COME A LITTLE CLOSER:

EXAMINING SPILLOVER PRIMING EFFECTS FROM A NETWORK PERSPECTIVE

David Thomas Morin

A Dissertation

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Committee:

Gi Woong Yun, Ph.D., Advisor
Mary M. Murray, Ed.D.
Graduate Faculty Representative
Sung-Yeon Park, Ph.D.
Srinivas Melkote, Ph.D.
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ABSTRACT

Gi Woong Yun, Advisor

Priming theory has been well researched within the field of media studies. Since the late 1980s, priming theory has been used to explain a host of media effects related phenomena. Although priming is one of the most robust theories in media studies, scant research has been paid to spillover/indirect priming effects. Traditional media priming studies examine how primes affect individual evaluations of presidents, but none to date have attempted to examine how individuals perceive little-known political officials via strong or weak ties to a president. To address this glaring gap in the literature, a 3X2 online experiment, manipulating prime valence and tie strength, was conducted. More specifically, a news transcript was manipulated to portray the educational issue, Race to the Top, in either a positive, negative, or neutral tone, with President Obama being portrayed as responsible for the issue. A newspaper article was manipulated to portray a fictional congressional candidate named Steve Easterly as either strongly or weakly tied to President Obama. After exposure to the primes, participants were asked to answer a series of items measuring attitude evaluations and voting intent towards both President Obama and Steve Easterly in a post-test questionnaire.

A total of 205 \((n = 205)\) politically engaged individuals were recruited across six Midwestern states. Significant differences were found for tie strength along the majority of evaluative measures. In addition, both tie strength and political ideology were found to be significant factors when predicting evaluations and voting intent towards Steve Easterly. When analyzed along party affiliation/membership, significant differences were found between Democrats and Republicans, with Democrats rating Steve Easterly significantly higher along the dependent evaluative criteria. Results are discussed in terms of network theory and motivated
reasoning among political partisans. More specifically, the results contribute to network theory as they provide a new definition of hub status. The results support previous political psychology research finding conservatives are more likely to have a higher need for closure than their liberal counterparts. Limitations and future research are addressed as well.
Dedicated to the teachers who never stopped encouraging me to ask questions.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 1922, Walter Lippmann, a prominent journalist and political commentator, published *Public Opinion*. In it, he describes public opinion as it relates to democracy, the activity of citizens, and the potential for journalists to create reality. Although the book is nearly 100 years old, its central idea, that media helps to construct a reality for average citizens, is still significant in light of research into the power of media to shape our attitudes and behavior. As stated by Lippmann (1922), “The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind…Gradually he makes for himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach” (p. 18). This picture inside of our heads is constructed, in part, from media, and is used to navigate an external environment that is often very complex and disjointed.

The media environment of the early 1920s is vastly different from that of today. In the early 1920s, there were few mediums in which to transmit newsworthy information. When *Public Opinion* was first published, commercial radio was in its infancy, and newspapers were still the most important news sources for the majority of Americans (Albarran, 2002). In the 90 years since Lippmann’s work was first printed, the media environment in the United States has changed dramatically. In the 21st century, American news outlets are forced compete with entertainment and sports programs in a niche-driven marketplace (Albarran, 2002; McChesney, 1997). News stories and reports, that were once disseminated in a few channels, are now delivered via a wide variety of mediums, including newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet. Moreover, news events are often experienced in real-time as citizen-journalists flock to social media outlets to report on stories as mundane as a traffic jam and as dramatic as a revolution taking place thousands of miles away.
Although the 21st century citizen is able to stay linked to the world around him/her, the average individual is still limited in what he/she can experience in any given day. Employment, spending time with family, keeping in contact with friends, and a host of other duties and responsibilities force the typical citizen to visit known media outlets to keep abreast of current events and stay informed of daily news stories. The media environment of the 1920s may have changed, but the power of media has remained, in some respects, the same. Additionally, there seems to be no escape from the relentless bombardment of mediated messages across a diverse set of mediums. It may have been possible to disengage from media in the early 1920s, but in today’s media landscape, it is difficult to remain isolated in an ever-interconnected world.

It is often assumed that individuals must be affected, to some extent and in some way, by the constant assault of media messages. Indeed, early media effects scholarship supposed that media were able to dramatically alter fundamental attitudes and behavior (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Whereas the early studies presumed media was all-powerful, subsequent studies in the 1950s and 1960s found that media influence was rather limited. Instead of being an all-powerful influence peddler, research in the middle of the 20th century discovered that media broadcasts and persuasive programs can be rendered ineffective, depending in part, on individual traits and dispositions (Bineham, 1988; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Wicks, 1996).

Contemporary media researchers take a more nuanced view of media influence. Although it is widely recognized that media do have the ability to alter attitude and behavior, individual differences play a significant role in whether attitudes and/or behaviors actually change (McCombs, 2004). This nuanced approach towards investigating media effects can be traced back to the early 1970s. In a seminal study published in 1972, Maxwell McCombs and
Donald Shaw found that media were able to dictate what the public deemed the most important issues in the country, but not necessarily how the public felt towards the issues themselves. McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) findings ushered in a new understanding of research as it related to media setting the agenda for the public (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; McCombs, 2004). The media agenda, as it was presented on television, was able to influence the public agenda as measured through surveys. This basic premise formed the first level of the agenda setting theory, which today has become one of the most influential media-specific theories within the media studies discipline (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; McCombs 2004; McCombs, 2005a; Weaver, 2007).

Lippmann’s early idea about media’s role in forming a picture in our heads is best understood and described by the agenda setting theory. According to McCombs and Ghanem (2001), “Agenda setting theory is a theory about the transfer of salience from the mass media’s pictures of the world to those in our heads…the core ideas is that elements prominent in the media’s pictures become prominent in the audience picture” (p. 67). While agenda setting has become an expansive theory since its original conception in 1972, now guiding a wide range of media effects studies, its underlying premise is evident in Lippmann’s *Public Opinion*. It is with this in mind that this project tackles an aspect of agenda setting that has yet to be examined by media scholars.

Much has been written about both the agenda setting theory and the consequences of agenda setting (often called priming) in the past 40 years (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Iyengar, Kinder, Peters, & Krosnick, 1984; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; McCombs, 2004; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Takeshita, 2005; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Since its conception in the early 1970s, over 400 agenda setting studies have been published in academic journals (Davie & Maher, 2006; McCombs, 2004). Similarly, priming has been used as a theoretical foundation for
a host of studies investigating how public opinion is shaped by the increase or decrease of issue and attribute salience (Althaus & Kim, 2006; Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Carpentier, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2008; Pan & Kosicki, 1997; Sheafer, 2007). As defined within the political communication literature, priming is a cognitive process that first assumes individuals, when asked to evaluate elected officials, rely on heuristic shortcuts. These shortcuts are presented in the media agenda as salient issues and/or attributes (Druckman, 2004). When asked to evaluate elected officials such as presidents, respondents utilize these salient issues and attributes as performance-evaluative standards. In sum, “the media agenda affects the criteria people use to evaluate the performance of political actors” (Sheafer, 2007, p. 24).

