The language used in fear appeals is meant to reinforce already held beliefs by viewers who adhere to the same political values as the candidate offering the message. But is there a justification for studying media and interpersonal influence?

### **Spiral of Silence Theory**

One idea behind the power of the influence that our close interpersonal relationships have on us is the idea of social isolation, or the fear that if our opinions differ too much from those we respect, we will somehow become ostracized from the very people with whom we wish to identify. Social isolation is perhaps best illustrated through the Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). Humans tend to select information that corroborates the opinions of our social groups. At the same time, we ignore information that provides a counter-point to the opinions offered by those closest to us. We want to sound intelligent around those we respect, so we educate ourselves from selected information that allows us to agree with our social allies. But often we eschew the information that may lead us to form a cogent argument against the predominant social opinion, no matter how logical the opposing viewpoint is. Therefore, minority viewpoints get quashed even if the minority viewpoints have some degree of validity to them. And those who espouse those minority viewpoints become summarily silenced in favor of the dominant way of thinking. The Spiral of Silence theory presumes that some people often “follow the crowd” and are compliant (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). If there is any “fear” involved in political advertisements, I believe it is a fear humans possess of offering a dissenting opinion that will somehow ostracize them from their primary social groups. Since humans are social creatures, they seek refuge amongst people they consider equals. The best way to maintain social harmony is to not speak out against the commonly-held opinions of the group. Often times

these commonly-held social opinions are formed through and disseminated by new media, as the next paragraphs explore.

### **New Media and Political Communication**

Building on the idea of social influence and transitioning to a mass media perspective regarding the subject, there are several scholars in the fields of mass communication and political science whose work bears looking into. For instance, Prior (2007) discusses the concept of a “floating voter”, or one who is politically apathetic unless sufficiently motivated to become involved in politics by some strong outside stimulus. An example of an outside stimulus would be a particularly politically-charged topic like abortion or the legalization of gay marriage. As part of my research I explore whether or not fear-inducing political advertisements or messages could be the catalysts for getting those citizens who would normally not involve themselves in political discussions to become more politically vocal and active.

An obvious question associated with this idea of the “floating voter” is *what drives an individual to become politically active?* At what point does a politically-apatetic citizen become engaged enough in social events to contribute to the political process? How are politically-apatetic people convinced to participate in the political process by voting or campaigning for a specific politician by placing phone calls to or visiting the homes of would be voters? One answer to this question revolves around a political movement known as the Tea Party. The Tea Party and another recent counter-movement gaining traction in the United States, Occupy America, are discussed next.

### **Tea Party Movement**

One group that has received an inordinate amount of press coverage over the last several years is the Tea Party. An apparent motivation for some members of this movement is the claim

that American society, whether it be economically or socially-related, has devolved to the point that decisive action must be taken against the status quo. The Tea Party's detractors say it is a movement fomented by irrational anger. Supporters and members of the Tea Party claim their anger is justified and directed at a federal government that is recklessly and dangerously spending taxpayers' money. Of course this ongoing debate assumes that the "Tea Party" encompasses one particular group that supports one particular ideal or a set of ideals. In fact, there are several different groups that in some fashion or another refer to themselves as a "tea party". A group calling itself The TeaParty.net ([www.theteparty.net](http://www.theteparty.net)) announces on its homepage that there is not just one "tea party". The TeaParty.net concerns itself with what it calls "...preserving liberty and freedom in the United States of America" ([www.theteparty.net](http://www.theteparty.net)). This particular faction of the tea party focuses on "core principles" concerning:

- Limited federal government
- Individual freedoms
- Personal responsibility
- Free markets
- Returning political power to the states and the people ([www.theteparty.net](http://www.theteparty.net))

The tea party claims not to be looking for third party status, but instead the reformation of all political parties in order to better represent the tea party's principles. However, under the link "Who to vote for" [theteparty.net](http://theteparty.net) states that they believe in "supporting the most conservative, constitutional, limited government, free market candidates available in any given election" ([www.theteparty.net](http://www.theteparty.net)). One struggles to imagine that the tea party does not have some sort of political leaning when they state on their website that they can currently find no Democratic candidate who supports their core beliefs. [Theteparty.net](http://theteparty.net) does in the next paragraph state to be

wary of Republicans who do not share the tea party's principles, but clearly the message here is that a conservative Republican candidate is a tea party follower's best option for political office. As stated earlier, however, there is more than one group calling itself the tea party.

Upon examining the TeaParty.org one finds many similarities with Theteparty.net. Specifically both groups identify themselves as grassroots organizations with a strong conservative bent. TeaParty.org, also known as Tea Party, Inc., separates itself slightly from Theteparty.net by expanding the latter group's five core principles into a list of fifteen. Among these fifteen principles familiar conservative issues of smaller government, gun rights, control of illegal immigration and a requirement of all U.S. citizens to learn English, and lower individual and business income taxes appear. The last principle delves into greater social issues, what one might call an initial salvo in what talking-head political pundits like to refer to as the "culture war", namely that "[t]raditional family values are encouraged" ([www.teaparty.org](http://www.teaparty.org)). While this statement in and of itself could be viewed as vague, especially if one has been unaware of the "family values" platform pushed by Republicans over the last several decades, TeaParty.org explains exactly what it means by "family values" in subsequent paragraphs. "The tea party includes those who possess a strong belief in the foundational Judeo-Christian values embedded in our great founding documents" ([www.teaparty.org](http://www.teaparty.org)).

Certainly the notion of "Judeo-Christian values" included in America's "founding documents" is debatable, but the statement implies that religious principles, namely those of the Christian faith, serve as the basis of the Tea Party, Inc. In case there was any confusion on this group's religious convictions, their website goes on to state: "Yes, we are a Christian nation. However, you do not have to be a Christian to enjoy freedom. The tea party welcomes all red-blooded U.S. citizens" ([www.teaparty.org](http://www.teaparty.org)). Despite the all-inclusive nature of this statement, it

is clear Tea Party, Inc., considers itself a Christian organization. By portraying these “traditional” American values as under attack, both Theteaparty.net and Tea Party, Inc., instill worry in their followers that serves as motivation toward an action that the tea party movement hopes will produce change in the American political system.

Tea Party, Inc., claims the movement was started as a backlash against “befuddled politicians gathering votes in Congress with sightless determination to force through an unconstitutional stimulus package” (www.teaparty.org). The website then goes on to compare—hyperbolically if not offensively—the Tea Party’s “patriots” to the protesters of China’s Tiananmen Square, “where a few stood to defy tyranny and demand liberty and democracy” (www.teaparty.org). The motivation of the tea party based on the fear of extreme government spending with the stimulus package can be summarized in the following paragraph:

Soon other fearless Patriots began to join in our solitary stance; The Tea was brewing! Young and old, wealthy and poor, patriots of all colors and backgrounds began to rally with a new energy, an energy reminiscent of pictures in old American History books. Word of mouth began to spread. Citizens began calling loved ones, proclaiming, "We must take back our nation!" Many blogged on their laptops, or messaged family and friends. The energy began to sweep across the nation. The media began to take notice. America was deeply moved, right down to her soul. A new voice began to speak, and a new hope was spawned. Gathering crowds grew from hundreds to thousands, and then swelled to the millions (www.teaparty.org).

One can see the similarity of this paragraph with what Witte et al., (1996) discussed as the primary objective of a fear appeal: a “persuasive message...depicting a personally relevant and significant threat” (p. 114). The tea party message is heavy on pathos and light on logic. The tea party movement has little in common with the happenings in China’s Tiananmen Square in 1989. But words like “tyranny” are used specifically to enflame emotional responses, not to produce a rational argument.

## Occupy Movement

In stark contrast to the Tea Party movement is the recent effort of the so-called Occupy movement. During the late summer of 2011, protesters filled New York City's Zuccatti Square in lower Manhattan's Financial District to voice concern with the apparent increasing influence of banks and large corporations over the political process in the United States and around the world. Occupy Wall Street, as the movement was christened, also sought to point out what members felt were increases in income inequality between the wealthiest Americans (labeled the 1%) and the rest of the country (the so-called 99%). Although the goals of the Occupy movement appear diametrically opposed to the goals of the Tea Party, a closer look at an Occupy website shows that while their missions may be different the two organizations use similar emotionally-driven language to influence their supporters into action.

For instance, on the *unofficial* website of the Occupy Wall Street movement, occupywallst.org, one finds several examples of the same revolutionary speech popular on the various tea party websites. The fact that the occupy movement does not have an official website illustrates the fact that its followers cannot be adequately classified into one particular flock with an ardent set of beliefs or demands (although the lack of an official website could be construed as a sign of the revolutionary-bordering-on-anarchist mentality that some occupy supporters embrace and some occupy critics use to pejoratively label the movement). It is not as if the occupy movement gets its revolutionary or anarchist label by accident, however. The language present on occupywallst.org mirrors the same type of revolutionary rhetoric that makes up much of the writings on the tea party websites. A couple of examples of the pseudo-violent rhetoric on the occupy website include: "[occupy wall street] is fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall



Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations” (occupywallst.org). The following sentence then goes on to compare the occupy movement to the protests of the so-called “Arab Spring” of 2011, specifically the revolts in Egypt and Tunisia, much like the comparisons the tea party made between itself and the revolutionary actions in Tiananmen Square. So each movement, occupy and tea party, tries to add more validity to their individual movements by comparing them to historic revolutions where “ordinary” citizens challenged governmental authorities in order to achieve some degree of democratic change.

One last note concerning the occupy webpage is that noticeable in the left margin of the site is a reminder in rather large font exclaiming that “the only solution is WorldRevolution” (capital letters and lack of spacing, their emphasis). Clearly the use of emotionally-charged language is not specific to either so-called conservative or liberal causes, nor is it specific to only the Internet. An element of truth appears to exist based on the perceptions that certain news networks are more conservative or liberal when one factors the percentage of viewers who identify with each political ideology. This next section will look at a few of the more popular cable news networks in terms of their audiences. The purpose of this next section is to see if some of the descriptions of certain networks being more geared toward conservative or liberal viewers are generally true.

### **Stereotypes of Cable News**

Common assumptions exist concerning three major cable news networks. Fox News Channel allegedly caters to a conservative audience. CNN, on the other hand, is widely regarded as having a more moderate to liberal audience. While, finally, MSNBC is generally viewed as a more liberal-leaning network. According to a 2008 survey by Pew Research, viewing trends for these three networks tend to match these commonly held beliefs. Fox News’ regular viewing

audience consists of 39% Republicans, 33% Democrats, and 22% Independents. Of regular CNN viewers 51% identified as Democrats, 23% were independents, and 18% were Republicans. MSNBC's average viewers also fall in line with expected demographic results with 45% Democrats as regular viewers compared with just 18% Republicans. According to a survey administered by the Pew Research Center (2012), cable television became the top source of news about the 2012 presidential campaign, while fewer Americans turned to their local TV stations and the networks.

While public attention to cable news has remained steady over the last four presidential cycles, the attention to other television outlets and to newspapers for election information has declined. While the Pew survey found that the percentage of those saying they use the Internet to access campaign news has stayed about the same as it was four years ago, there still exists a significant portion of the population that gets their political information from the Internet. Most frequently cited as the top Internet news sources during the 2012 campaign were CNN (24%), Yahoo! (22%), Google (13%), Fox News (10%) and MSNBC (8%). New media then, especially online news sites, have contributed greatly to an increase in political information available to the voting public. Does this mean, however, that seekers of political information are exposing themselves to political news that spans across the wide spectrum of political ideology? Or are those searching for political information seeking only the news and opinions that conform to their already established political philosophies? Certain scholars believed that with the Internet's rise in popularity during the mid-nineties, politically-active information seekers would be freer and more willing to search for information that both adhered to and differed from their own political ideologies and philosophies. However, some fifteen years after the Internet age began,

some media scholars have a different view of the Internet's influence on how the American public searches for political information.

A new media scholar whose work greatly benefits the topics of fear and political messages as well as sheds light on how language can drive certain political ideologies is Cass Sunstein (2009) and his notion of the "daily me" syndrome that he argues is present on the Internet. Sunstein's (2009) great worry is that even with the abundance of new media technology and the varying political opinions one may find online, media consumers are, with greater frequency, looking up information that already conforms to their political viewpoints. In other words, Sunstein worries that new media is causing us as a society to become even more fragmented and divided into exclusive political cliques. Perhaps it is these tightly-knit social cliques that prevent greater political dialogue among would-be voters as a result of the fear of social isolation. Sunstein has provided an interesting look at how Americans use new media to craft their own version of the news.

When Sunstein (2009) wrote of his concept of the *daily me* he was referring to the influence of new media and how even with the abundance of information this type of media provides, seekers of political news will still tend to search for material that pertains to their already existing political beliefs. Those who identify as conservative tend to seek out information that puts conservative issues into a positive framework. Similar patterns of behavior exist for those who identify as more liberal. Liberal-minded viewers of online political information have a tendency to seek out information that conforms to their political ideologies. Proponents of the internet and its vast wealth of information assumed that even those who were politically tied to a certain ideology would seek out information from the other end of the political spectrum. The amount of information on the Internet would help to foment new

moderate political ideals in even the most dogmatic conservative or liberal. But, alas, several scholars now argue that the Internet is no different from other sources of media in that it increases fragmentation instead of helping to bridge the gap between those on opposing ends of the political spectrum (Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Xenos & Foot, 2005; Sunstein, 2009). So, the Internet is clearly following the trend set forth by cable news networks.

In addition to examining how people get their news, I also hope to discover with this study whether there is a relation between fragmentation and fear-inducing political messages. Fragmentation, as explained by Sunstein (2009), is a by-product of the polarizing effect media can have on the public. Instead of interacting with people who may have slightly or totally different political, religious, or philosophical orientations, humans instead seek out those who subscribe to the same beliefs they have. This lack of interaction with those who may view the world through a different lens often causes one to take solace in the company of other like-minded individuals when one thinks that his or her way of life is being threatened. In other words, if one feels a certain sense of impending doom as a result of a fear-based political message and believes there is little he or she can do about the negative consequences of the situation, will that person be more likely to seek comfort in the company of politically like-minded individuals? Therefore, to begin the study of emotion, I will more closely examine the data from the 2008 Pew study on demographics and the emotion of happiness.

### CHAPTER III: STUDY ON POLITICAL PARTIES, RELIGION, AND EMOTION

While there is research on the effects of emotional appeals on message targets, there is minimal research concerning how these appeals elicit specific emotions in people (Kang & Capella, 2008). There is much debate about the effectiveness of emotional appeals in general or fear appeals particularly to produce specific changes in attitude or behavior (Ordonana et al., 2009). Some scholars disagree as to how much of an impact fear and so-called fear-inducing messages have on message targets. Therefore, the study of demographics becomes important in determining exactly what impact, if any, fear has on motivation. Is it possible that message receivers are socialized to respond to fear appeals due more to nominal factors such as political and religious affiliations, income level, and relationship status? Fear appeals, generally speaking, should not have the same effect on each individual who views a message. In fact, research by O'Keefe (1990) states that sometimes people become fearful as a result of messages that were not intended to be fear appeals. Also, the converse is true. Certain message receivers may not respond in a fearful way to a planned fear-inducing message.

Simply put, not everyone is afraid of the same stimuli. One person may dread crossing paths with a snake while walking in the woods, while another may delight at this chance encounter with a fascinating reptile. In order to adequately study fear and fear appeals, researchers need to not only inquire whether certain stimuli cause a respondent to become fearful but also factor in particular demographic variables in order to discern which segments of a population tend to report being more fearful in general.

Certainly demographic variables become important in studying not only fear but emotional responses of any kind. Since humans are social creatures it is only natural that the different groups and classifications we fall into should influence our emotional reactions to a

particular stimulus. Indeed, the long legacy of research in social identity theory reveals that under certain conditions, people will prefer and have affinity for one's in-group over the out-group, or anyone viewed as outside the in-group (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2009). This preference for in-group members can manifest itself in positive or negative judgments of others based solely on group affiliation. For example, the Republicans and Democrats castigated each other in the government shutdown and debt ceiling debate during October, 2013.

A stimulus that makes one age group joyful or happy may engender disgust in another age group. Similarly, devotees of one particular political party may experience anger or disgust differently from those who identify more with another political party. What causes one worry or anxiety may differ greatly depending on the socio-economic range one inhabits. Married couples may experience different levels of anger over certain stimuli than do single individuals. Since this dissertation deals primarily with political messages and the emotions elicited by these messages, an examination of how certain political and social demographics play into felt emotions is in order. To address these issues I offer the following research questions.

RQ1: Does identifying with a specific political party (i.e., Republican, Democrat, or Independent) affect respondents' degrees of the self-reported felt emotion of happiness?

RQ2: Does identifying with a particular religion or religious denomination affect respondents' degrees of the self-reported felt emotion of happiness?

RQ3: Does identifying as a "born again" Christian affect respondents' degrees of the self-reported emotion of happiness?

RQ4: Does actively practicing a religion (i.e., participating in religious services) affect respondents' degrees of the self-reported felt emotion of happiness?

To examine what, if any, role demographic categories play in self-reported emotions I analyzed data collected in 2008 by the Pew Research Center entitled The Early October Social Trends Survey. Associations between the self-reported emotion of happiness and particular demographic categories including political and religious affiliations were analyzed to see if there was any relation between the categories and classifications we as human beings fall into and the way we react emotionally to stimuli. Following is a study designed to test the effect identifying with different political parties and religions or religious denominations will have on a basic felt emotion, specifically the emotion of happiness. I am particularly interested in whether or not political affiliation and religious identification—and whether or not one actively participates in his or her religion of choice—play a role in how happy respondents claim to be. These inquiries are the bases of Research Questions 1 through 4.

I studied the Pew data set to provide a justification for exploring possible links and relationships between emotions and the influences demographic categories may have on how strongly respondents feel emotions—if they report feeling any emotion at all—when viewing political advertisements. The only emotion the Pew researchers studied in this survey was happiness, which does not limit my study since I am particularly interested in how demographic groups shape our emotional responses to stimuli. This study of happiness and demographic categories serves as a rationale for the overall study of emotions as they relate to our social groups and will serve as a starting point for a study of emotions that will eventually include respondents' reactions to fear-based messages and political advertisements.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

The Early October Social Trends Survey is a telephone survey conducted from October 3<sup>rd</sup> through October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Pew researchers asked primarily demographic questions relating to religious affiliation, religious service attendance, and political affiliation. In addition there was a question which asked respondents to rate to what degree they considered themselves happy. The survey included a total population of 2,260 adults ages 18 and up. The sample included 1,086 (48.1%) men and 1,174 (58.9%) women. The mean age of the respondents was 50.92.

Respondents' reported area of residence was split between "a city" (N = 631, 27.9%); "a suburban area" (N = 611, 27.0%); "a small town" (N = 611, 27%); and "a rural area" (N = 391, 17.3 %). Only a small number refused to respond to the question concerning area of residence (N = 16, 0.7%). Of the 2,260 respondents, a total of 2,030 (89.8%) were born in the United States, with three additional respondents born in Puerto Rico and two additional respondents born in other U.S. territories such as Guam or The U.S. Virgin Islands. A total of 224 (9.9%) respondents reported being born outside the United States, while one respondent refused to state where he or she was born.

The marital status of the respondents is as follows: "Married", N = 1,263 (55.9%); "Never been married", N = 395 (17.5%); "Divorced", N = 222 (9.8%); "Widowed", N = 200 (8.8%); "Living with a partner", N = 118 (5.2%); "Separated" N = 50 (2.2%); 12 respondents (0.5%) refused to answer the question. A final demographic category of interest deals with political ideology. Respondents' answers to the political ideology question are as follows: "Very conservative", N = 153 (6.8%); "Conservative", N = 614 (27.2%); "Moderate", N = 902



(39.9%); “Liberal”, N = 340 (15.0%); “Very Liberal”, N = 114 (5.0%); “Don’t know/Refused”, N = 137 (6.1%). Respondents’ identifications with particular political parties will be used later in this chapter.

## **Results**

I ran a series of analyses in order to explore a possible relationship between self-reported happiness and both political and religious affiliation. The main questions I hoped to observe were as follows: Was there a significant relationship between political party affiliation and degree of self-reported happiness? Was there a significant relationship between religious affiliation and self-reported happiness? Finally, there may be respondents who claim to identify with a particular religion or religious denomination but do not actively participate in services or routines based on that religion. Therefore, I would also like to find out if actively practicing a particular religion influences degrees of self-reported happiness.

First, in order to answer Research Question 1, I ran a one-way analysis of variance (ONEWAY ANOVA) to test for a relationship between political party affiliation and degree of self-reported happiness in order to answer the first research question. The independent variable consisted of responses to the following survey question: “In politics TODAY do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?” The dependent variable represented answers to the question: “Generally, how would you say things are these days in your life -- would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?” I recoded the original variable from the Pew survey dealing with happiness into a new variable so that higher scores reflect more happiness. The results of the ANOVA showed a significant relationship between the independent variable of political party identification and the dependent variable of self-reported happiness,  $F(2, 1994) = 24.770, p = .000, \eta^2 = .024$ . A post-hoc Duncan test showed

associations between self-reported happiness and identifying as a Republican,  $M = 2.29$ , Independent  $M = 2.11$ , and Democrat  $M = 2.04$ . Results of the Duncan test showed Republicans reported significantly more levels of happiness than did Independents who reported significantly more levels of happiness than did Democrats, at the .05 level (see Table 1).

Table 1  
Means Contrasts Between Political Affiliation on Happiness and Church Attendance\*

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Party Affiliation (Means)</u>			<u>Contrasts</u>
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	Means Differences
Happiness	2.29 (.623)	2.04 (.666)	2.11 (.672)	R>D, I
Church Attendance	3.18 (1.48)	2.51 (1.60)	2.41 (1.66)	R>D, I

\*Based on the Duncan test. Standard Deviations are in parentheses.

Since Republicans reported feeling significantly more happiness than Independents, who in turn reported significantly more happiness than Democrats, there may be a chance that party identification could influence not only one's happiness but also one's anger, sadness, or fear. These findings from the Pew research could relate to one's response to a political advertisement. Perhaps instead of the advertisement causing "fear" in a particular viewer, the viewer is already predisposed to respond to the advertisement in a "fearful" manner based on his or her political party identification. As a result of this test, Research Question 1 is answered in the affirmative. Political affiliation does play a role in one's self-report of emotion, in this case happiness. Also, identifying with a particular political party influences happiness as well. In the case of this study, it appears people who identify with the Republican Party report more levels of happiness.

Next, in order to answer Research Question 2, I ran a ONEWAY ANOVA to test for a relationship between religious affiliation and degree of self-reported happiness. This time the

independent variable consisted of the answers to the question: “What is your present religion, if any? Are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox such as Greek or Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else, or nothing in particular?” After running a frequency distribution on the responses to the religious affiliation question, I created 3 new independent variables consisting of “Protestant”, “Catholic”, and “New Age.” I recoded this variable due to the limited number of responses from self-professed Muslims, Buddhists, and Mormons. The variable “New Age” was used to represent certain groups that may have become more common in recent decades, such as Universalists, Secular Humanists, Atheists, and Agnostics. The results of the ANOVA indicate a significant relationship between self-reported happiness and religious affiliation,  $F(2, 2068) = 6.121, p = .002, \eta^2 = .005$ .

The post-hoc Duncan test revealed those who referred to themselves as Protestants,  $M = 2.184$ , reported a significantly greater degree of happiness than those who fell under the “New Age” category,  $M = 2.052, p = .002$ . There was no significant difference in the degree of happiness reported by Protestants as opposed to Catholics or Catholics as opposed to New Age believers.

The significance of the  $F$  test and the significant results of degrees of happiness between Protestants and the newly created “New Age” demographic indicate that religious affiliation could very well play a role in felt emotions, in this case the emotion of happiness. The results of this analysis bear special interest due to the fact that the “New Age” category contained both self-reported agnostics and atheists, which might indicate that people who report some religious affiliation generally have a greater degree of happiness than those who report no religious affiliation or belief. Since a relationship between religious affiliation and self-reported happiness

produced significant results, ANOVAs were conducted to see if more specific religious variables, such as whether or not someone claimed to be “born again” and the number of times one attended religious services, produced significant relationships with the degree of self-reported happiness. It appears from this test that Research Question 2 can be answered in the affirmative. Identifying with a particular religion does seem to increase respondents’ self-reports of happiness. In particular, those who reported identifying with the Protestant denomination of Christianity report being significantly happier than those who follow either a “new age” religion or no religion at all, but Protestants did not report significantly different levels of happiness from Catholics.

Next, to answer Research Question 3, I ran a t-test to see if there was a relationship between self-reported happiness and whether or not a respondent claims to be a “born again” Christian. For this test, the independent variable consisted of a simple “yes”, “no”, or “Don’t know/refused” answer to the question, “Would you describe yourself as a ‘born again’ or evangelical Christian, or not?” A frequency distribution of the answers to the above question produced a small number of those who didn’t know if they were born again or refused to answer the questions ( $N = 111$ ) as opposed to those who answered “yes” ( $N = 687$ ) or “no” ( $N = 918$ ), so the number of “don’t know/refused” was dropped from the variable, leaving the independent variable a simple “yes” or “no” answer. The dependent variable was once-again self-reported happiness. The results of this t-test indicate that there is a significant relationship between whether or not one claims to be “born again” and degree of self-reported happiness,  $M = 2.205$ , and those who do not claim to be “born again” and their reported happiness,  $M = 2.139$ . Respondents who claimed to be “born again” Christians reported significantly higher levels of happiness than did respondents who did not claim to be “born again” Christians,  $t(1603) =$

1.965,  $p = .05$ . So, there is a significant difference in the level of self-reported happiness between those who claim to be “born again” Christians and those who do not claim to be “born again” Christians. Again, I am finding support that certain group affiliations—be they religious or political—have some influence on the degree of self-reported emotions. This  $t$  test helps answer Research Question 3 in the affirmative and also continues to support the findings in Research Question 2. Not only do self-reported Protestants report more happiness in their lives, but those who claim to be “born again” Christians are significantly happier than those who do not claim to be “born again”.

Finally, I wanted to see if respondents’ active participation in their religions affected self-reported happiness, as proposed in Research Question 4. In order to answer Research Question 4, I ran an ANOVA to test for a relationship between the number of times a respondent attended a religious service, and self-reported degrees of happiness. For this ANOVA the independent variable consisted of responses to the following question: “Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services...More than once a week, Once a week, Once or twice a month, A few times a year, Seldom, Never, Don’t know/refused?” The dependent variable of the ANOVA was once again responses to the question regarding degrees of self-reported happiness. The “attendance” variable was recoded into an ordinal variable with the following values: 0 = never; 1 = seldom; 2 = a few times a year; 3 = once or twice a month; 4 = once a week; 5 = more than once a week; the “don’t know/refused” responses were eliminated.

The results of the  $F$  test indicate there is a significant relationship between the amount of time one spends going to religious services and the degree of happiness one reports,  $F(5, 2159) = 5.674, p = .000, \eta^2 = .012$ . Post-hoc Duncan and LSD analyses showed that those who “never” attended religious services ( $M = 2.065$ ) reported less happiness than all other

categories of respondents; however, these findings were significant only when comparing those who “never” attended religious services with those who attended “once or twice a month”, ( $M = 2.183$ )  $p = .035$ , and “more than once a week”, ( $M = 2.304$ )  $p = .000$  (see Table 2).

Table 2  
Means Contrasts Between Religious Affiliation on Happiness and Church Attendance\*

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Religious Affiliation (Means)</u>			<u>Contrasts</u>
	Protestant	Catholic	New Age	Means Differences
Happiness	2.18 (.655)	2.12 (.699)	2.05 (.677)	P>C, N
Church Attendance	3.20 (1.48)	2.89 (1.38)	1.05 (1.25)	P>C, N

\*Based on the Duncan test. Standard Deviations are in parentheses.

Respondents who “seldom” ( $M = 2.07$ ) attended religious services reported less overall happiness in their lives than all other categories, except for those respondents who “never” attended religious services. Again, however, those who “seldom” attended were only significantly less happy than those who attended “once or twice a month”,  $p = .033$ , and those who attended “more than once a week”,  $p = .000$ . Those who reported attending religious services “a few times a year” ( $M = 2.103$ ) reported less happiness than those who reported attending “once or twice a month”, “once a week”, and “more than once a week”, but only significantly so with those who attended “more than once a week”,  $p = .000$ .

Continuing with this trend, those who reported attending religious services “once or twice a month” reported significantly less happiness than those who attended “more than once a week”,  $p = .025$ . Those who reported attending religious services “once a week” ( $M = 2.134$ ) reported significantly less happiness than those who attended religious services “more than once a week”,  $p = .000$ . While, finally, those who attended religious services “more than once a week” reported significantly more happiness than respondents in all other categories. Research

Question 4 is answered in the affirmative; attendance in religious services does have a significant impact on respondents' levels of happiness.

The results of these ANOVAs indicate that once the question of religion is made more specific by tests for "time spent at religious services" and whether or not one considers oneself "born again" or "evangelical" that the significance of the relationship between religion and self-reported happiness becomes stronger. Therefore, it will be interesting to test whether or not self-reported fear has the same type of relationship with both political and religious affiliation that self-reported happiness has.

What these analyses show is that those who report more happiness in their lives tend to be affiliated with the Republican Party; they tend to be "born again" Christians of the Protestant denomination; they also tend to make at least a weekly habit of attending religious services. It appears then that not only does identifying with a particular religion increase one's self-reported happiness, but participating in religious services with relative frequency also increases respondents' self-reported levels of happiness. Group affiliation certainly plays a role then in how much happiness respondents report. There also may be a certain Republican tendency to base such political and philosophical beliefs on the old cliché concerning ignorance and its tendency to induce a blissful existence for those who choose to be purposefully ignorant of information that may upset their outlook on life. Indeed, in an experiment and subsequent publication by Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnich, and Walker (2008) involving the 2000 U.S. presidential election that measured self-identified Republicans and Democrats and their propensities to seek out stances on issues from candidates across the political aisle, those who identified as strong Republicans and strong conservatives were significantly less likely to search out the stance on certain political issues from the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, than they were to seek the

opinions of the Republican candidate, George W. Bush. Those who identified as Democrats or strong liberals, however, were as likely to seek the opinions on political issues of both Gore and Bush. While the results from the Pew research are interesting, of course one cannot simply make the assertion from these tests that being a Protestant/Republican is going to make one happier in life. There are other factors as well as other demographic categories to observe: age, income level, and biological sex perhaps all have an effect on one's degree of happiness, or any felt emotion for that matter. What this study does show, however, is support for studying emotions relative to the social groups to which human beings belong.

It is proposed from these ANOVAs and t-test that demographic categories such as political party identification and religious affiliation play a role in which particular emotions respondents report experiencing. The question that remains, however, is how much effect do the stimuli (in this case political messages) have on what emotions respondents report feeling? Scholars are still uncertain to what degree, if any, stimuli like political advertisements have on eliciting emotions in humans. Based on Noelle-Neumann's (1993) work on Spiral of Silence theory, I propose that our attitudes toward certain political messages and candidates are pre-formed through social processes. The stimulus itself, namely a political advertisement, will have little to no effect on respondents' emotional responses to these ads. Instead, respondents will look for particular heuristic cues present in all advertisements. Respondents will then fit these cues into their preconceived cognitive schemas in order to decide whether or not they agree with the message being sent by the political candidate.

The results from the first study show a relationship between affiliations with both political parties and religious groups and degrees of self-reported happiness. According to results from the above analyses, group affiliation does play a role in felt emotions, or in the case



of the first study group affiliation plays a role in degrees of self-reported happiness. The question that remains, however, is what role does group affiliation play in the reporting of other emotions, specifically fear? This dissertation's focus is fear—specifically countering the argument that fear is the salient emotion at the heart of much of political decision-making and the responses to political messages. The study of happiness, however, provides justification for the next chapter of this dissertation.

## **Discussion**

Politicians often accuse each other, and are themselves often accused by journalists and the public, of promoting fear within society. “Candidate A” may try his or her best to portray an opponent as “soft on crime” thereby encouraging the voting public to envision a culture where citizens have to be vigilant at every turn for fear they become the victim of criminal activity. But are these politicians actually promoting fear? Are they even promoting anxiety, for that matter? According to the work of neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux (1996), fear occurs in an instant. Fear is simply an automatic, evolved response to a particular stimulus. Since political fear advertisements do not promote instantaneous reactions, there has to be another explanation for their effects on the voting public. I studied the above Pew data set to provide a justification for exploring possible links and relationships between emotions and the influences demographic categories may have on how strongly respondents feel emotions, if they report feeling any emotion at all, when viewing political advertisements. The only emotion the Pew researchers studied in this survey was happiness, which does not limit my study since I am particularly interested in how demographic groups shape our emotional responses to stimuli. This study of happiness and demographic categories serves as a rationale for the overall study of emotions as they relate to our social groups and will serve as a starting point for a study of emotions that will

eventually include respondents' reactions to so-called fear-based messages and political advertisements.

While I will be examining a current political fear-message for the next study, the practice of alarming television viewers with disturbing images dates back to the 1960s with what many political pundits consider the first political fear appeal. The following chapter will look at examples of political fear appeals both old and new. I will briefly discuss what some refer to as the original televised political fear appeal, that being the "Daisy Girl" advertisement of President Lyndon B. Johnson. Following the discussion of "Daisy Girl" I will transition into a synopsis of Texas Governor Rick Perry's attempt to manipulate the emotions of the American voter with his advertisement entitled "Strong." Perry's "Strong" advertisement is another in a long list of political persuasive attempts to convince the American people that failing to vote for the right candidate could have a disastrous impact on the nation. Does this advertisement, however, promote "fear" in its audience? The studies of Chapter IV will attempt to answer this question.

## CHAPTER IV: POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS AND EMOTIONS

This chapter examines a political advertisement from the 2012 Republican primaries in order to gauge respondents' opinions on which emotions this particular advertisement elicits and whether or not viewers feel the messages conveyed in the advertisement are important enough to discuss with those closest to them. One common aspect that political advertisements share is the reassuring message that voting for whichever politician is sponsoring the message will stop or at the very least hinder the threat presented in the advertisement. A true fear appeal, as defined by Witte (1992), includes a response the target can put into effect in order to avoid the threat implied in the fear appeal. By putting responsibility in the hands of the voters, the politician empowers them to curtail the threatening situation by simply exercising power at the ballot box. Sometimes the remedy to the perceived problem is implied. Politicians may simply attack their opponents based on their past performances or political ideology as research by Curnalia (2007) shows.