Though agenda setting and priming have been studied from a wide variety of perspectives, to date, no scholar has attempted to investigate how agenda setting and priming indirectly affect political perceptions. Whereas previous agenda setting research has explored the transfer of issue and attribute salience from the media agenda to the public agenda, and priming studies have attempted to ascertain how individuals use the most salient issues and attributes to evaluate elected officials, no study has actively sought to explore the indirect effects of salient issues on the evaluation of others beyond the original official under scrutiny, i.e., “spillover effects,” from a specific prime (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010, p. 21).

As defined by Iyengar and Kinder (2010), spillover effects refer to the effect a salient issue may have on other variables besides the evaluation of the official under scrutiny. The additional variables can vary from issues that are perceived to be linked to the most salient issue, to the individuals and/or groups associated with the evaluated politician. In their seminal study first published in 1987, Iyengar and Kinder found that priming of a central issue influenced how individuals perceive other, not directly primed issues as well. For example, “participants
exposed to news about the arms race became more concerned not only with arms control but also with the conflict in the Middle East” (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010, p. 21). This study did not investigate the exact type of spillover effects found in Iyengar and Kinder’s original 1987 experiment. Instead, this project was designed to examine spillover effects related to evaluations of a particular political figure. In this case, spillover effects produced indirectly from a prime that is originally intended to influence the perception of a specific politician, but not so for those who are perceived to be strongly and/or weakly tied to the individual, will be measured. For example, a news story about the economy, when presented in a negative tone, should adversely affect how President Barrack Obama is evaluated. A spillover effect investigation is not necessarily concerned with how the president is evaluated, but instead, it attempts to measure how those who are perceived to be weakly or strongly tied to the President are assessed.

The lack of literature related to spillover effects is curious given that both agenda setting and priming have been studied quite extensively over the last several decades (Kuhne, Schemer, Matthes, & Wirth, 2011; McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Scheufele, 2000). The primary purpose of this project, then, was to ascertain how a prime affects the evaluation of not just the primed elected official, but also a politician who is perceived to be strongly or weakly tied to the original official under examination. Because spillover effects occur only if direct priming effects are present, it is necessary to investigate direct priming as well; thus this study will examine direct and spillover priming. Although this project is ambitious in its overall scope, it is pertinent to explore the role of associations as they relate to evaluations of political figures, because politicians will often align themselves with popular figures, groups, and issues in order to increase voter turnout and/or poll position (Benoit, 2007; Jackson, 2009; Jackson & Darrow, 2005; Pease & Brewer, 2008). Because such a study has never been attempted, justification
needs to be provided as to why this study was conducted.

This chapter offers a rationale and lays out the specific justifications for executing a project that sought to uncover how basic primes can indirectly affect the perception of political actors. In the first section of the chapter, I argue that this study builds upon previous agenda setting and priming scholarship, and consequently builds theory. Moreover, this study also addresses some of the obvious gaps in the agenda setting and priming literature. In the second section, the results of the study are addressed in terms of “real-world” applications. Not only does this project build upon existing theory, but the results of the experiment may provide insights into how public opinion is built from indirect primes. The third, and possibly most important, reason to conduct the study is its potential to create a hybrid theoretical framework incorporating network theory, agenda setting, and priming. Network theory, with its emphasis on structural relationships between actors, is an applicable theory in which to meld with agenda setting and priming. By incorporating a relatively new theory within the media studies field, network theory, with two traditional media theories that have been researched extensively, agenda setting and priming, the opportunity to investigate and discover indirect effects becomes evident. In the final section, I provide an overview of the research method I employed to measure both direct and spillover priming effects.

**Theoretical Significance of Agenda Setting, Priming, and Network Theory in Media Research**

As theories, both agenda setting and priming are powerful as they help to account for and predict media effects at both the individual and group level (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Kim, Han, & Scheufele, 2010; McGraw & Ling, 2003; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005; Son & Weaver, 2005; Valenzuela, 2009; Yang & Stone, 2003). The evidence supporting both
agenda setting and priming has, in part, been derived from past studies that have attempted to replicate earlier findings (Golan, Kiousis, & McDaniel, 2007; Golan & Wanta, 2001; Iyengar & Simon; Kim, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2002; Pan & Kosicki, 1997). The robustness of both theories is a testament to the underlying strength of their core theoretical assumptions as well as to their flexibility in explaining a host of media-induced effects on public opinion.

**Agenda Setting**

The original agenda setting theory has expanded from its original purpose in explaining how media influence issue salience in the public agenda (McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Today, the agenda setting theory is a grand media effects theory that, in addition to explaining the basic transfer of issue salience from the media to the public agenda, is also used to describe other concepts related to the agenda setting phenomenon. For example, agenda setting scholars have examined how agendas are constructed, the psychological processes that contribute to agenda setting effects, the transfer of attribute salience, and the consequences of agenda setting (McCombs, 2005a; McCombs, 2005b).

While traditional agenda setting research is still being conducted, replication of previous studies does little to move the theory forward. As stated by McCombs (2004), “Agenda setting has flourished because dozens of scholars have continued to explore its nuances and to add knowledge for more than 35 years now” (p. 55). Agenda setting is unique in that it continues to be modified, while still maintaining its fundamental suppositions (McCombs, 2004). The scholarship that has been published since the famous 1972 “Chapel Hill study” (Davie & Maher, 2006, p. 358) has varied in objectives, but all are similar in their overall purpose and scope, namely to understand and explain the agenda setting process.
Beginning in the 1990s, agenda setting researchers began to investigate the transfer of attributes from the media to the public agenda (McCombs et al., 1998; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas, 2000). Similar to previous research designs investigating the transfer of issue salience, studies examining attribute salience found that media were able to transfer particular candidate-defining attributes to the public agenda. Attribute agenda-setting studies helped to propel agenda setting forward and added to its explanatory and predictive strengths (McCombs, 2004; McCombs et al., 1998; McCombs et al., 2000). Researchers have continued to contribute to agenda setting by applying the theory in traditional media settings, and further, in new media environments. For example, Meraz (2011) utilized the second level of the agenda setting theory as the primary theoretical foundation in which she explored the transfer of attribute salience within the blogosphere. Her study, although not traditional in the sense that it explored the relationship between the media and public agenda, still contributed to the agenda setting literature by revealing associations between the attributes presented in mainstream political blogs and the attributes used in independent political blogs.