In the study alluded to above, Curnalia (2007) examined political advertisements by 2004 United States presidential candidates George W. Bush and John Kerry. One interesting result from this study is that in the months leading up to the 2004 election, the candidates did little to promote themselves as the solution to any problem or threat that their opponent would pose to the country. Instead, these two candidates used their political advertisements to simply attack their opponent. One could argue, however, that there was an implied threat to vote against the candidate being attacked since there was really only one other legitimate option for the presidency. In each of the advertisements I discuss or examine in this dissertation there is either an explicit or implicit verbalized message that either voting for or against a particular candidate will alleviate the threat discussed in the advertisement.

The message one hears in political advertisements should enforce fear since they often discuss threats to one's well-being that may be alleviated only with voting for the "correct" candidate. An alternative viewpoint, and one that I am advocating, is that political advertisements promote in-group solidarity through the use of political talking-points and slogans. Therefore, I propose the following hypotheses:

H1: So-called "fear appeals" in political advertisements, namely Rick Perry's "Strong, will produce a significant amount of self-reported fear in respondents.

H2: Respondents agree or disagree with political and philosophical beliefs based mainly on the fear of being socially isolated from their personal networks.

Hopefully, this study will be able to provide answers to questions concerning what emotions, if any, certain political advertisements make us feel but also how humans manage those particular emotions. For instance, do humans generally keep political issues to themselves or do they discuss them with their social networks? Perhaps a closer look at how political advertisements make respondents "feel" and an examination of those with whom they feel comfortable discussing said advertisements will help answer these questions.

The bulk of this chapter will focus on the discussion of emotional responses to a particular political message, namely Texas Governor Rick Perry's controversial advertisement entitled "Strong". First, however, I start with an overview of perhaps the original attempt by a politician at a televised political fear appeal, the controversial "Daisy Girl" advertisement of former President Lyndon B. Johnson.

### **Lyndon B. Johnson's "Daisy Girl"**

In 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign ran an advertisement later dubbed "Daisy Girl". The scene begins innocently enough, with a young girl of seven or eight years of

age counting backwards from ten as she picks the petals off a flower in a large, open field. The girl's peaceful playtime is soon interrupted by sirens warning of an imminent nuclear attack. The voice of the girl counting the petals blends into that of a man's voiceover continuing the countdown in the same fashion as one would count a nuclear launch. As the countdown reaches zero the picture of the girl morphs into a shot of an explosion and resulting mushroom cloud. A second man's voice—that of President Johnson—is then heard encouraging viewers to cast their votes for him, exclaiming: "These are the stakes. To make a world in which all of God's children can live or go into the dark. We must either love each other or we must die." The dire "either/or" choice Johnson leaves viewers is a paraphrase of a work from British poet W.H. Auden, entitled "September 1, 1939", concerning Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland sparking the beginnings of World War II. The symbolism involved in President Johnson quoting that particular piece of poetry cannot be overlooked. The President was likening the political climate of the late 1960s to that of the late 1930s. President Johnson was certainly offering an ominous message to Americans. The threat of communism espoused by the Soviet Union was on par with the danger of fascist Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s, at least this is the sense one gets from viewing the "Daisy Girl" advertisement. Following Johnson's urgent plea, a disembodied voice (not the President's) utters one final thought: "Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd. The stakes are too high for you to stay home."

Any subtlety that existed in Johnson's warning is lost in the nuclear explosion and ensuing mushroom cloud that engulf the viewer's screen. The separate voiceovers (President Johnson's and the announcer's) simply give context and direction to the viewers of the advertisement. The scenario is laid out for the viewing public, or in Witte et al.'s (1996) definition of a fear appeal the "threat" is presented. In keeping with Witte et al.'s (1996)

definition, there is no logical reason why a vote for Johnson would eliminate the threat of a nuclear attack, nor is there any stated reason why a vote for Johnson's Republican opponent, Arizona senator Barry Goldwater, would invite nuclear holocaust. The viewer is left to make the jump to the conclusion that a vote for Lyndon Johnson will make the country safer, and a vote for Barry Goldwater will embolden the United States to use nuclear options against its enemies (namely the Soviet Union).

Even in the 1960s, at perhaps the height of the Cold War, Johnson's advertisement caught its fair share of criticism. Indeed, the criticism was so great that Johnson's "Daisy Girl" ad ran only once and was subsequently pulled off the air. President Johnson's discontinuing of the advertisement did little to help Goldwater's campaign. The damage had been done. The Arizona senator lost in a landslide. How much the "Daisy Girl" advertisement had to do with Goldwater's defeat is debatable. Some scholars argue that Johnson already had the election wrapped up and the "Daisy Girl" advertisement was adding insult to an already injured Goldwater campaign (Mann, 2012). Polls taken after Johnson's victory, however, indicated that the American voters were concerned that Goldwater would be more likely than Johnson to use nuclear weapons and invite nuclear war. By all accounts, Johnson's advertisement had an effect, and perhaps a fear-inducing effect on the American population. But as Mann (2012) argues, the effect Johnson's advertisement had was more impactful on the American political system as a whole, opening the floodgates for the manipulation of emotion through visual media. Make no mistake, the images presented in Johnson's ad were frightening, especially to a 1960's audience that was just being introduced on a mass scale to televised images. While certainly some Americans may have been frightened by the images in Johnson's ad, an alternative argument could be that "Daisy Girl" simply emboldened Johnson supporters to continue to stand behind

their candidate while infuriating those who pledged allegiance to Barry Goldwater. The advertisement encouraged politically-minded people on both sides of the aisle to hold more steadfast in support of their chosen candidate. Goldwater's camp cried foul after the advertisement was televised, with Goldwater claiming Johnson's intent was to show Americans that, "Barry Goldwater would blow up the world if he became president of the United States" (Mann, 2011). Whatever the effect the "Daisy Girl" advertisement had on the 1964 election, the question persists: Are we more fearful of a threat based on our social groupings than we are due to the threat alone? In order to test this question I conducted a survey of respondents' reactions to a more current political advertisement.

### **Rick Perry's "Strong"**

"Strong", released in early December 2011, features Republican governor Rick Perry of Texas discussing his Christian faith and how this faith will serve him in leading the country if he is elected president. The advertisement was televised only in the state of Iowa, just ahead of that state's January 3, 2012, caucuses. Despite the original limited audience, the spot was quickly disseminated on the online social media site YouTube.com where it garnered unprecedented scorn for a political advertisement (Stein, 2011). The sentiment expressed in this thirty-second video is that Perry is concerned (perhaps more confused or disgusted) that the United States has become a country where, in Perry's words, "gays can serve openly in the military, but our kids can't openly celebrate Christmas or pray in school" (Perry, 2012). Perry's video was extremely controversial, even with some in his own party, because many viewed the advertisement as insensitive toward the LGBT community (Stein, 2011). Perry ended his run for the presidency a short time after this advertisement ran—formally suspending his campaign on January 19, 2012. Despite the widespread criticism Perry's advertisement received, it is unfair to blame the demise

of Perry's campaign based solely on the "Strong" advertisement. Perry was already trailing badly in polls and had yet to pick up any primary victories at the time "Strong" was first televised.

Nevertheless, the message in "Strong" became part of Perry's overall persona. If voters had any doubt as to Perry's social conservatism, those doubts were quickly assuaged after viewing "Strong". As unsettling as this particular advertisement was to some viewers, could "Strong" be considered a message that elicits fear in its audience? The Perry advertisement fits Witte's (2006) definition of a fear appeal by focusing on a "threat" that is both "personally relevant and significant" (p. 114). In Perry's mind the Obama administration threatens what Perry claims are traditional American values by waging a "war on religion" and participating in other "liberal attacks on our religious heritage" (Perry, 2012). Using the violent metaphor of "war", Perry and his camp seek to achieve the same results as both the "occupy" crowd and the tea party groups—namely, rallying one's base to affect some degree of future change. Perry counts on other examples of violent rhetoric—specifically a word like "attack"—to motivate his supporters into voting for him. What emotions are at the core of viewers' responses to these ads, though? Is Perry's advertisement truly a "fear" appeal? Will respondents who view this video rate "fear" as an emotion they associate with the "Strong" video, or will respondents associate other more long-term emotions such as disgust or anger with the Perry advertisement? Of course demographic information provided by the respondents could influence how they view both the advertisement and Rick Perry himself. Respondents may have a positive or negative predisposition toward Perry, his religion, or his party, thereby clouding any judgment of his advertisement. Explanations of my pilot study concerning Rick Perry's "Strong" follow in the next section. I also hope to answer the following research questions in the pilot study:



RQ5: With whom would respondents report feeling most comfortable discussing political issues, (family, close friends, acquaintances, strangers, etc.)?

RQ6: Does one's political party affiliation influence self-reported felt emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry's "Strong".

RQ7: Does one's religious/religious denomination affiliation influence self-reported felt emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry's "Strong"?

RQ8: Does political party affiliation influence the number and types of close relationships with whom one feels comfortable discussing political issues?

RQ9: Does religious/religious denomination affiliation influence the number and types of close relationships with whom one feels comfortable discussing political issues?

RQ10: Does one's level of spirituality influence self-reported emotions following viewing of the Rick Perry "Strong" advertisement?

### **Pilot Study**

For the first phase of the study I conducted a pilot study consisting of a two-part experiment with four undergraduate communication classes at a small southern community college. IRB approval was received.

### **Methods**

The pilot study was conducted over two separate class periods for all four classes involved. On the first day of the study respondents filled out an anonymous survey that asked basic demographic questions concerning age, biological sex, race/ethnicity, political and religious affiliation. Two days after the completion of the initial survey I showed the respondents Rick Perry's "Strong" political advertisement and, again, followed it up with two questions. First, I asked respondents to gauge their level of felt emotion for each of the six basic

emotions brought about by the Perry video. Second, I asked about the perception each respondent has of the general political leanings of his or her classmates as a whole. Before I analyze the main variables of my study (felt emotions, political party, and religious ideology), I will list and analyze some of the characteristics of the respondents. Demographics of the pilot study respondents are as follows.

### **Participants**

The pilot study consisted of 78 total respondents over four speech/communication courses. The sample consisted of 31 males (39.7%) and 46 females (59%), with one person leaving the question regarding biological sex blank. The average age of the respondents was 23.8, with a range from 18 to 42 years. Two respondents out of the 78 total did not answer the question concerning age. The racial/ethnic make-up of the respondents was as follows: European American/Caucasian (56.6%), Black/African American (31.6%), Asian/Asian American (3.9%), Asian/Pacific Islander (3.9%), Latino(a) (1.3%), Middle-Eastern (1.3%), with one respondent identifying as “Other”, and two respondents who did not answer the question.

Respondents also answered questions concerning religious and political identification. For instance, 45.9% identified as Republicans; 27% called themselves Democrats; 16.2% claimed to be Independents; while 4.1% claimed membership to the Green Party. An additional 6.8% of respondents marked “other”, including one who wrote “Libertarian”. Four respondents chose not to answer the question concerning political party.

Respondents also marked which religion or religious denomination they most identified with. The results of the religious denomination question are as follows: Protestant Christians (including Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, etc.) 42.9%; Catholics 16.9%; Other Christian denominations (including non-denominational Christians) 16.9%; “Some other

religion” 15.6% (included in “Some other religion”: several Buddhists, one “Spiritual”, one “Witness”, one “Agnostically Christian”, one Hindu, and one Tao). Finally, 6.5% of respondents identified as having “no religion”, including atheists and agnostics. One respondent identified as Muslim. One respondent did not answer the question concerning identification with religions and religious denominations.

Due to the limited number of responses for some categories of religious identification, I decided to recode the religious identification variable into fewer categories. For instance, since there was just one Muslim respondent, I combined that response with the category “Some other religion”. I also combined the “Other Christian denominations” in with the “Protestant Christian” category since none of the other Christian denominations mentioned reflected any traditional sub-group of Catholicism, e.g., Jesuits. The categories regarding Catholic respondents and respondents who claimed no religion (including atheists and agnostics) did not change.

In the same fashion I decided to recode the variable concerning political party identification. Since most respondents identified as either Republicans or Democrats, I combined those respondents who identified with the Green or Independent parties with those who marked “Other” on the survey, thereby creating three options for political party affiliation: Republican, Democrat, and Other.

## **Results**

As in the analysis of the pilot study, I decided to run a chi square analysis to further explore the descriptive statistics, especially those concerning religious and political identification. The chi square analysis, however, did not indicate a significant relationship

between the political party affiliations and religious identifications of respondents in this current data set,  $\chi^2 = 7.637$  (6,  $N = 73$ ),  $p > .05$ .

A further look at the descriptive statistics of the set of respondents shows the relationship statuses as follows: Those who were married accounted for 7.7% of total respondents. Those cohabitating with a partner accounted for 11.5% of respondents. Divorced respondents made up 3.8%. Those who claimed to be separated made up 1.3% of respondents. And, finally, respondents who had never been married made up 75.6% of the total survey.

One final question worth noting was the respondents' answers to how they would gauge their own political ideology. I tested this by using a seven-point Likert scale with "1" representing the most liberal response and "7" representing the most conservative response. The mean political ideology of respondents was 4.20 (SD=1.182), indicating that survey respondents claimed a more moderate political orientation. Although, 29.8% of respondents rated themselves on the conservative end of the spectrum (5, 6, or 7), while only 20.3% rated themselves on the liberal side of the scale (1, 2, or 3). Four respondents (5.1%) chose not to answer the question concerning political ideology. In addition to the question asking about respondents' own political ideologies, one of the questions on the second part of the survey asked respondents to venture a guess as to the political orientation of their fellow classmates. Perhaps not so coincidentally, respondents also rated their classmates as moderate ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ).

Next, to further explore the research questions and hypotheses designated for this chapter I examined frequencies of responses for the six basic emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry's political advertisement, "Strong". First, I will report the frequencies of each of the basic emotions respondents reported upon viewing the Rick Perry advertisement. The results are as follows (see Table 3): Surprise was the emotion with the highest reported mean (4.397,  $SD =$

2.519); next was the emotion of disgust ( $M = 3.743$ ,  $SD = 2.774$ ); following was the emotion of happiness ( $M = 3.602$ ,  $SD = 2.731$ ); the final three emotions means were, in order, anger ( $M = 3.346$ ,  $SD = 2.738$ ); sadness ( $M = 2.974$ ,  $SD = 2.725$ ); and, finally, fear ( $M = 2.346$ ,  $SD = 2.532$ ).

Table 3  
Means of felt emotions after viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong”. (Pilot Study)

Emotion	M	SD
1. Surprise	4.397	2.519
2. Disgust	3.743	2.774
3. Happiness	3.602	2.731
4. Anger	3.346	2.738
5. Sadness	2.974	2.725
6. Fear	2.346	2.532

Interestingly enough, the emotion of fear—the very essence of a fear appeal and one of the main emphases of this dissertation—was the least reported felt-emotion of all respondents ( $N = 78$ ) in the survey.

In order to answer Research Question 5 I ran a frequency analysis of this data set to see with whom respondents felt comfortable discussing political issues (see Table 4). The results are as follows: 53 respondents (67.9%) said they would feel comfortable talking with their close friends about political issues; respondents chose their mothers as the next most frequently named person they felt comfortable discussing political issues with, 39 respondents (50%); respondents then listed siblings, 29 respondents (37.2%); fathers, 27 respondents (34.6%); romantic partners,

24 respondents (30.8%); coworkers, 19 respondents (24.4%); acquaintances, 15 respondents (19.2%); and finally, strangers, 11 respondents (14.1%).

Table 4  
With whom do respondents feel most comfortable discussing political issues?\*( Pilot Study)

Relationship	Number of times chosen	Percentage
Close Friends	53	67.9%
Mothers	39	50%
Siblings	29	37.2%
Fathers	27	34.6%
Romantic Partners	24	30.8%
Coworkers	19	24.4%
Acquaintances	15	19.2%
Strangers	11	14.1%

\*Respondents (N = 78) could choose more than one response.

Respondents in the pilot study tended to choose their close friends as the group of people with whom they feel most comfortable discussing political issues, nearly 18% over the next highest response of “mothers”. Clearly the importance of social groups, namely close interpersonal friends, is a salient finding in these frequency analyses. Are these choices of social network directly related to respondents’ reported felt emotions following the viewing of political advertisements or perhaps identification with a particular political party or religion? I hope to answer this and other questions with further analyses of the pilot study data.

To investigate Research Question 6, I ran a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with political party identification and religious affiliation as the independent variables and the self-reported six basic emotions following the viewing of the Rick Perry advertisement serving

as dependent variables. The MANOVA was calculated to determine whether there are significant relationships between degrees of the self-reported emotions of fear, anger, disgust, happiness, surprise, and sadness following viewing of the Rick Perry political advertisement and respondents who identify as Republicans, Democrats, or affiliate with another political party and those who profess to be Protestants, Catholics, one who practices some other religion, or a follower of no religion at all. The Box M test was not significant, Box M = 71.60,  $F = 1.212$  (42, 2283.633),  $p > .05$ . Therefore, the assumption that the covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups is satisfied. The overall multivariate test was insignificant for party affiliation, Wilks' Lambda = .753,  $F = 1.245$  (12, 98),  $p > .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .132$ , and the overall multivariate test was also insignificant for religious affiliation, Wilks' Lambda = .701,  $F = 1.036$  (18, 139.078),  $p > .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .112$ .

Next, I ran a correlation analysis of the dependent variables, as revealed in Table 5. The correlations range from .8 to .009. The mean absolute value of the correlations was .289.

Table 5  
Inter-correlations of Dependent Variables (Self-reported felt emotions)

Correlations						
	Fear	Anger	Disgust	Happiness	Surprise	Sadness
Fear	1	.313*	.234	.009	.083	.295*
Anger		1	.800*	-.314*	.251*	.556*
Disgust			1	-.325*	.242*	.568*
Happiness				1	.133	-.192
Surprise					1	-.020
Sadness						1

\*Significant at the .05 level.

Therefore, since the set of variables was relatively uncorrelated, I looked at univariate F tests following Pedhazur's (1982) recommendations of running individual F tests when the set of dependent variables is not correlated. Regarding party affiliation these tests indicated significant differences for two of the six basic emotions: anger,  $F = 5.045 (2, 62), p = .009, \eta^2 = .140$ , and disgust,  $F = 3.915, (2, 62), p = .025, \eta^2 = .112$ . The univariate F tests revealed that Republicans reported feeling significantly less anger and significantly less disgust following viewing the Rick Perry advertisement than both Democrats and the group of respondents who identified with another political party.

The mean of felt anger for Republicans after viewing the Rick Perry advertisement was 1.97 as opposed to a mean of 3.47 for those in the "Other" category and a mean of 3.65 for self-identified Democrats, with alpha set at .05. Again, the F test showed that Republicans reported significantly less anger than those who identified with the category of "Other" political party,  $p = 0.13$ , and those who identified as Democrats,  $p = .006$ , but there was no significant difference between the degree of anger felt between Democrats and respondents who identified with "other" political parties. This result concerning Republicans feeling less anger than their political counterparts coincides with results from Chapter III of this dissertation where it was reported Republicans were significantly happier than Democrats and followers of other political parties.

The ANOVA test also showed a significant difference in the means for self-reported *disgust* among Republicans ( $M = 2.41$ ) from the degrees of self-reported disgust for either Democrats ( $M = 3.81$ ) or those who identified with another political party, "Other's" ( $M = 3.88$ ). The ANOVA, with alpha set at .05, showed Republicans reported feeling significantly less disgust than Democrats,  $p = .031$  and significantly less disgust than those who identified with



another political party,  $p = .021$ , but there was no significant difference in degrees of self-reported disgust between those who identified as Democrats and those who identified with another political party, the “Other” category.

The non-significant ANOVAs for the four other basic emotions as they related to political party identification were as follows: fear,  $F(2, 63) = 1.071, p > .05, \eta^2 = .032$ ; happiness,  $F(2, 63) = .482, p > .05, \eta^2 = .015$ ; surprise,  $F(2, 63) = 2.485, p > .05, \eta^2 = .073$ ; and sadness,  $F(2, 63) = 2.505, p > .05, \eta^2 = .073$ . There were no significant relationships between identifying with any of the three political parties and the felt emotions of fear, happiness, surprise, or sadness.

Therefore, to answer Research Question 6, it appears that political party identification does play some role in the degrees of emotion one may feel after viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong” political advertisement. In this specific case, Republicans were significantly less likely to be disgusted or angry after watching “Strong” than were Democrats or those respondents who identified with any other political party. Perhaps the significant lack of disgust and anger on behalf of Republicans was due to the fact that Perry, in his advertisement, discusses many of the core concerns of the more conservative branch of the Republican Party: an apparent “war” against those who hold deeply their Christian beliefs; a perceived lack of ability to profess those Christian beliefs in public; the perception of the promotion of more (or special) rights for the LGBT community, which in Perry’s and other conservatives’ ideologies is a lifestyle “choice” that is strictly condemned.

These messages of a perceived lack of tolerance for Christian beliefs and an abundance of support for “gay rights” have been repeated constantly by those who would flex their conservative *bona fides* in public in order to appease a more conservative base, so increased

anger on the part of Democrats and members of other political parties is understandable, but a lack of fear from respondents upon viewing the Perry advertisement is telling. Should not conservative or moderate Republicans be fearful of the type of world Perry describes if Obama is re-elected? Should not liberal or progressive Democrats be fearful that a man with Perry's worldview is a highly visible and legitimate candidate for the presidency, and the current governor of one of the largest states in the country? Either way, the lack of a significant amount of reported fear by respondents shows that perhaps this particular fear appeal and threat implied within are misleading. Perhaps a different level of fear, and other emotions, will be evident when respondents' religious convictions are measured in response to Rick Perry's advertisement.

Next, to examine the impact of religious beliefs on emotional responses to Rick Perry's "Strong", and to answer Research Question 7, a univariate ANOVA test was run. The results of the F test showed a significant difference between the four groups of religious identification and the self-reported emotion of disgust,  $F = 3.222 (3, 68), p = .028$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .129$ . The ANOVA test indicated Protestants ( $M = 2.68$ ;  $SD = 1.97$ ) and Catholics ( $M = 2.50$ ;  $SD = 2.20$ ) felt significantly less disgust following viewing of the Rick Perry advertisement than did those who professed worshipping some other religion ( $M = 4.55$ ;  $SD = 1.86$ ). There was no significant difference, however, in levels of disgust felt between Protestants and Catholics, nor were there any significant differences between those who claimed no religion and any of the other three religious identification groupings.

The non-significant ANOVAs for the independent variable of religious affiliation (Christian/Protestant; Catholic; Another Religion; No Religion) and the other five basic emotions are as follows: fear,  $F(3, 68) = .452, p > .05, \eta^2 = .020$ ; anger,  $F(3, 68) = 10.22, p > .05, \eta^2 = .045$ ; happiness,  $F(3, 68) = .672, p > .05, \eta^2 = .030$ ; surprise,  $F(3, 68) = 1.821, p > .05, \eta^2 = .078$ ;

and sadness,  $F(3, 68) = .995, p > .05, \eta^2 = .044$ . The ANOVA test, however, could not identify a significant relationship with a specific religious identification other than Christianity and the emotion of disgust. Therefore, I argue that people who identify with a religion other than Christianity are significantly more disgusted than those who follow a Christian denomination. Of course one must include those who did not identify with a religion as contributing to the significance of the overall omnibus F test, but since the vast majority of respondents identified with a particular religion or religious denomination, the small number of respondents who claim no religion should make little difference in the overall result.

To be sure, however, of the supposed minimal impact of those who claimed to have no religion I did run one final ONEWAY ANOVA. Once again, the six basic felt emotions respondents reported after watching the Perry advertisement served as my dependent variables. The independent variable was a re-coding of the religious affiliation variable, this time omitting those who claimed to have no religion—or thought of themselves as atheists or agnostics—creating a slightly smaller sample ( $N = 72$ ). As previously assumed, the impact of losing those who claim to have no religion was minimal. There was still the significant effect of religious identification on respondents feeling disgusted after watching the Perry advertisement,  $F(2, 61) = 4.19, p = .02, \eta^2 = .120$ . To summarize Research Question 7, religious identification does indeed influence the degree of self-reported disgust following the viewing of the Rick Perry advertisement. I will now proceed to research questions that hope to gain some insight into how respondents' political and religious attitudes and beliefs influence political discussions with their social relationships.

First, to study Research Question 8, I ran a chi square analysis to test for a possible relationship between political party identification and the types of social relationships—mother,

father, siblings, romantic partners, close friends, acquaintances, coworkers, or strangers— with whom respondents felt most comfortable discussing political issues. There were no significant results, however, based on this chi square analysis. To answer Research Question 8 it does not appear there is a relationship between one's political party identification and the close relationships with whom respondents feel comfortable discussing political issues.

To continue searching for links involving attitudes and beliefs with interpersonal relationships—and to examine Research Question 9—I ran a chi square analysis to test for a possible relationship between identifying with a particular religion or religious denomination and the types of close relationships—mother, father, siblings, romantic partners, close friends, acquaintances, coworkers, or strangers— with whom respondents would report feeling the most comfortable discussing political issues. The only significant chi square was for religious identification and those who felt comfortable discussing political issues with strangers,  $\chi^2 = 21.999$  (3,  $N = 77$ ),  $p = .000$ . Looking at the respective cells of the chi square analysis—and taking into consideration the standard residuals of each cell—the actual count of those who both claim to have no religion and are comfortable discussing political issues with strangers is significantly greater than the expected count. Therefore, it appears there is a significant result with those who profess no religion claiming more comfort in discussing political issues with strangers. There were no other significant standard residuals associated with the chi square cell involving religious affiliation and comfort in discussing political issues with strangers. This relationship between atheists and agnostics and political discussions with strangers is an odd one. Perhaps one explanation is that atheists and agnostics may be able to separate their political beliefs from the general religious beliefs of society and are, therefore, more willing to discuss simply the political impact of certain issues without inquiring into their conversational partner's

religious philosophy. It may be difficult for those with sincerely-held religious beliefs to discuss politics with others without intertwining their religion with their politics—not so with atheists and agnostics, presumably. Is testing one’s religious beliefs enough of a gauge, though? There are those who claim to be spiritual rather than religious. In order to account for this variable of spirituality, respondents’ attitudes on spirituality are tested in the following paragraphs.

To examine the next set of research questions, specifically Research Question 10, I ran a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test for a relationship between levels of spirituality and political party affiliation and the six basic emotions respondents recorded after watching Rick Perry’s “Strong”. One question on the survey asked respondents to select from four choices pertaining to how spiritual they were: very spiritual, moderately spiritual, slightly spiritual, or not at all spiritual. A supplemental MANOVA with the six basic emotions serving as the dependent variables and the levels of spirituality and different political party affiliations serving as the independent variable produced the following results: The Box M test, using the .001 alpha, was not significant, Box M = 74.41,  $F = 1.088 (42, 1207.992)$ ,  $p > .05$ , accepting the null hypothesis of equal covariance matrices of the dependent variable. The overall multivariate test for political party affiliation was insignificant, Wilks’ Lambda = .794,  $F = .980 (12, 96)$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .109$ . The overall multivariate test for level of spirituality was insignificant as well, Wilks’ Lambda = .583,  $F = 1.590 (18, 136.250)$ ,  $p > .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .164$ . Again, based on recommendations from Pedhazur (1982), follow-up  $F$  tests showed a significant difference between the four groups coinciding with levels of spirituality and the self-reported emotion of disgust,  $F(3, 67) = 2.964$ ,  $p = .039$ ,  $\eta^2 = .122$ . The ANOVA test showed a significant difference between those who claimed to be “very spiritual” and those who claimed to be both “moderately spiritual” and “slightly spiritual”. Those who were “very spiritual” were significantly more

disgusted after viewing the Perry advertisement than those who were “moderately spiritual”,  $p = .006$ , and the “very spiritual” group was significantly more disgusted than those who were “slightly spiritual”,  $p = .026$ . There were no significant differences between those who were “moderately” and “slightly” spiritual, nor were there any significant differences in self-reported disgust between those who claimed to be “not at all” spiritual and those who were either “moderately” or “slightly” spiritual. Again, the reported emotion of disgust produced the only significant effect with degrees of spirituality. The non-significant results of the ANOVAs are as follows: fear,  $F(3, 67) = 1.593, p > .05, \eta^2 = .068$ ; anger,  $F(3, 67) = .747, p > .05, \eta^2 = .033$ ; happiness,  $F(3, 67) = .882, p > .05, \eta^2 = .039$ ; surprise,  $F(3, 67) = 1.918, p > .05, \eta^2 = .081$ ; and sadness,  $F(3, 67) = .559, p > .05, \eta^2 = .025$ . Research Question 10 is answered in the affirmative when it comes to the self-reported felt emotion of disgust. Those respondents who claim to be “very spiritual” reported significantly higher levels of disgust than those who were either “moderately” or “slightly” spiritual. Therefore, one’s degree of spirituality does seem to play a role in felt-emotions following viewing of the Rick Perry video, but only with the self-reported emotion of disgust, and only with those who deem themselves “very spiritual”.

To summarize Chapter IV, I stated in Hypothesis 1 that the Rick Perry advertisement “Strong” should produce a significant level of fear in respondents. This hypothesis is not supported. The mean level of fear, as reported by respondents, was the lowest of the six basic emotions from which respondents could choose. Also, there were no significant results for level of fear when paired with respondents’ political affiliations, religious affiliations, or levels of spirituality.

In Hypothesis 2 I stated that if respondents fear anything it would be risking alienation from social circles by offering political opinions that differ greatly from those of their close

relationships. This hypothesis is more difficult to support based just on the survey responses, but there is some evidence that respondents might worry about how they are perceived by those closest to them. Respondents in the pilot study listed their close friends as those with whom they felt most comfortable discussing political topics. One would assume these close friendships are built on common opinions and beliefs on specific religious and political matters, and that respondents risk losing these relationships if their political and religious opinions differ too greatly. However, more focused questions need to be asked in the second study of this dissertation that might help support a “spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann, 1993) explanation of respondents’ political opinions.

Since respondents in the pilot study felt more disgust and anger than fear following viewing of the Rick Perry advertisement, I decided to conduct a second study to further analyze these findings, as well as explore some other emotions, the study of which might be worth pursuing in future research. This second study will also help better explore which aspects of Perry’s advertisement caused respondents to feel a certain emotion by allowing them to explain what about “Strong” made them feel angry, sad, etc. Finally, I also hope to gain more insight into who respondents talk to about certain controversial issues, exploring further Noelle-Neumann’s Spiral of Silence theory as a possible explanation for why humans choose to discuss political and religious issues with some people but not with others. In addition to exploring this next study through the lens of the spiral of silence theory I will also explore reactions to Rick Perry’s “Strong” based on Dolf Zillmann’s excitation transfer theory by recording both pre- and post-video opinions of Perry himself by the next set of respondents. First, I will describe Study II of the Perry advertisement.

## **Study II**

For the second part of the study of Rick Perry's "Strong" political advertisement I once again had respondents complete a survey in which they reported demographic information such as age, biological sex, race/ethnicity, and political and religious affiliation among other categories. I also, once again, showed respondents Rick Perry's "Strong" advertisement, but this time I included pre-video questions in which I asked respondents to what degree they were familiar with Governor Perry and, if familiar, what their opinion of Perry was. Perhaps the main difference between this study and the pilot study was that I conducted the research for Study II in a fashion where respondents answered all questions and viewed the video for "Strong" in one sitting, instead of spreading the study out over two days, as was the case with the pilot study. The new survey for Study II consisted of, now, 60 questions. In addition to the aforementioned changes, I also added each basic emotion and its more and less intense version from Plutchik's (1980) emotions wheel. Plutchik's emotions wheel is a standard of measuring and explaining emotions that has been referenced by scholars for over thirty years. The use of Plutchik's wheel served as a way for me to once again measure the basic emotions, but also search for degrees of intensity in relation to those same basic emotions. The use of Plutchik's model also provided validity and reliability to my emotions measurements that may have been lacking in the pilot study. Plutchik (1980) offered eight basic emotions in his research—the six previously discussed in this dissertation plus the emotions of trust and anticipation. In addition to the eight basic emotions, Plutchik also discussed how each of the eight emotions has a more and less intense version. For instance, now instead of just wanting respondents to rate the degree of sadness the Perry advertisement may make them feel, I am now asking them to also rate their felt degree of the more intense version of sadness according to Plutchik—the state of being grief-stricken—and



the less intense version of sadness—pensiveness. In addition to the eight basic emotions Plutchik posited (and the more and less intense version of each emotion) I am also measuring the felt level of anxiety that respondents may report upon viewing the Perry advertisement, since LeDoux (1996) speaks of anxiety as similar to fear but yet different enough to warrant its own study.

## **Methods**

Study II was conducted over a month-long period from late February to late March of 2014. IRB approval was sought and granted before the study began. The questionnaire was uploaded to computers in a lab at a large southern university using surveymonkey.com. The video of Rick Perry’s “Strong” was embedded from YouTube.com into surveymonkey.com approximately halfway through the questionnaire. Respondents took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey, including the watching of Perry’s “Strong”. Demographic characteristics and frequencies associated with Study II are listed next.

### **Participants**

Study II consisted of 153 respondents. Of these 153 respondents, 103 were female (67.3%), 49 were male (32%), while one respondent refused to answer the question concerning biological sex. The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 28 years with a mean age of 19.75. When asked to identify which race or ethnicity best described them, respondents chose the following: Caucasian/European American (69.9%); Black/African American (22.9%); Latino(a) (4.6%); Asian/Asian American (2.6%); Asian/Pacific Islander (1.3%). Respondents were also asked to mark their year in school; the results are as follows: Freshmen (46.4%); Sophomores (19%); Juniors (22.2%); Seniors (13.1%). Finally, respondents were asked to identify their relationship status. The vast majority of respondents had never been married (N = 144 or

94.1%); six respondents reported cohabitating or living with their partners. One respondent each claimed they were divorced, separated, or married.

Since this project revolves around gauging respondents' emotions based, in part, on their religious and political identifications, I also asked respondents to choose the political party and religion/religious denomination they most identified with. The results are as follows: for political party affiliation, 51.6% of respondents identified as Republicans; 26.8% identified as Democrats; 21.6% identified as Independents; 1.3% identified as followers of the Green Party; one respondent typed "Libertarian" into the "other political party" section, while one final respondent typed that they were mostly Republican, but with some Democratic leanings. As a follow up to the question concerning political party preference, I also asked respondents to rate their political ideology on a seven-point scale, with 1 being extremely liberal, 7 being extremely conservative, and 4 being moderate. A plurality of respondents (46.4%) chose 4 (the moderate option). Only 1.3% of respondents identified as extremely liberal, while just 2% identified as extremely conservative. There were more respondents who identified their political ideology on the more conservative side of the scale, however. A total of 31.4% of respondents marked either a 5 or 6 on the conservative end of the spectrum. While just 19% of respondents marked either a 2 or 3 on the more liberal side of the scale. Next, I ran frequency analyses for respondents' choices for religious identification.