By using agenda setting theory to ask and subsequently answer novel research questions, Meraz (2009; 2011), among others, was able to further agenda setting scholarship and traverse new paths within the agenda setting research vein. Theoretically, then, this study adds to the existing agenda setting literature by investigating agenda setting from a new and inventive theoretical perspective. In this sense, this project is similar to previous studies that have attempted to expand the agenda setting theory beyond its original purpose.

Adding to existing literature because others have also done so is a tenuous justification for any study, however. Therefore, it is necessary to provide an additional theoretical rationalization for which to undertake this project. Indeed, media’s ability to increase or
decrease saliency, whether issue or attribute-based, is a powerful tool to alter public opinion, but agenda setting scholars have yet to probe the consequences of indirect agenda setting effects on public opinion. The initial evidence of this spillover effect, first found by Iyengar and Kinder in 1987, has long been overlooked by both agenda setting and priming scholars.

The gap in the literature is stark considering agenda setting has been studied from both macro and micro perspectives (McCombs & Shaw, 1993; McCombs, 2004). Moreover, scholars have not only designed projects to examine the structural aspect of agenda setting (e.g., the actual issues that are transferred from the media to the public agenda), but the psychological processes (e.g., the psychological concept that motivates individuals to pay attention to news stories) as well (Dearing & Rogers, 1996).

**Priming**

Like agenda setting, priming has a rich history within the scholarly literature. Since the 1970s, researchers from a wide variety of backgrounds and methodological approaches have attempted to better understand how primes affect attitude and behavior both in a political and non-political setting (Chang, 2010; Domke, 2001; Druckman, 2004; Kiousis, 2011; Shen & Chen, 2007; Valentino, 1999; Valenzuela, 2009). At its most basic definition, “priming is the activation of knowledge stored in longer memory following exposure to a stimulus” (Althaus & Kim, 2006, p. 961). This definition, although comprehensible, is still very broad in its overall description, thus it is necessary to define priming within the context of communication, and especially political communication. When described within the political communication context, priming “refers to the changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010, p. 63). Even more specifically, political priming studies suggest media have the unique ability to create and sustain primes by increasing or decreasing issue and
attribute saliency. The most salient of these issues and attributes are used as evaluative measures when the public forms opinions about political officials and similar elites. Consequently, priming is often labeled an outcome of agenda setting (Lee, 2010; McCombs, 2005; Sheafer, 2007). As such, McCombs (2005b) suggests priming should be thought of as an extension of agenda setting research. According to McCombs (2005b), media are able to prime “opinions about public figures through an emphasis on particular issues and shaping an opinion through an emphasis on particular attributes” (p. 549). For example, media often transfer the most salient issues to the public agenda, which in turn are primed to be evaluative benchmarks in which to judge political candidates and other officials. The public relies on these issues and attributes to make judgments and opinions about political actors, because few citizens actually know candidates running for public office (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). As is often the case with large-scale political contests, voters must rely on mediated communication in order to make judgments about the candidates’ credibility, favorability, and general electability (Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982; Kiousis, 2003; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Peterson, 2004; Sheafer, 2007; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005).

While similar, agenda setting and priming are sometimes studied separately (Dunn, 2009; Kiousis & Shields, 2008; Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, McCombs, & Lennon, 1998; McCombs et al., 1998; McCombs et al., 2000; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Tedesco, 2005a; Tedesco, 2005b). Indeed, agenda setting studies often ignore priming consequences when exploring just the transfer of issue and attribute salience or the construction of the media agenda. Priming, on the other hand, is a consequence of agenda setting, hence almost all priming studies assume that priming effects rely on the most salient issues and attributes presented in media (Iyengar &
Kinder, 2010; Lee, 2010; Kiousis, 2011; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Min, 2004; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). Whether priming is incorporated into agenda setting research or not, no priming study to date has sought to analyze spillover effects from a media-induced prime.

Most projects operationalize priming stimuli as either a salient issue or attribute in a media source (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Kiousis, 2011; McGraw & Ling, 2003; Pan & Kosicki, 1997; Sheafer, 2007; Valentino, 1999; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). The dependent variable is often operationalized as the evaluation of the candidate that the prime was intended to influence (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Ju, 2005; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). What has yet to be asked is how the media-created prime, whether issue-based or attribute-based, can affect the perception of other political officials perceived to be linked to the original candidate under assessment.

Previous research designs have helped to explain a wide variety of media effects at both the individual and public opinion level. Although beneficial in the sense that priming theory has become more robust since its initial conception in the 1970s, traditional research approaches are limited in that they only take into account direct effects from specific primes. These effects, while noteworthy, have yet to be understood from an associative perspective. Both agenda setting and priming are not stagnant theories, but instead continue to evolve. In keeping with this tradition, this study moves both theories forward in an attempt to discover some of the nuances of agenda setting and priming.

**Implications of Synthesizing Two Theories and Further Theoretical Needs**

This study not only contributes to media theory, but the findings have the potential to answer some of the questions surrounding political alliances and endorsements. Political elites are quick to link themselves to popular politicians and interests groups through endorsements, fundraising activities, media appearances, and co-sponsorship of bills (Arceneaux & Kolodny, 2001).
Popular presidents often appear with local and state politicians in the hope of altering poll standings for the local officials (Roshwalb & Resnicoff, 1971; Summary, 2010). By appearing together and forming a perceived alliance, it is hoped that the popular elite and/or interest group will help to boost favorable ratings for the unpopular, neutral, and/or lesser-known candidate (Arceneaux & Kolodny, 2009; Roshwalb & Resnicoff, 1971; Summary, 2010).

At the same time, politicians are quick to distance themselves from unpopular officials for fear they may be negatively influenced by a perceived link with an unpopular politician. In the 2000 United States Presidential election, for example, then-Vice President Al Gore attempted to distance himself from then-President Bill Clinton due to the personal scandals surrounding Clinton’s presidency (Hillygus & Jackman, 2003; Lawrence & Bennet, 2001). Although elected officials have been keenly aware of this perceived guilt by association concept, no studies to date have tried to ascertain if guilt by association actually occurs in the minds of voters through priming. As such, empirical investigation on this topic will enhance our understanding of the guilt by association notion and its subsequent effects.

Politicians, regardless of ideology, often seek endorsements from figures and institutions outside of the political realm. Whether on the campaign trail or already in office, national and local leaders use endorsements from media outlets and celebrities to increase popularity with key demographic groups (Austin, Vord, Pinkleton, & Epstein, 2008; Jackson, 2009; Jackson & Darrow, 2005; Meltzer, 2007; Scarrow & Borman, 1979; St. Dizier, 1985). During the presidential election of 2008, then-candidate Barack Obama touted Oprah Winfrey’s endorsement, while in 2004, President Bush was endorsed by Boston Red Sox pitcher, Curt Shilling (Goodnight, 2005; Pease & Brewer, 2008). The fusion of entertainment and politics is
not a recent phenomenon, however. Past presidents have used appearances on talk shows and endorsements from celebrities to bolster their image in the hopes of winning an election or improving their poll numbers. For example, while running for president in 1992, Bill Clinton went on the popular late night talk show, *The Arsenio Hall Show*, in order to increase his visibility and popularity among young voters (Baum, 2000).