The results for religious affiliation are as follows: 45.8% of respondents identified as Catholic; 21.6% identified as followers of the Protestant denomination of Christianity (including Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians); 15.7% identified as non-denominational Christians; 11.8% identified as having no religion, including atheists and agnostics. Two respondents typed in "Pentecostal" in the "other religion" section. Finally, one respondent each

typed the following religions or descriptions of their own spirituality: Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Haitian Voodoo, Judea Christian, Unitarian, Mormon, “I don’t define myself to a religion, but I am not atheist or agnostic”, and a “Spiritual individual, belief in one God...not Jesus though.”

Upon completion of the pilot study, I was left with three guiding statements to explore in this second study of Rick Perry’s “Strong”. First, my main assertion is that the emotion of fear is mislabeled. According to the pilot study, these fear appeals and threats prevalent in political advertisements, specifically Rick Perry’s “Strong”, did not produce a significant level of fear in respondents. Respondents more commonly associate disgust, and occasionally anger, with their feelings following viewing of Perry’s advertisements. This second study will allow me to pursue the general thesis of the mislabeling of fear while testing a larger sample size with a greater number of emotions from which respondents may choose.

The second guiding statement to be explored in this next study concerns fear. Not only do I argue that fear is being mislabeled, but it appears from the pilot study that researchers are simply not looking at enough emotions when it comes to exploring a link between political advertisements and the emotional response of those watching the advertisements. This second study will allow respondents to choose from more than just the basic emotions to describe their responses to Rick Perry’s “Strong”. In addition to offering respondents more emotions from which they may choose, I also included a section in Study II to allow for respondent elaboration as to why they felt a particular basic emotion after viewing Perry’s advertisement. This will allow me to gauge if a respondent felt, for example, disgust due to the message of the advertisement, the message sender (Perry), or the recipient of the message-sender’s attack (President Obama).

Lastly, the third guiding statement for this second study is that our behaviors and responses to political messages and advertisements are due as much, if not more so, to our social networks than the emotional impact of the advertisement itself. To further explore the impact of Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1993) on how and with whom respondents discuss political advertisements, I am including in this second survey several sections in which respondents can remark as to which of their close relationships (if any) they feel comfortable discussing emotions with. Also, there is a section in which respondents can rate to what degree they believe their close relationships agree or disagree with them concerning religion, politics, and values. With the aforementioned three guiding principles, I propose the following hypotheses and research questions for Study 2 of Rick Perry's "Strong", which are mostly holdovers from the pilot study.

H3: Respondents adhere to political and philosophical beliefs based mainly on the fear of being socially isolated from their interpersonal relationships, not as a result of actually fearing the outcomes of political messages and advertisements.

RQ11: With whom would respondents report feeling most comfortable discussing politics, religion, and values (family, close friends, acquaintances, strangers, etc.)?

RQ12: Do respondents believe that those with whom they feel comfortable discussing politics, religion, and values actually agree with respondents on these issues?

RQ13: What emotions will respondents report feeling following the viewing of Rick Perry's "Strong"?

RQ14: What reasons will respondents give for feelings certain emotions?

RQ15: Does one’s political party affiliation influence self-reported felt emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry’s “Strong”.

RQ16: Does one’s religious/religious denomination affiliation influence self-reported felt emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry’s “Strong”?

**Results**

First, to focus on Research Question 11 I ran a frequency analysis to see with whom respondents felt most comfortable discussing political issues. The results are listed next in Table 6.

Table 6  
With whom do respondents feel most comfortable discussing political issues?\*( Study II)

Relationship	Number of times chosen	Percentage
Close Friends	98	64.1%
Mothers	92	60.1%
Fathers	90	58.8%
Siblings	61	39.9%
Romantic Partners	50	32.7%
Acquaintances	29	19.0%
Coworkers	25	16.3%
Strangers	19	12.4%

\*Respondents (N = 153) could choose more than one response.

The frequency results listed in Table 6 are similar to results in the pilot study. Respondents named their close friends and mothers and the top two relationships with whom they would feel most comfortable discussing political issues. Siblings and fathers traded places for third and fourth on the list of relationships, while romantic partners remained fifth. The more

impersonal relationships of acquaintances, coworkers, and strangers rounded out the list, albeit in a slightly different order than they appeared in the pilot study. While this second frequency analysis shows respondents are more comfortable discussing their political opinions with those closest to them, this does not on its own show evidence of the spiral of silence theory as an explanation for why we react emotionally to certain political advertisements. In order to further investigate if and how spiral of silence theory influences our responses to political advertisements I included a question on the new survey asking respondents with whom they would feel most comfortable discussing religious issues. The results are listed in Table 7.

Table 7  
With whom do respondents feel most comfortable discussing religious issues?\*

Relationship	Number of times chosen	Percentage
Mothers	112	73.2%
Close Friends	89	58.2%
Romantic Partners	72	47.1%
Fathers	70	45.8%
Siblings	70	45.8%
Acquaintances	22	14.4%
Strangers	19	12.4%
Coworkers	17	11.1%

\*Respondents (N = 153) could choose more than one response.

When it comes to comfort in discussing religious issues, respondents, overwhelmingly, chose their mothers as the person they would most likely confide in. Close friends, fathers, and romantic partners were once again high on the list. One interesting finding from this frequency

analysis is that coworkers replaced strangers as the relationship with which respondents would least like to discuss political issues. Perhaps this is due to some religions' emphases on spreading the faith with others, including strangers. Also, religion is a topic that may be difficult for some to discuss at work for fear of being ostracized by coworkers or even disciplined by companies who frown on their employees discussing such a controversial issue as religion with coworkers. In order to further examine spiral of silence I posed one final question asking respondents to list which relationships they would feel most comfortable discussing their values with. The results are listed in Table 8.

Table 8  
With whom do respondents feel most comfortable discussing their values?\*

Relationship	Number of times chosen	Percentage
Close Friends	120	78.4%
Mothers	114	74.5%
Romantic Partners	95	62.1%
Siblings	85	55.6%
Fathers	80	52.3%
Acquaintances	28	18.3%
Coworkers	24	15.7%
Strangers	19	12.4%

\*Respondents (N = 153) could choose more than one response.

Once again respondents chose their close friends and mothers as those they feel most comfortable discussing personal issues such as politics, religion, and, in this case, values. The high frequency of the selection of “close friends” as a group of relationships respondents feel comfortable discussing personal issues with is most intriguing. Close friends constitute

relationships humans choose to cultivate. One would think the ability to discuss issues confidently with others would be the key to forming long-lasting friendships. A question remains, however. Just because respondents feel comfortable discussing religion, politics, and values with their close friends does not necessarily mean that respondents agree with their close friends on these subjects. To answer this question, posed in this study as Research Question 12, respondents were asked to what degree they felt their interpersonal relationships agreed with them on the issues of politics, religion, and values. In the next section I will explore the findings related degrees of agreement regarding these taboo topics and whether these findings lend any support to a framework of spiral of silence theory to help explain respondents' reactions to political advertisements.

To examine the level of agreement respondents felt they had with their close relationships regarding politics, religion, and values I asked respondents to rate on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree) the degree to which they believed each of their interpersonal relationships (Mother, Father, Siblings, Close Friends, Romantic Partners, Acquaintances, Coworkers, and Strangers) agreed with them concerning their politics, religious beliefs, and values. The means for each of the taboo topics is listed below in their respective tables, starting with the means of agreement on politics in Table 9, the means of agreement on religion in Table 10, and the means of agreement on values in Table 11.

Table 9  
Means of respondents' perceptions of agreement on politics

Relationship	Mean	Standard Deviation
Mothers	4.84	1.45
Fathers	4.78	1.55



(Table 9 Continued)

Relationship	Mean	Standard Deviation
Siblings	4.66	1.55
Close Friends	4.64	1.34
Romantic Partners	4.52	1.55
Acquaintances	3.93	1.09
Coworkers	3.79	1.16
Strangers	3.49	1.12

Table 10  
Means of respondents' perceptions of agreement on religion

Relationship	Mean	Standard Deviation
Mothers	5.37	1.80
Siblings	5.24	1.71
Romantic Partners	5.07	1.68
Fathers	4.97	2.02
Close Friends	4.92	1.50
Acquaintances	4.10	1.21
Coworkers	3.79	1.41
Strangers	3.45	1.24

Table 11  
Means of respondents' perceptions of agreement on values

Relationship	Mean	Standard Deviation
Mothers	5.76	1.38

(Table 11 Continued)

Relationship	Mean	Standard Deviation
Close Friends	5.68	1.03
Fathers	5.58	1.38
Romantic Partners	5.57	1.39
Siblings	5.54	1.32
Acquaintances	4.57	1.11
Coworkers	4.28	1.24
Strangers	3.81	1.14

Research Question 12 is answered as follows: From the frequency analyses of respondents' perceived degree of agreement with their interpersonal relationships on issues of politics, religion, and values, it is apparent that respondents believe their close relatives and close friends agree with them on these sometimes controversial subjects. What stands out is that respondents rated strangers as those with whom they thought they would agree the least when it comes to discussions of religion, politics, and values. It is telling that respondents in this survey expect people they do not know to disagree with them concerning personal topics such as religion and politics.

While these frequency analyses help explain to an extent who respondents trust when discussing personal topics like religion and politics, further exploration is needed before one is able to point to spiral of silence theory as the primary explanation for respondents' choices for discussing taboo issues. In order to test Hypothesis 3 I ran a series of t tests comparing two variables: the relationship respondents chose as those they felt most comfortable discussing issues of politics, religion, and values, and the degree to which they believed each of these

relationships agreed with them on these sometimes controversial issues. For example, I began by looking at the respondents' choices for relationships with whom they felt most comfortable discussing political issues. I then ran t tests with the choice of relationship serving as the dichotomous variable and the degree to which a respondent felt that same relationship agreed with them on issues of politics (and later, religion and values) as the scale variable. These t tests should show if there is a significant difference in the means of perceived agreement with those who did and did not feel comfortable discussing taboo topics with a specific relationship.

I first ran t tests concerning who respondents would discuss politics with and the degree to which respondents felt that relationship agreed with them on political issues. The significant results are as follows. Respondents who chose their fathers as one with whom they felt comfortable discussing political issues were also significantly more likely to believe their fathers agreed with them concerning political issues than did those respondents who did not feel comfortable discussing politics with their fathers,  $t(149) = 3.27, p = .001$ . T tests were also significant for the following relationships respondents felt comfortable discussing politics with and the degree to which respondents felt these relationships agreed with them on political issues: siblings,  $t(150) = 2.03, p < .05$ ; romantic partners,  $t(145) = 3.26, p = .001$ ; and close friends,  $t(149) = 2.14, p < .05$ . Again, in the preceding significant t tests, those respondents who chose these four relationships as those with whom they felt comfortable discussing political issues also felt a significantly greater degree of perceived agreement with these relationships on political issues than those respondents who did not choose the above four relationships as those with whom they felt comfortable discussing politics. In the following paragraphs I explore the same questions of choice of relationship and perceived agreement with questions of religion and values.

To continue exploring predictions made in Hypothesis 3 I ran t tests to search for possible significant differences in means of those respondents who did and did not choose to discuss issues regarding religion with each of the eight close relationships offered in this study and the degree to which respondents felt each relationship agreed with them about religious issues. First, there was a significant difference in perceived agreement on religious issues with respondents who felt comfortable discussing religion with their mothers as opposed to those respondents who did not feel comfortable discussing religion with their mothers,  $t(150) = 4.43, p = .000$ . T tests for the following relationships and perceived level of agreement on religion also provided significant differences: fathers,  $t(149) = 3.42, p = .001$ ; romantic partners,  $t(146) = 4.36, p = .000$ ; close friends,  $t(151) = 3.09, p < .05$ ; acquaintances,  $t(148) = 3.53, p = .001$ ; coworkers,  $t(149) = 3.50, p = .001$ ; and strangers,  $t(148) = 2.95, p < .05$ . To summarize, in the preceding significant t tests, those respondents who chose all eight relationships as those with whom they felt comfortable discussing religious issues also felt a significantly greater degree of perceived agreement with these relationships on religious issues than those respondents who did not choose the above relationships as those with whom they felt comfortable discussing religion.

In order to complete this exploration of Hypothesis 3 I ran t tests to search for possible significant differences in means of those respondents who did and did not choose to discuss issues regarding values with each of the eight close relationships offered in this study and the degree to which respondents felt each relationship agreed with them about issues regarding values. First, there was a significant difference in perceived agreement with respondents who felt comfortable discussing values with their mothers as opposed to those respondents who did not feel comfortable discussing values with their mothers,  $t(149) = 5.91, p = .000$ . T tests for the following relationships and perceived levels of agreement on values also provided significant

differences: fathers,  $t(149) = 6.09, p = .000$ ; siblings,  $t(150) = 4.19, p = .000$ ; romantic partners,  $t(146) = 6.12, p = .000$ ; close friends,  $t(150) = 2.64, p < .01$ ; acquaintances,  $t(148) = 3.33, p = .001$ ; coworkers,  $t(148) = 2.99, p < .01$ ; and strangers,  $t(148) = 2.79, p < .01$ .

From these t tests one can summarize that if respondents chose to talk to a relationship in their life (or even in some cases a stranger) about politics, religion, or issues regarding values, then these same respondents felt quite confident that these relationships were in agreement with them concerning these sometimes taboo topics.

The results of this survey may help further show that humans tend to not only trust those closest to them but also expect those closest to them to be in agreement with them when it comes to a variety of personal topics. There may be two explanations for this phenomenon. First, humans do indeed tend to form relationships based on common values, including political and religious beliefs. Another explanation may be that humans simply refuse to counter the opinions of those they admire or love for fear of losing that relationship through heated disagreements about values—including religious and political beliefs—thereby cultivating relationships based in part on principles presented in Noelle-Neumann's (1993) spiral of silence theory. Either way, this analysis develops further the idea that humans gauge their responses to certain stimuli in part based on how they think their close personal relationships might react to the same stimuli—or in the case of this study, political advertisements. Several questions remain as to whether or not the same emotions respondents reported in the pilot study remain the most commonly reported felt emotions in this new study. If fear is mislabeled, which emotions will respondents report feeling? If the emotions of anger and disgust are commonly chosen in this next study—as they were in the pilot study—what part of the message in Rick Perry's "Strong" will respondents say

made them feel those emotions? These questions, which form the basis of Research Questions 13 and 14 from Study II, are explored in the following paragraphs.

Before, I once again delve into the topic and analysis of respondents' levels of felt emotions after viewing Rick Perry's "Strong" I will analyze respondents' reactions to three new survey questions I added for this second study. In order to gauge respondents' attitudes to Rick Perry himself, I asked the following three question—two preceding respondents' viewing of "Strong" and one immediately after. The two questions I asked prior to having respondents watch "Strong" are as follows: How familiar are you with Texas Governor Rick Perry? If you are familiar with Governor Perry, what is your opinion of him? (If you are not familiar with Rick Perry you may leave this question blank.) Each of these new questions was answered using a seven-point Likert scale with 1 = Not at all Familiar and 7 = Very Familiar for the first question and 1 = Not at all Favorable and 7 = Very Favorable for the second question. The means for the two questions are reported in the following paragraphs.

Out of the total 153 respondents, 84 of them (54.9%) marked "1" on the scale reporting that they were "Not at all Familiar" with Rick Perry. Another 26 respondents (17%) marked "2" on the scale, again indicating an almost complete lack of familiarity with Perry. Just five total respondents (3.3%) marked a "6" or "7" on the scale, which indicated an extreme amount of familiarity with Rick Perry. The total mean of respondents' familiarity with Rick Perry was 2.09 (SD = 1.52). These results will serve the part of my survey where I ask respondents to evaluate their emotions after viewing Perry's advertisement. From the responses concerning respondents' knowledge of Perry it is safe to assume that a majority of my respondents will base their emotional reactions on the message itself and not on any pre-conceived opinions of Governor Perry. Although most respondents reported being unfamiliar with Perry, it is worth examining

the second question concerning respondents' attitudes toward Perry if they are even somewhat familiar with him.

Even though most respondents reported being unfamiliar with Perry, there were 48 respondents—again out of a total 153—who answered the question where they had to rate their opinion of the Texas Governor. Of the 48 who responded, 20 (13%) marked either a “1” or “2” indicating either a great or total lack of favorability toward Rick Perry. Only seven respondents (4.6%) marked even a “5” or “6” on the scale, indicating at least some degree of favorability toward Perry. Of the 48 respondents, 14 (9.2%) marked a “4” indicating a neutral attitude toward Rick Perry. The total mean of respondents' favorability toward Rick Perry before watching his advertisement was 2.98 (SD = 1.44). It is safe to assume based on these findings that the few respondents who were aware of Rick Perry did not view him in a favorable light. Would these attitudes towards Rick Perry change after respondents viewed his advertisement “Strong”? The next paragraph explores this question.