Because the formation of opinions does not exist outside of the social world, and endorsements may influence voters’ attitudes and behavior, it is necessary for politicians of all stripes to form alliances with a wide assortment of individuals, issues, and organizations (Arceneaux & Kolodny, 2009; Goodnight, 2005; Jackson, 2009; Vinning & Wilhelm, 2011). Endorsement effects, when defined as the influence an endorser has on the endorsee, has been studied extensively; however, few studies have tried to determine how the media portrayal of a political official can affect other political elites who are perceived to be linked to the actor under examination.

**Additional Dimension: Network Theory**

From a theoretical standpoint, this research project adds to the existing literature and fills a gap left by previous research. Spillover effects, although found indirectly, have yet to be investigated on their own merits. This study also contributes to a real-world understanding of priming effects. Politicians may assume that public opinion may swing against them when they are associated with unfavorable groups and/or individuals; nonetheless, this assertion has yet to be empirically tested from a priming perspective. Whereas theory building and the application of empirical results in a real-world setting are often used as dual purposes for conducting a study, very little agenda setting and priming research to date has attempted to meld network theory into research designs. This is troublesome given the scholarship that has utilized network theory,
either as a theoretical structure or a methodological tool within an agenda setting and priming framework, has uncovered interesting and pertinent findings related to agenda setting and priming effects (Meraz, 2009; Meraz, 2011).

As stated by Meraz (2009), network theory allows researchers to investigate the “interdependence of actors and their actions, the relational ties between actors, the network structure of ties between and among individuals, and the conceptualization of network structure along social, political, and economic dimensions” (p. 685). Whereas previous agenda setting and priming studies have focused on the direct effects of salient issues when presented in media and the effects of said issues on public opinion, little scholarship has been devoted to attempting to discover how these issues and other such primes can influence a perceived political network.

In this sense, network theory provides an outline in which agenda setting and priming can be aptly combined, because evaluations of political actors and the saliency of issues are not constructed from just one variable in a social vacuum (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Horvit, Schiffer, & Wright, 2008; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Peake & Eshbaugh-Soha, 2008; Peterson, 2004; Son & Weaver, 2005; Suo & Chen, 2008; Valenzuela, 2009). Instead, the direction of public opinion and the evaluation of public officials are often moderated by interpersonal conversations, need for orientation, certainty, accessibility, among other factors (Cho, 2006; Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Kiousis, 2005; Lawrence & Bennett, 2001; McCombs, 2004; Matthes, 2008; McCombs & Zhu, 1995).

Since the 1990s, researchers from a varied selection of social science disciplines have sought to examine social phenomena using network theory as the prime theoretical base (Butts, 2008; Cho & Fowler, 2010; Delre, Jager, Bijmolt, & Janssen, 2010; Feeley, Hwang, & Barnett, 2008; Grosser, Lopez-Kidwell, & Labianca, 2010; Knoke & Yang, 2008; Quatman &
Chelladurai, 2008 Wright, 2000). The number of published social science studies incorporating network theory as both a theoretical framework and methodological tool have increased dramatically over the last 15 years (Knoke & Yang, 2008). Moreover, network-related research has made it into the popular press. Within the last few years, a number of books, written to appeal to a mass audience, have been published (e.g., Barabasi, 2003; Buchannan, 2002; Watts, 2003).

While sociologists have been using some form of network theory for nearly 40 years (e.g., Granovetter, 1973), media scholars have been slow to embrace the theory. This is problematic given that network theory and its methodological offshoot, social network analysis, have the potential to answer some of the most pertinent questions in media studies. As explained by Newman (1999), “Most human communication—where the world is used in its broadest sense—takes place directly between individuals. The spread of news, rumors, jokes, and fashions all take place by contact between individuals” (p. 819). Whereas most media scholarship is governed by the ontological assumptions rooted in traditional social science research, media studies governed by the network perspective are fundamentally different in that most of them scrutinize relationships to determine how a network’s structure influences seemingly independent actions (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009; Emirbayer, 1997; Schnettler, 2009a).

One of the earliest communication theories that assumed networks played a pivotal role in human action/inaction was the diffusion of innovation theory. As described by Rogers (2003), the diffusion of innovation theory is defined as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (p. 5). Network theory is never explicitly mentioned in early diffusion of innovation research, but it was
first assumed that networks play a substantial role in the spread of an innovation, whether it was defined as an idea or a product. Indeed, the diffusion of innovation theory asserts that the spread of an innovation is contingent, in some respects, on the position of individuals within a given social web (Rogers, 2003). For example, an isolated member of a social group who has few ties to a community is less likely to persuade others to adopt a potential innovation, because of his/her position within the network structure. In contrast, an individual who is respected by the group and has strong ties to foremost members of the community is often seen as a trustworthy source (Rogers, 2003). These early studies, though not using network theory as it is defined in the 21st century, have helped to set the foundation for subsequent communication and media studies that strive to understand the power of networks.

Contemporary media studies that have incorporated network theory into their theoretical framework and/or research methodology have primarily analyzed web-based media, including blogs and social network sites (SNS). In these studies, researchers collected manifest data to construct and visualize real networks. For example, Tremayne, Zheng, Lee, and Jeong (2006) mapped the war blogosphere to learn the attributes that contribute to hub status online. In addition, hyperlink information was collected to create a war blogosphere network graph. Meraz (2009) attempted to discover intermedia agenda setting between traditional news blogs and top independent bloggers using the network-related concept of homophily as a theoretical guide. By analyzing the hyperlinks between traditional mainstream blogs and independent blogs, she found that traditional media blogs tend to link to other mainstream blogs, indicating online news outlets conform to some of the basic tenets of network theory.

Whereas the vast majority of media research that incorporates network theory focuses on real networks based on manifest data, few to none have attempted to explore how individuals
perceive mediated social networks. These perceived networks are significant, because media consumers can be swayed by news reports that emphasize particular issues and attributes over others (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Golan et al., 2007; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005; Sheafer, 2007; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005; Wanta et al., 2004). The issues and attributes reported on by news media are constructed from a wide variety of factors, including journalistic norms, the reliance on high-level sources, information subsidies, and time constraints (Gandy, 1982; McChesney 1997; McChesney, 2003; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Tedesco, 2005a). As such, producers, correspondents, and editors disseminate only a portion of potential newsworthy information. News consumers perceive a hybrid world that is both based in reality and shaded by journalists and other gatekeepers (Funkhouser, 1973; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; McCombs, 2004). This mediated reality does not often mirror true reality. For example, Funkhouser (1973) found that real-world indicators did not contribute to issue saliency within the media agenda of the 1960s. In fact, “Peaks in coverage appeared during years in which the situation in these cases was not different from other years, and in several cases, coverage increased while the problem was showing improvement, or dropped while the problem was getting worse” (p. 74-75). Since subsequent research has shown the power of news media in setting the agenda for issues and attributes, and these issues and attributes do not often parallel actual reality, news media are able to create and sustain certain perceptions within the public agenda by virtue of their ability to reach a wide audience and disseminate information.

In many respects, incorporating network research into agenda setting and priming is not unusual. Many social scientists have been advocating for such a social approach for years. Emirbayer (1997) argues that social science research should begin to investigate the relationships between entities by applying a trans-action research perspective. Instead of measuring actors
within a self-action or inter-action position, scholars should instead integrate a trans-action research approach. Whereas the self-action component of substantive scholarship is concerned with individual units of analyses, which can be both rational (e.g., economics) or irrational (e.g., sociology), and the inter-action approach investigates causal relationships between entities, the trans-action (relational) approach assumes that “the very terms or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within the transaction” (p. 287).

The relational viewpoint accepts that individual attitudes and behaviors are both created and restricted, in some part, by the network in which the individual belongs. The dynamic processes that exist between individuals should be observed and analyzed to determine how the network itself affects the actors that reside within its relational web. Although Emirbayer (1997) does not argue for the use of network theory (in fact, he doesn’t even mention “network theory”) within the social sciences, his past writings advance an epistemological justification for observing and building knowledge from a network perspective. The relational approach may run counter to some basic notions of knowledge construction within the social sciences, yet its fundamental tenets (e.g. assuming action is dictated, in part, by relational links among actors) must be embraced as an assumption in order to expand our ability to describe and explain human interaction beyond dyadic relationships.

Emirbayer’s assertion, that scholars should begin to study relationships between units, sounds intuitive in light of network evidence indicating that the links between individuals can have profound consequences not only for the individuals within the network, but for the entire network structure (Amblard & Deffuant, 2004; Feeley et al., 2008; Franks, Noble, Kaufmann, & Stagl, 2008; Granovetter, 1983; Meraz, 2009; Meraz, 2011). The advantages are then clear.
With respect to agenda setting and political priming, network research can help to account for how the transfer of salience, whether issue or attribute-based, and the priming process affects a perceived political network. With the explosive growth of network-related research in the past 10-15 years, it is prudent for media scholars to embrace this new paradigm. This study applied a component of network theory to agenda setting and priming in order to build knowledge and continue in the tradition of expanding two of the most important theories in media research.

**Research Method**

The project employed a 3X2 experimental, post-test only design. Experimental designs have been used extensively in other social-scientific disciplines; however, mass communication scholars, in general, have been slow to embrace this well-established methodology (Thorson, Wicks, & Leshner, 2012). The project was conducted entirely online and involved politically active individuals across six Midwestern states. Although the Internet still trails television as a source of news and information, the online medium represents a growing segment for the production and consumption of news (The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012).

The study manipulated the valence of a news transcript prime and the perceived link between two politicians via a print news story prime. Perceived link strength is an important dimension to consider, because network theory suggests that the comparative strength or weakness of a link will often dictate how individuals perceive one another (Feeley et al., 2008; Granovetter, 1983). The perception of the political network may differ depending, in part, on how individuals perceive the web of political actors. Although agenda setting and priming research has traditionally used salient issues as stimuli, recent scholarship indicates the tone of the coverage, often called story valence, is a stronger predictor of agenda setting and priming
effects when compared to issue primes (Kiousis, Bantimarodis, & Ban, 1999; Kiousis, 2003; Lee, 2010; Wu & Coleman, 2009).

The participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions, which were the combinations of positive/neutral/negative valance and strong/weak link prime: (1) Positive Valence/Strong Link Prime, (2) Positive Valence/ Weak Link Prime, (3) Negative Valence/Strong Link Prime, (4) Negative Valence /Weak Link Prime, (5) Neutral Valence/Strong Link Prime, and (6) Neutral Valence/Weak Link Prime (see Table 1). After exposure to the priming stimuli, participants were asked a series of questions to determine if both priming and spillover priming effects were meaningful and measurable. The post-test questionnaire asked participants a block of items designed to measure attitude (via job performance, competency, and favorability evaluations) and the potential for behavioral change (via voting intent). Whereas previous priming research tends to measure attitude change, few studies have attempted to measure behavioral change intention (Kiousis, 2011; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005).

An experimental research design is an excellent methodology in which to capture priming effects. While priming has been studied through surveys, content analyses, and experimental designs, the data collected from an experiment allows researchers to make causal statements about the independent variable(s) and dependent variable(s) under scrutiny (Babbie, 2005; Fowler, Heaney, Nickerson, Padgett, & Sinclair, 2011). More specifically, the experimental design allows researchers to make causal statements between two variables, because the design is able to eliminate, through random assignment and control, spurious relationships that might influence the change in the dependent variable.
In addition, experiments tend to have high internal validity. As defined by Babbie (2005), internal validity “refers to the possibility that the conclusions drawn from experimental results may not accurately reflect what has gone on in the experiment itself” (p. 238). Because an experimental design attempts to control for extraneous variables, data obtained from the post-test should accurately capture the effects created by manipulating the independent variable (IV) across the conditions.

Given that this study focused both on the saliency of a certain primed issue as well as perceptions of political actors, the experiment was able to address a gap in the literature at both the structural and the process level. This is not to say that the project was be able to fully explain spillover effects within the structural and psychological realm, but it does represent the first step in a path that has yet to be explored.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary goal of this study was to investigate “spillover” (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010, p. 21) priming effects using agenda setting, priming, and network theory as the chief theoretical guides. As such, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of agenda setting by focusing on the first and second level of the theory. Because this study also utilized priming theory, I provide readers with a general outline of priming theory as it relates to both political communication and the agenda setting process in the second section of this chapter. Few media scholars have tried to incorporate network theory into agenda setting research; therefore, in the third section, I discuss network theory at a broad level as well as the limitations of previous network-related research. After providing a general overview of the three principal theories that formed the foundation of the study, a more specific review, as it pertains to this study’s research questions, is provided in the third chapter.