After watching Rick Perry's “Strong” respondents were asked the following question: After viewing his political advertisement, what is your opinion of Governor Perry? Respondents were once again offered a seven-point Likert scale in which to rate their responses (1 = Not at all Favorable; 7 = Very Favorable). Out of a total N of 153, 145 respondents answered the question concerning their opinion of Perry upon viewing “Strong”. The eight missing cases are possibly due to some respondents having difficulty accessing the video of “Strong” via YouTube.com or having a rather slow connection which did not allow them to view parts or all of the video. The total mean of those 145 respondents who did answer the question concerning their opinion of Perry was 3.70 (SD = 2.10). Again, respondents' mean was on the unfavorable side of the Likert scale, but it did approach a more neutral number than the mean of those who rated Perry's

favorability before watching “Strong”. One may gather from these numbers that Perry’s favorability among respondents increased after viewing “Strong”, but it is difficult to come to this conclusion considering nearly 100 more respondents rated Perry’s favorability after viewing “Strong” than did prior to viewing the advertisement. To gauge a more accurate description of what respondents felt about the advertisement and Perry himself, I will spend the next several paragraphs exploring which emotions respondents reported feeling after viewing “Strong” and specific reasons respondents gave for why they believe they experienced these emotions.

To once again explore Research Questions 13 and 14 (which emotions respondents report feeling following the viewing of Rick Perry’s “Strong” and what reasons respondents give for feeling these emotions) I ran frequency analyses to see which of the 25 emotions respondents rated highest after viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong”. Table 12 shows, rated from highest to lowest, the 25 emotions respondents reported following viewing of the Rick Perry advertisement.

Table 12  
Means of respondents’ emotions after viewing “Strong”, in order from largest to smallest mean

Emotion	Mean	Standard Deviation
Surprised	4.05	1.98
Interested	3.63	2.12
Accepting	3.33	2.12
Annoyed	3.25	2.22
Amazed	3.17	2.08
Apprehensive	3.07	2.03
Trusting	3.03	2.07



(Table 12 continued)

Emotion	Mean	Standard Deviation
Admiring	2.97	2.12
Disgusted	2.95	2.15
Anticipating	2.89	1.99
Joyful	2.75	1.92
Vigilant	2.71	1.76
Anxious	2.67	1.83
Serene	2.66	1.81
Bored	2.52	1.69
Angry	2.50	1.89
Pensive	2.26	1.64
Ecstatic	2.21	1.71
Sad	2.19	1.78
Filled w/Loathing	2.14	1.57
Enraged	2.11	1.70
Fearful	1.83	1.35
Grief-Stricken	1.78	1.36
Distracted	1.67	1.24
Terrified	1.52	1.18

Interesting in this frequency analysis is that just two of the original six basic emotions—surprised and disgusted—appeared in this top-ten list. Two more basic emotions, based on Plutchik’s (1980) wheel—trust and anticipation—were two of the most highly rated emotions as well. Perhaps not so surprisingly, at least based on the results from the pilot study, the emotion of fear was one of the lowest rated of all 25 emotions, ( $M = 1.83$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ). Only the emotions of Grief-stricken ( $M = 1.78$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ), Distracted ( $M = 1.67$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ), and Terrified ( $M = 1.52$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) were rated lower than fear by respondents. Even though “fear” and its more extreme version “terrified” rated low with respondents, the less extreme version of fear, “apprehensive”, did rank highly with respondents.

To explore these emotions further and to answer Research Question 14 I had respondents answer open-ended question as to why they felt—if they felt—any of the six basic emotions, plus anxiety. Since just two of the six basic emotions—surprise and disgust—rated in the top ten means as reported by respondents, I will list some of the reasons why respondents reported feeling higher levels of surprise and disgust. First, I will explore the emotion of surprise—the emotion respondents rated experiencing the most following viewing of Rick Perry’s “Strong”. One respondent, a 21-year-old Caucasian woman who identified as both a Republican and a Catholic commented favorably toward Perry, remarking that her surprise (she rated surprise a 4 out of 7) was due to, in her opinion, “[t]here are not many strong conservative politicians like Perry willing to make such statements”. On the liberal to conservative Likert scale, this respondent rated herself a “6”, where 7 = Extremely Conservative.

Another respondent, a 19-year-old Caucasian male who identifies as both Catholic and Republican remarked that he was surprised by “all of it, thats [sic] a bold statement, and he’s not afraid of hiding it”. This respondent rated his surprise at a 4, but he rated his amazement (the

more extreme version of surprise) as a 7. This respondent also rate his political ideology a 6 on the liberal/conservative scale, with 7 = Extremely Conservative.

Perhaps the most supportive response one of the surprised respondents reported about Perry was the following quote from a 19-year-old Caucasian woman who identifies as both a Republican and a Catholic: “I was pleasantly surprised by how straightforward he was about what he wants”. This particular respondent rated herself a 5 on the liberal/conservative scale, where 7 = Extremely Conservative. This respondent marked a 5 for her degree of surprise, but a 7 for her degree of amazement (once again, amazement is the more extreme version of surprise according to Plutchik). The remarks by those who felt surprise, however, were not all skewed positively toward Rick Perry. Respondents described feeling seemingly negative reasons behind their surprise as the following paragraphs will show.

For instance, a 19-year-old African American male who identifies as both a Democrat and a non-denominational Christian wrote that he felt surprise by “[h]ow he [Perry] openly spoke out against gays being in the military in a negative regard on an official campaign advertisement. Shocking.” This respondent rated his level of surprise as a 7 and his political ideology as, surprisingly, a 5 out of 7—indicating a greater degree of conservatism, certainly for one who identifies as a Democrat.

Another respondent, a 21-year-old Caucasian woman who identifies as both a Democrat and a non-denominational Christian wrote the following: “I was surprised that he would talk negatively about soldiers who are helping our country.” This respondent rated her degree of surprise as a 5 out of 7, while she rated her political ideology as neutral, a 4 out of 7 on the liberal/conservative scale.

Finally, two more respondents spoke of their surprise and how it negatively affected their views of Rick Perry and his advertisement. First, a 19-year-old Asian American woman who identified as both an Independent and non-religious summed up her surprise with the following quote: “I just can’t believe someone running for president made such a divisive commercial.” This respondent, who gauged her political ideology at a slightly more conservative 5, rated her level of surprise as a 6 and her degree of amazement a 7. Also, a 21-year-old Caucasian woman who identified as a non-religious Democrat wrote the following comment: “I was very shocked that someone would so bluntly incorporate their religious beliefs into a political advertisement.” This respondent, who rated her political ideology as a 2 (where 1 = Extremely Liberal), gauged her degree of surprise after viewing “Strong” as a 4 out of 7. While the responses for those surprised by the advertisement were mostly skewed against Perry and his beliefs, they did tend to fall along party lines. As in the examples provided, people who were surprised by “Strong” and identified as Republicans tended to view the Perry advertisement as positive, but in a surprising manner. For instance, some self-identified Republicans seemed to be surprised Perry would stick up for what they perceived to be conservative values in such a bold way. Those who were surprised by “Strong” but self-identified as Democrats seemed to be more surprised that a political candidate actually shared Perry’s beliefs and would advertise them to the voting public. There was one other basic emotion that was ranked highly by respondents, that being the emotion of disgust. Perhaps an exploration of the comments made by those respondents who were disgusted by Perry’s advertisement will shed more light on why respondents experienced certain emotions following viewing “Strong”.

The emotion of disgust was the ninth-most highly rated emotion respondents reported feeling after watching Rick Perry’s “Strong”. The following is a brief summary of respondents’

open-ended comments regarding why they felt disgusted after watching Perry's advertisement. One respondent, a 22-year-old Asian American woman who identified as having a mixture of religious views including Protestant, non-denominational Christianity, and no-religion and identified politically as Libertarian wrote that her feeling of disgust following viewing Perry's advertisement stems from the following: "I really hate discrimination and the feeling of religious beliefs being imposed on people (me)". This respondent rated her political ideology as fairly neutral (a 4 out of 7) and her degree of disgust at Perry's advertisement as a 7 out of 7.

To continue, another respondent, when summarizing why she felt a great deal of disgust (a 7 out of 7) after watching Perry's advertisement, offered the following reason: "The hateful speech used to scapegoat marginalized people." This respondent, a 20-year-old African American woman who identified as both a Democrat and a non-denominational Christian, also reported that this advertisement filled her with a great degree of loathing (a 7 out of 7)—loathing being the more extreme version of disgust, according to Plutchik. She also ranked her political ideology as a 3—more on the liberal side of the Likert scale.

While most respondents who claimed to be disgusted by Perry's advertisement were either Democrats or Independents, there was disgust shared by at least one respondent who identified as Republican. This respondent, a 20-year-old Caucasian woman, who identified as Catholic and neutral (4) on the liberal/conservative ideology scale remarked that Perry's advertisement made her feel a high level of disgust (a 6 out of 7) because of "[h]is hate [sic] towards gay people that are trying to serve the country and protect it". While this respondent's level of disgust is high, it would be fair to point out that she framed her response as disgust toward Perry for his critique of the military and not his comments against members of the LGBT community. To summarize Research Question 14, it certainly appears that one's political and

religious standings have an impact on the way respondents viewed Rick Perry's "Strong". A more in-depth analysis is required, however, to see if there are any significant relationships with the political parties and religions respondents identify with and their emotional reactions to Perry's advertisement.

To investigate Research Question 15, I ran a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with political party identification serving as the independent variables and respondents' self-reported levels of the eight basic emotions, each of the eight basic emotion's more and less intense versions—based on Plutchik's model—and, finally, anxiety (a total of 25 emotions). Cronbach's alpha for this set of 25 emotions (Plutchik's wheel plus anxiety) was .767. Upon examining the independent variables, due to only two respondents identifying as supporters of the Green Party, I focused solely on the three most popular political parties: Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. The Box M test for the set of emotions and political party affiliation was significant—even at the more strict .001 level—Box M = 1274.616,  $F = 1.295$  (650, 20870.496),  $p = .000$ . The assumption of equal covariance matrices is therefore violated. As recommended by Allen, Titsworth, and Hunt (2009), one should report Pillai's Trace when the Box M test is significant. The Pillai's Trace for political party affiliation and the new set of emotions did show significant differences: Pillai's trace = .562,  $F = 1.688$  (50, 216),  $p < .05$ . Univariate results were significant for political party affiliation and the following fifteen emotions: Apprehensive,  $F = 4.336$  (2, 131),  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .062$ ; Joyful,  $F = 15.936$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .196$ ; Serene,  $F = 5.260$  (2, 131),  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .074$ ; Ecstatic,  $F = 9.626$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .128$ ; Disgusted,  $F = 15.304$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .189$ ; Bored,  $F = 12.002$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .155$ ; Filled with Loathing,  $F = 6.662$  (2, 131),  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .092$ ; Angry,  $F = 7.253$  (2, 131),  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .100$ ; Annoyed,  $F = 16.506$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .201$ ; Enraged,  $F =$

= 4.788 (2, 131),  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .068$ ; Trusting,  $F = 12.120$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .156$ ; Accepting,  $F = 10.195$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .135$ ; Admiring,  $F = 13.779$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .174$ ; Anticipating,  $F = 9.675$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .129$ ; Interested,  $F = 8.263$  (2, 131),  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .112$ .

Post hoc tests showed significant differences between the three political parties for the following emotions: Republicans felt significantly more joy than did Democrats and Independents. Republicans also claimed feeling more serene following the viewing of Rick Perry's advertisement than did Independents, but there was no significant difference in levels of serenity between Republicans and Democrats. Finally, Republicans claimed to be significantly more ecstatic than did both Democrats and Independents. Suffice it to say, Republicans felt higher levels of the positive emotion of joy and its more and less extreme versions. Republicans also felt significantly greater degrees of trust, acceptance, admiration, anticipation, and interest following viewing Perry's advertisement than both Democrats and Independents.

Just as important as the discovery that Republicans had higher levels of reported joy and the other more positive emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry's "Strong" were the post hoc results of some of the more negative emotions. For instance, post hoc tests revealed that Republicans felt significantly less disgust than did both Democrats and Independents. Republicans also felt significantly less apprehension, annoyance, anger, and boredom than both Democrats and Independents. In addition, Republicans also claimed to be "filled with loathing" to a significantly lesser extent than both Democrats and Independents. Republicans also reported being enraged significantly less than Independents but not significantly less than Democrats, however.

One interesting finding, first and foremost, is that much like in the pilot study, there was not a significant response of fear (nor either terrified or apprehensive) when measured against respondents political parties. There is not a significant number of respondents who view Rick Perry's "Strong" as a fear appeal. In all, much like in the pilot study, Research Question 15 is answered in the affirmative. One's political party does play a significant role in the degree of felt emotion one reports after watching Rick Perry's "Strong".

Next, to explore Research Question 16, I ran a MANOVA with the same set of new emotions as dependent variables with the new independent variable of religion. Respondents were given the choice of the following religions or religious denominations: Protestant, Catholic, Non-Denominational Christian, Jewish, Muslim, No religion, and other. For the sake of brevity I included just the four most commonly selected religions or denominations for this MANOVA. For instance, just one respondent identified as Muslim; two wrote Pentecostal; no one identified as Jewish; and just one person each wrote in Buddhist and Hindu. Due to this lack of response for other religions, I chose to focus on just those who identified as Protestant, Catholic, Non-Denominational, or having no religion (including atheists and agnostics). The following numbers indicated those who both identified with a religion and rated their emotions after watching the Perry advertisement: Protestants,  $N = 29$ ; Catholics,  $N = 62$ ; Non-denominational Christians,  $N = 21$ ; No religion,  $N = 16$ . The results of the MANOVA are analyzed in the following paragraphs.

The Box M test for the new set of emotions and religious affiliation was significant, thus violating the assumption of equal covariance matrices: Box  $M = 680.504$ ,  $F = 1.299$  (325, 9964.965),  $p = .000$ . Once again, based on recommendations from Allen et al. (2009), I will report Pillai's trace since the assumption of homoscedasticity was violated. The result of Pillai's



trace was not significant: Pillai's trace = .678,  $F = 1.191 (75, 306)$ ,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, to answer Research Question 16, no significant differences exist between respondents' religious identifications and the types or degrees of felt emotion they reported following viewing of the Rick Perry advertisement. It appears that in this current study one's religious preference holds no significant influence over how one responds emotionally to Rick Perry's "Strong".

To further analyze both Research Questions 15 and 16 I ran a final MANOVA to test for the relationship between felt emotions and the two independent variables discussed in the preceding paragraphs: political party and religion. The results of the MANOVA for emotions and both political party and religious identification were not significant. The Box M test could not be run due to an error within SPSS, but neither of the multivariate tests for emotion with political party and religious identification were significant: Pillai's trace = 1.351,  $F = 1.092 (150, 564)$ ,  $p > .05$ ; Wilks' Lambda = .207,  $F = 1.090 (150, 529.168)$ ,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, there are no significant differences in respondents' reporting of particular emotions following viewing the Rick Perry advertisement when factored in with both their religious and political affiliations.

## **Discussion**

By looking at the results of all research question I can now better hope to show evidence for spiral of silence theory at work in respondents' reactions to Rick Perry's "Strong". In looking at the answers to Research Questions 11 and 12 in Study II one notices a trend of respondents picking those closest to them, especially mothers, fathers, siblings, close friends, and romantic partners as the relationships they would choose to discuss the often personal and taboo topics of religion, politics, and values. These results do not differ much from results from the pilot study concerning this very question. What is different in Study II is the follow up question concerning degrees of agreement respondents thought they had with their interpersonal

relationships concerning issues of politics, religion, and values. Respondents were under the impression that their close relationships agreed with them concerning issues of religion, politics, and values. Even the relationships respondents choose to enter—romantic partnerships and close friendships—rated highly in means of perceived agreement. Indeed, noticeable in the results is that “close friends” finished second only to “mothers” in respondents’ rankings of relationships they felt a great degree of agreement with on values. Couple these responses about relationships and perceived agreement with the fact that much of the emotions research from Study II in Chapter IV showed that respondents’ reported felt emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry’s “Strong” tended to coincide with their group affiliation, in this case political party affiliation. Republicans tended to feel significantly greater degrees of positive emotions and significantly lesser degrees of negative emotions than Democrats or Independents. Taking these results into consideration, there certainly seems to be more support for a spiral of silence framework than the results of Chapter III or the pilot study of Chapter IV showed. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported based on the results from Chapter IV, Study II.

To summarize Chapter IV and the three principles that guided this second study, the results of numerous frequency analyses and MANOVAs indicate the following. First, the emotion of fear continues to be mislabeled. Neither respondents in the pilot study nor respondents in Study II rated fear as an emotion they felt to any great extent following the viewing of Rick Perry’s “Strong”. The second guiding principle is that researchers are studying the wrong emotions in relation to political advertisements. In the pilot study respondents reported feeling a significant amount of disgust and, in some cases, anger. In Study II respondents reported feeling disgust, again, but also surprise after viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong”. Perhaps future studies need to focus more on why respondents might be disgusted

with certain political advertisements, and, to a lesser extent, why respondents feel anger or surprise toward messages received in these advertisements. Finally, the third guiding principle leads to the notion that respondents' behaviors and attitudes toward political advertisements are based more in our social networks than actually biological responses. Humans, as discussed in spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1993) tend to fear social isolation so they may refuse to challenge popular opinion, especially if that opinion is espoused by someone they greatly admire. In short, humans would rather risk lying about their beliefs than risk disagreeing with a respected interpersonal partner and possibly damage or lose that relationship. In the final chapter I will elaborate more on not just these guiding principles but also the research questions posed and answered in previous chapters.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Research in emotional responses to stimuli, namely those dealing with fear and political responses, is moving away from a strict formula of studying how or if a political stimulus causes or influences a certain reaction in a potential voter. Instead, current research in communication and political science is focusing on trait-based emotional dispositions, such as a genetic fear-based disposition, and how those inherited traits, along with particular external stimuli, cause our attitudes of and behaviors towards politicians and their supporters, those with whom potential voters both agree and disagree (Hatemi, McDermott, Eaves, Kendler, & Neale, 2013). In other words, the entities individuals choose to identify with politically—be they specific politicians or entire political parties—may be based in part on biology but as much or more so in socialization, as some of the results from this study examined. Recent literature is focused on how both nature and nurture play a role in our affiliations, attitudes, and actions (LeDoux, 1996, 2012; Cohen, 2003; Hatemi, et al., 2013).