**Agenda Setting**

Since McCombs and Shaw’s seminal “Chapel Hill” study was first published in 1972, hundreds of subsequent studies have since been conducted employing agenda setting as the primary theoretical framework (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; McCombs, 2004). Indeed, agenda setting has become so popular that it has expanded into a general media effects theory that seeks to explain how individuals use media messages to make sense of the world around them (McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005a; McCombs, 2005b; McCombs & Shaw, 1993). Today, agenda setting scholarship can be broken down into five distinct research levels. The first level, starting with the groundbreaking 1972 study, investigates the transfer of object salience from the media to the public agenda (Kiousis, 2004; McCombs, 2005a; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The second level of agenda setting research, started in earnest in the 1990s, explores the transfer of
attribute salience from the media to the public agenda (Golan et al., 2007; Kiousis & McCombs, 2004; Lopez-Escobar et al. 1998; McCombs et al., 1998; McCombs et al., 2000). The third level of agenda setting research examines the psychological processes that can strengthen or weaken agenda setting effects (Matthes, 2008; Stromback & Kiousis, 2010; Yang & Stone, 2003). The fourth level analyzes how agendas are built, maintained, and transferred (via intermedia agenda setting) through norms, rules (both formal and informal), and in the case of the media agenda, source selection (Dunn, 2009; Golan, 2006; Kiousis & Shields, 2008; Min, 2004; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta, 2008). The final level of agenda setting research investigates the consequences of agenda setting. More specifically, researchers conducting this type of agenda setting scholarship attempt to establish how agenda setting affects public opinion and attitude formation through the priming process (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; McCombs, 2004; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). As this study focused primarily on the first and second level of agenda setting as well as priming, it is pertinent to discuss the first two levels of agenda setting and then address priming theory.

**First Level of Agenda Setting**

Most individuals will not be able to meet the president or a high-level politician, nor will they be able to fully comprehend the causes of a global financial crisis or a similar complex issue; therefore, individuals must rely on an external source to understand the world around them, both at the local and national level (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). This external source, for most people, is media (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; McCombs, 2004). Media, then, have the unique ability to construct an agenda of important and not so important issues. This very idea, that media have the ability to raise or lower issue salience in the public agenda, is the central tenet of the first level of agenda setting.
As defined by Sheafer and Weimann (2005), “the amount of media attention, or the media salience, devoted to certain issues influences the degree of public concern for these issues” (p. 347). By covering or not covering certain stories, media are able to establish, to some extent, what the public perceives to be the most significant issues facing the country.

The number of issues the public deems as vital is usually restricted from two to six, however (McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Zhu, 1995). Indeed, when surveys are used to determine what the public considers significant, only a handful of issues are able to climb above the 10% threshold of importance. Moreover, not all issues will resonate with the public. Direct experience with the issues presented in media can alter whether the public perceives the issue to be a truly central point of concern (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Watt, Mazza, & Snyder, 1993). The narrow number of issues that the public can be aware of at any given time is a result of their limited cognitive resources (McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Zhu, 1995; Shaw & McCombs, 1977). The typical citizen can only devote a finite amount of time and energy understanding and remembering subject matter. In this sense, the public agenda is a zero-sum game, with issues always vying to become salient within the media and subsequently the public agenda.

In their groundbreaking study, McCombs and Shaw (1972) offered empirical evidence suggesting that media influence public opinion in regards to what issues are and are not salient. By utilizing content analyses and interviews during the 1968 U.S. presidential election, McCombs and Shaw found that there was a direct and positive correlation between the amount of news coverage a certain electoral issue obtained in news reports and the saliency of that issue within the public. It was not that media directly told people what to think about regarding the 1968 U.S. presidential election, but instead influenced the citizenry on what issues were the most essential. While Cohen’s (1963) axiom stated that media may not be successful in telling the
public how to think, but may be very successful in informing the public what to think about was viewed as accurate, McCombs and Shaw (1972) were the first to empirically test the notion using a well-established methodology. Agenda setting theory and its core first-level assumptions have received ample empirical support in a wide variety of contexts (e.g., Dearing & Rogers, 1996; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005a; McCombs, 2005b; McCombs et al., 2000; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005; Watt et al., 1993).

Because the empirical support for first level agenda setting effects is so robust, contemporary first-level agenda setting studies tend to investigate the transfer of object salience from the media agenda to the public agenda in tandem with research designs that can measure additional layers of the agenda setting process. For example, past studies have measured first level agenda setting effects in addition to measuring second level effects and their influence on attitude strength (e.g., Golan et al., 2007; Kiousis, 2011; Sheafer, 2007; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Other studies have attempted to discover the relationship between first level effects and priming (e.g., Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Lee, 2010). Tan and Weaver (2009) investigated the association between first level agenda setting effects (defined as the transfer of object salience from the media to the public agenda) and the policy agenda at the state level. Finally, researchers have tried to establish and better appreciate the conditions in which first-level agenda setting effects are more or less pronounced by finding variables that can mediate or moderate the effects (Brosius & Kepplinger, 1992; Edwards & Wood, 1999; Horvit et al., 2008; Kiousis, Mitrook, Wu, & Seltzer, 2006; McCombs, 2004).

Scholars debate media’s role in society, but most agree that media should serve as some kind of surveillance body, alerting the public to pressing concerns whenever pertinent issues arise (Kellner, 2004; McChesney, 2003; Murphy, Ward & Donovan, 2006). Researchers have
discovered that contrary to the news media’s assertion, the issues that are reported on in the
media agenda are rarely a reflection of the most essential issues of the day as defined by
objective data (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Funkhouser, 1973). Instead, issues disseminated to the
public derive from a combination of economic standards, journalistic norms, and source pressure
(Boyle, 2001; Dunn, 2009; Gandy, 1982; McChesney, 1997; McChesney, 2003; Min, 2004;
Roberts & McCombs, 1994).

Regardless of the type of news story, scholars tend to treat the frequency of a particular
issue in the media agenda as the independent variable (IV). McCombs (2005a) argues that media
can increase or decrease salience for almost any “object.” Objects can range from issues to
candidates, to even nation-states (Kiousis & Wu, 2008; Wanta et al., 2004). For example,
Kiousis and McCombs (2004) investigated candidate saliency and found that the saliency of a
political candidate within the public agenda was directly influenced by candidate saliency in the
media agenda. While most agenda setting scholars tend to examine the increase and decrease of
issue and candidate saliency (e.g., McGraw & Ling, 2003), others like Wanta and colleagues
(2004) have explored how media can increase and decrease nation-state saliency. In this case, it
was found that media, like their capability to increase issue and candidate saliency, also have the
power to alter public opinion towards a particular nation-state. The coverage of certain nation-
states by media influenced their perceived importance by the public at-large. Notwithstanding if
the object under investigation is an issue or political candidate, media is able to increase public
saliency by mere coverage of that object (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Kiousis & Wu, 2008;
McCombs, 2005a; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Tan & Weaver, 2009).

As stated above, most agenda setting researchers treat the saliency of an object in the
media agenda as the independent variable. Because mediums differ in how they present
information, defining saliency within the media agenda is not universal (Kiousis, 2005; McCombs, 2004; Takeshita, 2005). For example, scholars have defined an object’s saliency in print media as the amount of space given to an object or by where it is placed within a newspaper or magazine. In addition, authors have also counted the number of times an object is mentioned (frequency) over time (McCombs, 2004). Similarly, defining salience in the context of television has also been open to interpretation. While most scholars define salience as frequency of an object, others have defined salience as the placement of stories within a news program and/or how many minutes/seconds are devoted to covering a specific object (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Kiousis, 2004; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005a). To accurately measure salience, most researchers employ content analysis as a methodological tool. Although defining salience differs among researchers, for most first level agenda setting scholarship, the independent variable is the salience of a specific object on the media’s agenda (Kiousis et al., 2006; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005a; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Tan & Weaver, 2009).

Further, the operationalization of public salience as the dependent variable differs as well (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). For most scholars, the public agenda is best measured by surveys, either taken from national polls, or conducted by the researchers themselves. Indeed, almost all agenda setting studies primarily use surveys to ascertain the general sentiment of public opinion (Kiousis, 20011; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005a, McCombs, 2005b; Wu & Coleman, 2009; Yang & Stone, 2003). The surveys differ on what exactly they hope to measure, however. For some studies, researchers asked the participants to rank order the issues that were initially measured in the content analysis (McCombs, 1972). Other studies asked open-ended questions; allowing the respondents to answer questions such as, “what do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?” (Kiousis, 2004, p.
For candidate saliency, respondents are often asked whether they could recognize a certain candidate who was running in an election cycle (McCombs et al., 2000).

With a combination of content analysis and survey questionnaires, agenda setting researchers are able to establish correlations with the media and public agenda. To strengthen the findings, some researchers conduct time-lag comparisons in order to establish how long it takes for an issue covered by media to be transferred to the public agenda. Research indicates that the average amount of time to observe a transfer of salience from the media to the public agenda is approximately four weeks, though this is contingent on how long the issue/object is able to sustain itself on the media agenda (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Hester & Gibson, 2003; Kim & McCombs, 2007; McCombs, 2005a; Yang & Stone, 2003).

**Second Level of Agenda Setting**

Whereas the first level of agenda setting probes the transfer of object salience, the second level of agenda setting explores the transfer of salience of attributes that describe the objects in the news (Golan et al., 2007; Hester & Gibson, 2003; Kim et al., 2002; Kiousis, 2011; Kiousis, Bantmaroudis, & Ban, 1999; Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998; McCombs et al., 1997). All objects in the media agenda, whether they are issues or candidates, are described in a certain manner by correspondents, editors, and other media professionals. Media-produced reports and stories emphasize specific characteristics of individuals and issues, while de-emphasizing others. According to Lopez-Escobar et al. (1998), second level agenda setting “addresses not only the transfer of issues, but the characteristics and appraisals-attributes from the mass media to the public” (p. 347). Cohen’s (1963) truism that media does not tell the body politic what to think may need to be re-evaluated based on recent findings. Indeed, McCombs and Shaw (1993) assert that “media may not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think about it, and
consequently, what to think” (p. 65).

Some of the earliest second level research projects sought to determine if media were actually able to transfer attributes to the public agenda. By analyzing two local elections in Spain, McCombs and his colleagues (1998) found that media were indeed able to transfer the most salient candidate attributes from the media agenda to the public agenda. Especially effective were the local newspapers as they had a greater effect in transferring the most salient attributes when compared to the television medium. In a similar study, Golan and Wanta (2001) found that newspapers covering the 2000 Republican primary in New Hampshire were able to transfer candidate attributes to the public agenda. Regardless of the medium under investigation, the second level of agenda setting has received robust support in the past 15 to 20 years (Golan et al., 2007; Hester & Gibson, 2003; Kim & McCombs, 2007; Kim et al., 2002; Kiousis et al., 1999; Kiousis et al., 2006; McCombs et al., 1997; McCombs et al., 2000; Sheafer, 2007; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005; Wu & Coleman, 2010).

Agenda setting scholars have defined two types of attributes: substantive and affective (Kiousis, 2005; Kiousis & Shields, 2008; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005a; Sheafer, 2007). The substantive attributes are used by media, and consequently the public, to describe an object. As defined by Kiousis and Shields (2008), “substantive elements refer to those characteristics of communication messages that help us to cognitively structure and discern among various topics…” (p. 325-326). These substantive elements tend to remain fixed in media reports in that media are apt to use no more than a handful of descriptive categories to characterize and define objects. For example, there is an almost an infinite number of attributes that could be ascribed to any one political candidate, but media tend to emphasize, especially in the case of political reporting, the ideology, qualifications, and personality of a politician running for office.
In general, media structure their stories around five to six substantive attributes, including conflict, human interest, problem definition, responsibility attribution, moral evaluation, and consequence assessments (Kiousis & Shields, 2008; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Some studies have found that media employ more than just a handful of attributes to describe an object. For example, Kim and McCombs (2007) discovered 11 attributes used by an Austin, Texas newspaper to describe candidates during the 2002 election cycle. The substantive attributes assigned to an issue or figure in the news are generated from a wide variety of different sources, including from the supporters of the issue/candidate, detractors of the issue/candidate, news norms, and external events (Kiousis et al., 2006; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Tedesco, 2005a; Tedesco, 2005b).

Whereas substantive attributes are more specific in their description, affective attributes are broader, because affective attributes refer to the tone of news coverage (Kiousis et al., 1999; Kiousis, 2003; McCombs et al., 2000; Sheafer, 2007). A story can present an object in a positive, neutral, or negative perspective. Over time, the affective attribute (tone) of an object is transferred from the media agenda to the public agenda (Sheafer, 2007; Wu & Coleman, 2009). This affective component is important to consider, because “there is more evidence of second level agenda setting effects on the affective dimension than on the substantive dimension” (McCombs et al., 1998, p. 714). This suggests that the tone of the coverage has a greater effect in terms of salience transfer than the substantive attributes attached to the object (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Kiousis, 2005). Kiousis and his colleagues (1999) found that affective attributes were laden with emotionally charged elements, ensuring that the public would be more influenced by affective attributes rather than their substantive counterparts. From a political communication standpoint, “these affective opinion are perhaps the most crucial components of
object salience because actual voting behavior is often more contingent on how positively or negatively people evaluate a candidate, as opposed to how prominent they believe him or her to be” (p. 418). A substantive attribute like truthfulness may be used to describe a candidate, but the affective attributes, because they reflect the tone of the overall coverage, are oftentimes more significant in relation to the transfer of attribute salience from the media to the public agenda.