One finding from this dissertation is that while I believe the study of emotion is important, researchers are studying the wrong emotions—or researchers are studying too few emotions—when it comes to exploring citizens' approaches to discussing politics and acting on their political beliefs. While the study of fear itself is still a noble pursuit, perhaps social scientists need to be looking more at other emotions, like anger, joy, or, especially, disgust. Also, researchers need to put more focus on what specifically about a stimulus (the target, the message-sender, etc.) causes respondents to feel certain emotions.

Results from Chapter III showed that Republicans felt higher levels of general happiness than Democrats or Independents; although, Independents felt significantly higher levels of happiness than Democrats. Results from the pilot study in Chapter IV indicated that Republicans

felt significantly less disgust upon viewing the Rick Perry advertisement “Strong” than did Democrats or Independents. Study II results from Chapter IV showed that Republicans tended to feel a significantly higher degree of positive emotions after watching “Strong” than did both Democrats and Independents (emotions such as joy, ecstasy, trust, admiration, and interest, to name a few). Based on findings from Chapters III and IV there is a significant emotional difference between Republicans and followers of other political parties, namely those who identify as Democrats and Independents. The following tables show summaries from interesting and significant findings from Chapter IV concerning Research Question 15 of Study II. Since fear is being mislabeled, which emotions do respondents actually feel upon viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong” when their political party identification is factored in? The answer is that respondents report feeling several emotions, but fear is not one that is frequently mentioned. In addition, one’s political affiliation seems to greatly influence the emotions one feels in response to “Strong”.

Table 13  
Significant means differences of positive emotions between self-identified Republicans, Democrats, and Independents after viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong”.\*

Emotion	M-Republicans	M-Democrats	M-Independents	Significant Difference
Joy	3.56	2.09	1.66	R > D, I
Ecstasy	2.82	1.68	1.52	R > D, I
Serene	3.04	2.41	1.97	R > D, I
Trust	3.86	2.24	2.21	R > D, I
Acceptance	4.08	2.62	2.41	R > D, I
Admiration	3.83	2.06	2.07	R > D, I
Interest	4.34	3.06	2.80	R > D, I

(Table 13  
Continued)

Emotion	M-Republicans	M-Democrats	M-Independents	Significant Difference
Anticipation	3.58	2.09	2.24	R > D, I
Amazed	3.56	2.41	2.79	R > D only

\*All differences significant at the .05 level.

In addition to the significant results based on positive emotions and political party identification, there were also several significant findings based on party affiliation and emotions that are often classified as negative or sometimes maladaptive. Table 14 shows findings that indicate Republicans are significantly less likely than Democrats and Independents to feel these negative emotions following viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong”.

Table 14  
Significant means differences of negative emotions between self-identified Republicans, Democrats, and Independents after viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong”.\*

Emotion	M-Republicans	M-Democrats	M-Independents	Significant Difference
Apprehensive	2.59	3.79	3.17	R < D only
Sad	1.90	2.26	2.72	R < I only
Disgusted	2.06	3.59	4.17	R < D, I
Bored	1.92	2.97	3.45	R < D, I
Filled with Loathing	1.68	2.50	2.72	R < D, I
Angry	1.93	2.88	3.31	R < D, I
Annoyed	2.28	4.18	4.38	R < D, I
Enraged	1.69	2.32	2.76	R < I only

\*All differences significant at the .05 level.

One explanation for the link between positive emotions and an affiliation with the Republicans is that wealthier people in the United States tend to vote Republican (Censky, 2012); although, that trend was slightly altered in the 2008 elections when a greater number than usual of those earning \$250,000 or more voted for Barack Obama (Schneiderman, 2008). Perhaps the Republicans' greater amount of overall happiness can be explained by the average wealth he or she has amassed. Yet, after a certain threshold there seems to be no association between income and happiness. According to Kahneman and Deaton (2010), happiness increases when people make at least \$75,000. The lower a person's annual income falls below that benchmark, the unhappier he or she feels. But no matter how much more than \$75,000 that people make, they don't report any greater degree of happiness. Similarly, Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) place an emphasis on the genetic basis for happiness and found that external conditions do little to change one's level of happiness.

In addition to wealth, why else would Republicans report significantly more happiness and significantly less anger and disgust than do Democrats and members of other political parties? Additional reasons for this phenomenon need to be explored. First, these Republicans could be social conservatives who truly do share Rick Perry's dire prediction of an American life where Christians are persecuted for prayer and those in the LGBT community are given "special" rights. Another explanation is that some Republicans may just be fiscal conservatives who support Perry for financial reasons only. Perhaps Republicans in the Chapter IV surveys look at Perry's social messages as superfluous to his fiscal message and are, therefore, less interested in his social views in general or simply view the attacks on LGBT members as "politics as usual" (Margolis & Resnick, 2000)—just a game politicians need to play in order to get elected.

Political party affiliation certainly plays an important role in my study of felt emotions following viewing of the Rick Perry advertisement. These differences help lend more support to using spiral of silence theory as a framework for this dissertation. Respondents seem to be wary of straying from expressing viewpoints that clash with the platform issues of their respective political parties. Respondents also seem more comfortable talking with their close relatives and friends about political and religious issues, while also reporting that they believe these same relationships tend to agree with them on these sometimes controversial issues of religion and politics. Perhaps, as stated earlier, the real fear experienced by respondents in a study like this is the fear of saying something that may alienate one from his or her primary social group.

Again, Republicans and Democrats seem diametrically opposed emotionally when it comes to the feelings of anger and disgust (but not fear) after watching Perry's "Strong". Whereas political party identification produced significant results for anger and disgust, respondents' religious identification produced significant—but telling—results for only the emotion of disgust in the pilot study of Chapter IV but no significant results in Study II. Respondents from the pilot study who identified as either Protestant or Catholic (the two main denominations of Christianity in the United States) felt significantly less disgust after watching the Rick Perry political advertisement when compared with those respondents who identified with another religion that was not Catholic or Protestant, or those who identified as having no religion. Perhaps looking at disgust, or any other emotion, through the lens of religious affiliation is now of lesser importance based on the non-significant results from Study II of Chapter IV on felt emotions and religious and religious denomination identification. These findings, however, do not diminish the need to study disgust more in emotions and political



studies. Here, again, is a table summary of the salient research questions and hypotheses from Study II of this dissertation.

Table 15  
Summary of Hypothesis and Research Questions from Study II

<u>Hypothesis/Research Question</u>	<u>Supported/Not Supported/Answered</u>	<u>Reasons for Support</u>
<p>H3: Respondents adhere to political and philosophical beliefs based mainly on the fear of being socially isolated from their interpersonal relationships, not as a result of actually fearing the outcomes of political messages and advertisements.</p>	<p>Partially Supported</p>	<p>Respondents generally chose their close relatives and friends to discuss taboo issues like politics, religion, and values with (see summary of RQ 12 below). Also, t tests were run for the variable of relationship respondents felt comfortable discussing politics, religion, and values with, and the degree to which respondents felt these relationships agreed with them on these three topics.</p> <p>T tests for choice of relationship and degree of agreement on politics were significant for the following relationships: fathers, siblings, romantic partners, and close friends.</p> <p>T tests for choice of relationship and degree of agreement on religion were significant for all relationships except siblings.</p> <p>Finally, t tests for choice of relationship and degree of agreement on values were significant for all eight relationships studied in this dissertation.</p>
<p>RQ11: With whom would respondents report feeling most comfortable discussing political issues?</p>	<p>Answered in rank order</p>	<p>Frequency analysis shows the following relationships ranked from most to least comfortable: Close Friends (64.1%); Mothers (60.1%); Fathers (58.8%); Siblings (39.9%); Romantic Partners (32.7%); Acquaintances (19%); Coworkers (16.3%); Strangers (12.4%).</p>

(Table 15 Continued) <u>Hypothesis/Research Question</u>	<u>Supported/Not Supported/Answered</u>	<u>Reasons for Support</u>
RQ11: With whom would respondents report feeling most comfortable discussing religious issues?	Answered in rank order	Frequency analysis shows the following relationships ranked from most to least comfortable: Mothers (73.2%); Close Friends (58.2%); Romantic Partners (47.1%); Fathers (45.8%); Siblings (45.8%); Acquaintances (14.4%); Strangers (12.4%); Coworkers (11.1%).
RQ11: With whom would respondents report feeling most comfortable discussing their values?	Answered in rank order	Frequency analysis shows the following relationships ranked from most to least comfortable: Close Friends (78.4%); Mothers (74.5%); Romantic Partners (62.1%); Siblings (55.6%); Fathers (52.3%); Acquaintances (18.3%); Coworkers (15.7%); Strangers (12.4%).
RQ12: Do respondents believe that those with whom they feel comfortable discussing politics actually agree with them on this issue?	Means listed in rank order from highest to lowest.	Means of respondents' perception of agreement on politics: Mothers (M = 4.84); Fathers (4.78); Siblings (4.66); Close Friends (4.64); Romantic Partners (4.52); Acquaintances (3.93); Coworkers (3.79); Strangers (3.49).
RQ12: Do respondents believe that those with whom they feel comfortable discussing religion actually agree with them on this issue?	Means listed in rank order from highest to lowest.	Means of respondents' perception of agreement on religion: Mothers (M = 5.37); Siblings (5.24); Romantic Partners (5.07); Fathers (4.97); Close Friends (4.92); Acquaintances (4.10); Coworkers (3.79); Strangers (3.45).
RQ12: Do respondents believe that those with whom they feel comfortable discussing their values actually agree with them on this issue?	Means listed in rank order from highest to lowest.	Means of respondents' perception of agreement on values: Mothers (M = 5.76); Close Friends (5.68); Fathers (5.58); Romantic Partners (5.57); Siblings (5.54); Acquaintances (4.57); Coworkers (4.28); Strangers (3.81).
RQ13: What emotions will respondents report feeling following viewing of Rick Perry's "Strong"?	Respondents gauged their levels of 25 emotions after viewing Rick Perry's "Strong".	The means of the top ten most frequently reported emotions are as follows. (For a full list see Table 12 in Chapter IV.): Surprised (M = 4.05); Interested (3.63); Accepting (3.33); Annoyed (3.25); Amazed (3.17); Apprehensive (3.07); Trusting (3.03); Admiring (2.97); Disgusted (2.95); Anticipating (2.89).

(Table 15 Continued) <u>Hypothesis/Research Question</u>	<u>Supported/Not Supported/Answered</u>	<u>Reasons for Support</u>
RQ14: What reasons will respondents give for feeling certain emotions?	Respondents wrote brief explanations as to why they felt certain emotions.	See pages 99 – 103 for a full summary of respondents’ open ended remarks to emotions.
RQ15: Does one’s political party affiliation influence self-reported felt emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry’s “Strong”?	Answered in the affirmative.	Pillai’s Trace for political party affiliation and the set of emotions did show significant differences: Pillai’s trace = .562, $F = 1.688$ (50, 216), $p < .05$ . Univariate results were significant for political party affiliation and the following 15 emotions: Apprehensive, Joyful, Serene, Ecstatic, Disgusted, Bored, Filled with Loathing, Angry, Annoyed, Enraged, Trusting, Accepting; Admiring, Anticipating, Interested.
RQ16: Does one’s religious/religious denomination affiliation influence self-reported felt emotions following the viewing of Rick Perry’s “Strong”?	Answered in the negative.	The result of Pillai’s trace was not significant: Pillai’s trace = .678, $F = 1.191$ (75, 306), $p > .05$ . No significant relationships exist between religious affiliation and respondents’ felt emotions following viewing Rick Perry’s “Strong”.

If researchers need to study disgust and surprise more, why do social scientists often look to fear, though, when American voting behaviors are studied? While a portion of the blame surely lies with politicians and media, some fault may lie with potential voters as well. Due to media and political forces’ constant reminders that the United States is a country whose citizens often react or perform particular behaviors (such as voting) based on fear, the average American may just assume that fear is the emotion they experience after watching a particular political stimulus, such as the Rick Perry advertisement “Strong”. Simply put, American viewers of political advertisements may be mislabeling their own emotions due to the constant reminders from external forces that they are part of a fearful nation. What the respondents in my surveys showed is that when given several emotions to choose from when labeling their experiences they are more likely to select emotions other than fear in order to describe their reactions to political

advertisements such as Perry's. Again, to look back again at Research Questions 13 and 14 from Chapter IV, Study II respondents did not rate fear highly as an emotion they felt after watching Rick Perry's "Strong". Simple frequency analyses from Study II showed that respondents reported higher means of surprise, interest, acceptance, annoyance, and amazement in response to Rick Perry's "Strong". Disgust, the emotion that seems to have emerged as the one basic emotion to devote future research to, finished in the top ten of most highly rated emotions. Fear ranked toward the bottom of the set of 25 emotions.

What may be of greater importance, however, than studying just which emotion or emotions respondents self-identify with after viewing political advertisements, could be the study of excitation and exposure to these particular advertisements. Perhaps the felt emotion one reports has less of an influence on respondents' reactions than the amount of time one subjects himself or herself to viewing emotionally-charging political advertisements. Exposure to political advertisements is not only accidental. Before the advent of the Internet the American voter would be bombarded with political advertisements either on television or radio—and often with more frequency as the date of an election drew nearer. This exposure, however, was accidental. Television and radio audiences did not choose when a particular political advertisement would air. The Internet, however, has changed the viewing of political advertisements into a purposeful endeavor. With sites like YouTube.com, viewers can now choose to view an advertisement whenever they want, or as many times as they want.

While taking into consideration viewer choice when it comes to the consumption of political advertisements and looking back at prevailing theories of emotions, one can see a role for excitation transfer theory in any future study of political advertisements and the types and degrees of felt emotions. In Study II of Chapter IV I asked respondents a question concerning

their prior knowledge of and current attitude toward Governor Rick Perry. Out of the 153 respondents, a vast majority indicated they were unfamiliar with the Governor. Those respondents who marked a 1 or 2 on the scale of familiarity toward Rick Perry (with 1 = Completely Unfamiliar) totaled 119 (71.9%). From these numbers it is safe to assume that a majority of respondents and their reactions to “Strong” were not influenced by any previous biases toward Governor Perry. Any emotion reported by my respondents should have been based solely on stimuli received from the actual advertisement. There are other aspects of excitation transfer theory that deserve study in future research, however.

One of the factors involved in Zillmann’s excitation transfer theory is time and, particularly, what Zillmann calls “seriation” (Bryant & Miron, 2003, p. 38). Seriation involves the “item order or position in the series” (Bryant & Miron, 2003, p. 38) of potential emotionally-charging stimuli. In other words, future experiments could involve showing respondents several political advertisements—some from politicians or representatives of political parties that respondents have indicated they agree with on preliminary questionnaires. Another aspect of seriation is the space between respondents’ viewings of emotionally-charged stimuli. Future experiments should control for the lapse of time between viewing stimuli, in this case political advertisements. Respondents who are given little time between viewing emotionally-charged political advertisements may very well experience more residual negative (or positive) emotions than those respondents who are given more time between watching political advertisements and, perhaps, more time for their original excitation to dissipate.

With this dissertation I believe I have laid the groundwork for future studies of how our group affiliations and emotional responses can influence our communication choices and styles with those who are similar to or, more importantly, different from us—namely members of

particular social out-groups: those of different races, ethnicities, and genders, in addition to those who espouse different political and religious ideologies. There are limitations to my study, however, as I will address in the next section.

### **Limitations**

This study is not without its limitations. First, a larger sample size would greatly benefit both the pilot study and even the larger Study II. The surveys were given as a convenience sample to communication studies undergraduates looking for research participation credit. The fact that these surveys were responded to by undergraduates only also limits responses from the standpoint of experience with politics and voting. Many of the respondents were probably too young to vote in the last presidential election. Some have never voted in any election, national or local. Both a larger sample size and a group of respondents whose mean age is a bit older would greatly benefit future results related to emotions and political advertisements.

Another limitation to this study was the fact that the pilot study was conducted over a period of two class sessions on two different days. This had an effect on limiting the sample size. Unfortunately, some respondents who took part in the first part of the pilot study did not return for the second day of the study; the second day was, perhaps, the most important part of the study since it was on that day that I showed the respondents Rick Perry's "Strong" video and asked them to gauge their emotions upon viewing that political advertisement. As a result, there are respondents in my pilot study data set who answered all the important questions concerning demographic information (political party identification, religious affiliation, interpersonal relationships with whom they discuss politics, etc.) on the first day of the study but failed to arrive for the second day to view the Rick Perry advertisement and record their emotional responses. Since many of my statistical analyses relied on searching for relationships involving

the basic felt emotions of the respondents, the lack of attendance on the second day of the study limited some of my results. This problem was rectified in Study II by having respondents complete the survey and watch the video at the same time.

Further, another limitation to this dissertation is that I did not get a baseline emotional level for respondents. There were no tools for measuring baseline pulse or heart-rate levels at my disposal. Therefore, it is impossible to know for sure if those who remarked that the Perry advertisement made them angry, fearful, disgusted, or any of the other basic emotions may have registered higher levels of those emotions based not solely on Rick Perry's "Strong" but on residual emotion from some earlier emotionally-charged encounter or situation. Further studies should incorporate a pre-test of baseline emotions before subjecting respondents to a political advertisement.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, my future research, especially as it relates to this project, must focus on the emotion of disgust. One of my hypotheses posited how I felt Rick Perry's "Strong" would elicit feelings of fear in respondents because I was framing Perry's advertisement using Witte's (1996) definition of a fear appeal—a message that contains "a personally relevant and significant threat" (p. 114). Respondents did not report feeling significant amounts of fear after viewing "Strong". While this was surprising, what struck me even more was the amount of disgust respondents reported feeling after viewing Governor Perry's advertisement. Disgust is a basic emotion that has not received as much scholarly examination as some of the more commonly studied emotions such as fear and anger. Any future research I do involving disgust must continue to ask exactly what it is respondents are disgusted by. While respondents in Study II of Chapter IV provided brief explanations as to what about "Strong" made them disgusted, further work on

“Strong” and other political advertisements should be done in order to gain an even more thorough understanding of why respondents are disgusted with “Strong” or any other advertisement. Although this dissertation serves as an initial foray into emotional responses concerning current political advertisements, questions still remain as to why respondents react the way they do toward these advertisements and how our communication with those closest to us can either alleviate or flame the emotional responses that sometimes feed our biases toward certain politicians and political issues.



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APPENDIX A: PILOT STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions for Chapter IV Concerning Demographics, Party Affiliation, and Emotion

1. Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ethnicity: European American/Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_  
Black/African American \_\_\_\_\_  
Latino(a) \_\_\_\_\_  
Asian/Asian American \_\_\_\_\_  
Middle Eastern \_\_\_\_\_  
Asian/Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. Level of Education: Some High School \_\_\_\_\_  
High School Diploma/Equivalent degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Some College \_\_\_\_\_  
Associates Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Bachelor's Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Post-Bachelor's Work \_\_\_\_\_
5. How often do you vote?  
Never \_\_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_\_ Occasionally \_\_\_\_\_ All the time \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which political party do you most identify with?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Republican  
\_\_\_\_\_ Democrat  
\_\_\_\_\_ Independent  
\_\_\_\_\_ Green  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify)



7. What is your religious preference?

\_\_\_\_\_ Protestant (Including Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Catholic

\_\_\_\_\_ Another Christian Denomination

\_\_\_\_\_ Jewish

\_\_\_\_\_ Muslim

\_\_\_\_\_ Some other religion (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ No religion (includes Atheists and Agnostics)

8. How would you rate your overall strength of belief in your religion?

\_\_\_\_\_ Strong                      \_\_\_\_\_ No religion

\_\_\_\_\_ Not very strong                      \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat strong

9. Do you consider yourself very spiritual, moderately spiritual, slightly spiritual, or not at all spiritual?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very spiritual

\_\_\_\_\_ Moderately spiritual

\_\_\_\_\_ Slightly spiritual

\_\_\_\_\_ Not at all spiritual

10. How important is religion in your daily life?

\_\_\_\_\_ Extremely important

\_\_\_\_\_ Very important

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat important

\_\_\_\_\_ Not at all important

11. How often do you talk about politics with your family and close friends?

\_\_\_\_\_ Roughly Daily

\_\_\_\_\_ Roughly Weekly

\_\_\_\_\_ Roughly Monthly

\_\_\_\_\_ Seldom

\_\_\_\_\_ Never

12. With whom do you feel most comfortable discussing political issues?

\_\_\_\_\_ Mother

\_\_\_\_\_ Father

\_\_\_\_\_ Siblings

\_\_\_\_\_ Romantic Partner

\_\_\_\_\_ Close Friends

\_\_\_\_\_ Acquaintances

\_\_\_\_\_ Coworkers

\_\_\_\_\_ Strangers

13. Are you married, living with a partner, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?

\_\_\_\_\_ Married

\_\_\_\_\_ Living with partner (Cohabiting)

\_\_\_\_\_ Widowed

\_\_\_\_\_ Divorced

\_\_\_\_\_ Separated

\_\_\_\_\_ Never married

14. Please rate your political ideology on the following scale from politically liberal to conservative, with 1 being the most liberal, 7 being the most conservative, and 4 being moderate.

←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Liberal

Conservative

15. After watching this political advertisement, please circle the degree to which you feel each emotion with “1” being the minimum amount and “7” being the maximum amount of each emotion.

Not at all Fearful ←-----→ Fearful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Angry ←-----→ Angry

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Happy ←-----→ Sad

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Disgusted ←-----→ Disgusted

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Surprised ←-----→ Surprised

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Anxious ←-----→ Anxious

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

APPENDIX B: STUDY II QUESTIONNAIRE

**PART I**

1. Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age \_\_\_\_\_

3. Race/Ethnicity (You may check more than one):

Caucasian/European American \_\_\_\_\_

Black/African American \_\_\_\_\_

Latino(a) \_\_\_\_\_

Asian/Asian American \_\_\_\_\_

Middle Eastern \_\_\_\_\_

Asian/Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Year in college:

Freshman \_\_\_\_\_

Sophomore \_\_\_\_\_

Junior \_\_\_\_\_

Senior \_\_\_\_\_

5. Which of the following best describes your relationship situation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Married

\_\_\_\_\_ Living with partner (Cohabiting)

\_\_\_\_\_ Widowed

\_\_\_\_\_ Divorced

\_\_\_\_\_ Separated

\_\_\_\_\_ Never married

6. How often do you vote? (Please mark the number that most closely corresponds to your answer. For instance, if you vote in every election, mark "7". If you vote in most elections, mark "5" or "6". If you rarely vote, mark "2" or "3". If you never vote, mark "1".)

Never ←-----→ All the time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. Which political party do you most identify with (check one)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Republican

\_\_\_\_\_ Democrat

\_\_\_\_\_ Independent

\_\_\_\_\_ Green

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify)

8. Please rate your political ideology on the following scale from politically liberal to conservative, with 1 being the most liberal, 7 being the most conservative, and 4 being moderate. (Mark the corresponding number.)

←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely Liberal

Extremely Conservative

9. Which is your religious preference?

\_\_\_\_\_ Protestant (Including Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Catholic

\_\_\_\_\_ Non-Denominational Christian

\_\_\_\_\_ Jewish

\_\_\_\_\_ Muslim

\_\_\_\_\_ Some other religion (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ No religion (includes Atheists and Agnostics)

10. How would you rate your overall strength of belief in your religion? (Mark the corresponding number).

Very Weak ←-----→ Very Strong  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. How would you rate your level of spirituality? (Mark the corresponding number.)

Not at all spiritual ←-----→ Very spiritual  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. How important is religion in your daily life? (Mark the corresponding number.)

Not at all important ←-----→ Extremely important  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. How often do you talk about politics with your family and friends? (Mark the corresponding number.)

Never ←-----→ All the time  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. With whom do you feel most comfortable discussing political issues?

- \_\_\_\_\_Mother
- \_\_\_\_\_Father
- \_\_\_\_\_Siblings
- \_\_\_\_\_Romantic Partner
- \_\_\_\_\_Close Friends
- \_\_\_\_\_Acquaintances
- \_\_\_\_\_Coworkers
- \_\_\_\_\_Strangers

15. To what degree do you believe the following people agree or disagree with you concerning politics? (Skip any questions that pertain to relationships you are not involved in: e.g., skip the third part of this questions if you have no siblings.)

Mother: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Father: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Siblings: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Romantic Partner: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Close Friends: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Acquaintances: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Coworkers: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Strangers: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

16. With whom do you feel most comfortable discussing religious issues?

- \_\_\_\_\_Mother
- \_\_\_\_\_Father
- \_\_\_\_\_Siblings
- \_\_\_\_\_Romantic Partner
- \_\_\_\_\_Close Friends
- \_\_\_\_\_Acquaintances
- \_\_\_\_\_Coworkers
- \_\_\_\_\_Strangers

17. To what degree do you believe the following people agree or disagree with you concerning religion?

Mother: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

Father: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

Siblings: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

Romantic Partner: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree Completely Agree

Close Friends: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree Completely Agree



Acquaintances: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Coworkers: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Strangers: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

18. With whom do you feel most comfortable discussing issues regarding your values?

\_\_\_\_\_Mother

\_\_\_\_\_Father

\_\_\_\_\_Siblings

\_\_\_\_\_Romantic Partner

\_\_\_\_\_Close Friends

\_\_\_\_\_Acquaintances

\_\_\_\_\_Coworkers

\_\_\_\_\_Strangers

19. To what degree do you believe the following people agree or disagree with you concerning values?

Mother: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Father: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Siblings: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Romantic Partner: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Close Friends: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Acquaintances: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Coworkers: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

Strangers: ←-----→

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely Disagree

Completely Agree

20. How familiar are you with Texas Governor Rick Perry?

Not at all Familiar ←-----→ Very Familiar  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. If you are familiar with Texas Governor Rick Perry what is your opinion of him (If you are unfamiliar with Governor Perry, skip question)?

Not at all Favorable ←-----→ Very Favorable  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

[SHOW VIDEO]

**PART II**

22. After viewing this political advertisement, what is your opinion of Governor Rick Perry?

Unfavorable ←-----→ Favorable  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

23. After watching Rick Perry's political advertisement, please mark the number that corresponds to the degree to which you feel each emotion. The number "1" corresponds with the lack of a particular emotion and the number "7" corresponds with the extreme amount of a particular emotion. Mark "4" if you feel a moderate amount of a particular emotion.

Not at all Fearful ←-----→ Fearful  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Apprehensive ←-----→ Apprehensive  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Terrified ←-----→ Terrified  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Sad ←-----→ Sad  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Pensive ←-----→ Pensive  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Grief-stricken ←-----→ Grief-stricken  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Joyful ←-----→ Joyful  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Serene ←-----→ Serene  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Ecstatic ←-----→ Ecstatic  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Disgusted ←-----→ Disgusted  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Bored ←-----→ Bored  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all filled with Loathing ←-----→ Filled with Loathing  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Angry ←-----→ Angry  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Annoyed ←-----→ Annoyed  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Enraged ←-----→ Enraged  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Trusting ←-----→ Trusting  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Accepting ←-----→ Accepting  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Admiring ←-----→ Admiring  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Anticipating ←-----→ Anticipating  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Interested ←-----→ Interested  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Vigilant ←-----→ Vigilant  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Surprised ←-----→ Surprised  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Distracted ←-----→ Distracted  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Amazed ←-----→ Amazed  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all Anxious ←-----→ Anxious  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**PART III**

**In the following section write a brief statement as to why Rick Perry’s advertisement made you feel a particular emotion. If Perry’s advertisement did not make you feel any or all of these emotions, leave the question(s) blank.**

24. What, if anything, about Rick Perry’s advertisement made you feel fear?

25. What, if anything, about Rick Perry’s advertisement made you feel anger?

26. What, if anything, about Rick Perry's advertisement made you feel disgust?

27. What, if anything, about Rick Perry's advertisement made you feel sadness?

28. What, if anything, about Rick Perry's advertisement made you feel happiness/joy?

29. What, if anything, about Rick Perry's advertisement made you feel surprise?

30. What, if anything, about Rick Perry's advertisement made you feel anxious?

**PART IV**

31. Who do you most often talk to when you feel fear?

- Mother
- Father
- Siblings
- Romantic Partner
- Close Friends
- Acquaintances
- Coworkers
- Strangers
- I don't discuss this emotion with anyone

32. Who do you most often talk to when you feel anger?

- Mother
- Father
- Siblings
- Romantic Partner
- Close Friends
- Acquaintances
- Coworkers
- Strangers
- I don't discuss this emotion with anyone

33. Who do you most often talk to when you feel disgust?

\_\_\_\_\_Mother

\_\_\_\_\_Father

\_\_\_\_\_Siblings

\_\_\_\_\_Romantic Partner

\_\_\_\_\_Close Friends

\_\_\_\_\_Acquaintances

\_\_\_\_\_Coworkers

\_\_\_\_\_Strangers

\_\_\_\_\_ I don't discuss this emotion with anyone

34. Who do you most often talk to when you feel joy/happiness?

\_\_\_\_\_Mother

\_\_\_\_\_Father

\_\_\_\_\_Siblings

\_\_\_\_\_Romantic Partner

\_\_\_\_\_Close Friends

\_\_\_\_\_Acquaintances

\_\_\_\_\_Coworkers

\_\_\_\_\_Strangers

\_\_\_\_\_ I don't discuss this emotion with anyone



35. Who do you most often talk to when you feel sadness?

\_\_\_\_\_Mother

\_\_\_\_\_Father

\_\_\_\_\_Siblings

\_\_\_\_\_Romantic Partner

\_\_\_\_\_Close Friends

\_\_\_\_\_Acquaintances

\_\_\_\_\_Coworkers

\_\_\_\_\_Strangers

\_\_\_\_\_ I don't discuss this emotion with anyone

36. Who do you most often talk to when you feel surprise?

\_\_\_\_\_Mother

\_\_\_\_\_Father

\_\_\_\_\_Siblings

\_\_\_\_\_Romantic Partner

\_\_\_\_\_Close Friends

\_\_\_\_\_Acquaintances

\_\_\_\_\_Coworkers

\_\_\_\_\_Strangers

\_\_\_\_\_ I don't discuss this emotion with anyone

37. Who do you most often talk to when you feel anxious?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Mother
- \_\_\_\_\_ Father
- \_\_\_\_\_ Siblings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Romantic Partner
- \_\_\_\_\_ Close Friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ Acquaintances
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coworkers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Strangers
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't discuss this emotion with anyone

**PART V**

38. Which social media sites do you participate in (Mark all that apply)?

- Facebook \_\_\_\_\_
- Twitter \_\_\_\_\_
- Tumblr \_\_\_\_\_
- Instagram \_\_\_\_\_
- Myspace \_\_\_\_\_
- Another social media site (please list) \_\_\_\_\_
- I do not participate in any social media sites \_\_\_\_\_

39. I use my favorite social media site(s) for political and/or religious discussions with

- People I agree with \_\_\_\_\_
- People I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_
- People I both agree and disagree with \_\_\_\_\_
- I do not use social media sites for political and/or religious discussions \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL

### Consent Form

Dear participants,

Researchers at Louisiana State University are conducting a survey to identify links between political and religious identification and emotional responses to political advertisements. This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

1. Study Title: The Twin Taboos Of Discussing Religion and Politics: A Study of Six “Basic” Emotions and Interpersonal Relationships in Response to Rick Perry’s “Strong”.
2. Performance Site: Louisiana State University, Coates Hall, Department of Communication Studies, Room B-17.
3. Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions about this study:  
M-F, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Michael F. Rold, 812-760-8033
4. Purpose of this study: This is part two of a study to determine a link between political party and religious identifications and degrees of felt emotion following the viewing of a political advertisement.
5. Subject inclusion: LSU undergraduate students enrolled in communication studies courses.
6. Number of subjects: Approximately 150.
7. Study Procedures: This study will consist of a 37-question survey. Respondents will fill out an anonymous survey where they will answer simple demographic questions concerning age, race/ethnicity, gender, political affiliation and religious identification. After answering the first set of questions, respondents will then watch the political advertisement entitled “Strong” from Governor Rick Perry of Texas. After watching the advertisement the respondents will rate their experience of the video based on 25 emotions scales; for instance, the respondents will gauge whether the advertisement caused them to feel a great degree of fear or no fear at all. Finally, respondents will answer open-ended questions asking them what, if anything, caused them to feel a particular emotion following the viewing of the advertisement and with whom they might discuss these advertisements.
8. Benefits: Research will be used to determine how a politician might manipulate the emotions of the voting public to the politician’s benefit.
9. Risks: The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedure for which having signed consent is normally required.
10. Right to refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

12. "I understand this study and may direct questions regarding its specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692, [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu), [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb). By clicking on "next", I agree to participate in this study."

**STUDY EXEMPTED BY:**

Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman  
Institutional Review Board  
Louisiana State University  
130 David Boyd Hall  
225-578-8692 / [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)

Exemption Expires: 2/10/2017

## VITA

Michael Rold came to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge via a circuitous route that saw him born in Kentucky and raised in Indiana, while spending parts of his childhood in various coastal towns in California and Oregon. In his early twenties, Mr. Rold decided to move to Boston, Massachusetts, to pursue a master's in journalism at Emerson College. It was after earning his master's and briefly trying to make a living as a journalist in Boston that Mr. Rold made the egregious mistake of taking a job simply for the sake of money—toiling for two years in the insurance industry back in Indiana. As this brief foray into the insurance world was turning late-twenties-Michael prematurely gray, he decided to start teaching speech and interpersonal communication classes at a local community college. It was while educating college students that Mr. Rold developed his own personal teaching style that has often resulted in excellent class evaluations and, perhaps the greatest reward of all, numerous students approaching him—sometimes months if not years after the end of a semester—to inform him of how his class helped them gain confidence in speaking or the necessary communication skills to improve the interpersonal relationships in their lives. Mr. Rold hopes to start a career in academia that will allow him to continue to develop his teaching skills while at the same time exploring those taboo topics—such as religion and politics—that often times end interpersonal conversations before they truly begin.