The type of attribute, whether classified as substantive or affective, can serve as a compelling argument, thus strengthening agenda setting effects (Kiousis, 2005). As described by Sheafer (2007), the compelling argument hypothesis posits that “some object attributes emphasized by the news media affect the accessibility of that object (and not the attribute) to the public, regardless of the frequency of their appearance in the media message” (p. 22). Put simply, the tone or substantive attributes attached to an object may affect the overall saliency of that object based on the description put forward by news media (Kiousis, 2005). A compelling argument can reinforce first level of agenda setting effects by prompting the public to consider additional elements than just the media saliency of the issue. Sheafer (2007) found that the more negative the portrayal of the issue by media (in this case the economy), the more likely it was for that issue to be rated as the number one matter of importance in the public agenda. Put succinctly, although issue salience was still a powerful predictor in determining what public deemed the most central issue facing the country, the negative attributes assigned to the issue strengthened the overall agenda setting effect.

Like first-level agenda setting studies, second level research treats frequency of attribute assertions within stories as the independent variable. To collect such statements, scholars tend to employ content analysis. For substantive attributes, researchers count the number of descriptors and classify them into larger categories. For affective attributes, agenda setting scholars will
usually classify a story as positive, neutral, or negative in its tone (Hester & Gibson, 2003; McCombs et al., 2000; Son & Weaver, 2005). In order to measure the dependent variable, researchers utilize surveys to determine if there was a transfer of attribute salience from the media to the public agenda. Oftentimes, respondents will be asked, in order to determine what attributes are included in the public agenda, how they would describe a candidate or issue to a friend that “has been away for a long time” (Kim & McCombs, 2007, p. 304). To measure the affective attributes present in the public agenda, researchers tend to ask respondents how they feel about a particular issue or person using a 5 to 7 point Likert-type scale (Kim & McCombs, 2007; McCombs et al., 2000).

**Moderating Factors of Agenda Setting Influence**

On initial glance, it seems that media is permanently able to increase the salience for all objects and attributes by just selecting or not selecting to cover certain stories, yet this is not always the case. Research has found that, although the public is susceptible to media influence, it is able to resist when certain conditions are met. For example, the obtrusiveness of an issue is one such condition (Lawrence & Bennett, 2001; McCombs, 2005b; Wu & Coleman, 2009). The obtrusiveness of an issue is generally defined as the ability of an issue to directly affect an individual (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; McCombs, 2004). For obtrusive issues (e.g., the economy), the relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda tends to be weaker, because the public is fully aware of the issue and/or object under scrutiny. Indeed, obtrusive issues are often experienced directly, without any type of mediated contact.

In contrast, an unobtrusive issue is more abstract in the mind of the public. These issues and stories tend to be perceived as distant (e.g., Arab Spring of 2011-2012). The public must rely on the media for information regarding unobtrusive issues, because there are few reference
points in their immediate environment. As such, “unobtrusive issues are likely to dominate the media agenda, whereas obtrusive issues occasionally appear on the public agenda” (Yang & Stone, p. 61). The relationship between unobtrusive issues reported in media and perceived salience of the issue in the public agenda is both strong and positive (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Funkhouser, 1973; Hester & Gibson, 2003; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Lawrence & Bennett, 2001; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005a; McCombs et al., 2000; Son & Weaver, 2005).

In addition to issue obtrusiveness, the need for orientation must be considered in order to determine if agenda setting effects will arise (Matthes, 2008). As defined by McCombs (2005a), the need for orientation is the “idea that individuals have an innate curiosity about the world around them” (p. 159). The need for orientation is a psychological state based on the perceived relevance of an object on the media’s agenda as well as the uncertainty about the reported object (Matthes, 2008; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005a; McCombs, 2005b). If a story has low relevance for an individual, he/she will not expose him/herself to the object nor to the attributes attached to the object, meaning agenda setting effects will be limited. If relevance is high and uncertainty are high, agenda setting effects increase as individuals rely on media for information about the object in question. Finally, if relevance is high but uncertainty low, the effects will be moderate, because the individual, although turning to media for supplemental information, already has an opinion about the object on the media agenda (Golan & Wanta, 2001; Kim & McCombs, 2007; Kiousis et al., 1999; McCombs, 2005b). Put simply, a higher need for orientation is positively related to exposure to mass news media.

Finally, it is essential to understand that the agenda setting process can only take place if an object remains on the media agenda for a long enough period of time. Today’s 24-hour news cycle constantly puts forth new stories only to forget about them when another interesting story
comes up (McCombs, 2004). Since there is a time lag between exposure to the media agenda and the transfer of object and attribute salience to the public agenda, a story that is not able to sustain itself on the media agenda will frequently be forgotten by the public (Watt et al., 1993). As such, the length of time an object remains on the media agenda must be taken into account before one can assume agenda setting effects will occur. Research suggests that the time it takes for issue and/or attribute salience to be transferred to the public agenda ranges from a few days up to six months, with an average time span of four weeks (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Son & Weaver, 2005).

**Priming**

Since this project includes political priming and agenda setting as the two primary media-specific theories, it is necessary to provide the reader with a general overview of priming as it relates to political communication and the agenda setting theory. Priming and agenda setting are interconnected in that priming is repeatedly defined as an outcome of agenda setting (Iyengar et al., 1982; Kim et al., 2002; McCombs, 2004). Put concisely, political priming theory posits that the most salient objects on the media agenda are used to evaluate political candidates and issues. More specifically, “by calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged” (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010, p. 63). Priming is considered a consequence of agenda setting, because the issues and attributes that are made most salient in the media agenda are used as evaluative benchmarks in which to judge political officials (Scheufele, 2000). From this perspective, the agenda setting theory is the foundation from which priming theory has evolved (Iyengar & Simon, 1993).
Political priming researchers examine media-specific primes and their effects on attitude and behavior, but priming effects have been measured from non-media related primes as well. Priming theory is rooted in social psychology research dating back to the 1970s (Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1979). In one early study, Srull and Wyer (1979) found that when participants were exposed to an aggressive prime (in this case, a basic scrambled sentence that implied violence towards an individual), they were more likely to form hostile impressions towards an unrelated individual. A simple priming stimulus was able to alter, to some extent, participant attitudes. Although Srull and Wyer’s (1979) experiment seems simple in retrospect, its implications are significant given that subsequent priming studies, both in psychology and media studies, have shown that individual behavior and attitude can be influenced by subtle stimuli (Dragojlovic, 2011; Eves, Scott, Hoppe, & French, 2017; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Lee, 2010; Samon-Daly & Forgas, 2010; Vilaythong T., Nosek, & Lindner, 2010).

Political Priming

Political priming is studied from a wide variety of perspectives within political science, psychology, and media studies (Dragojlovic, 2011; Druckman, Jacobs, Ostermeir, 2004; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Early work focused on understanding the evaluative measures the public employs to judge politicians, and more specifically presidents (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar et al., 1982; Iyengar, Peters, Kinder, & Krosnick, 1984; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). For example, in their well-known series of experiments, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) found that the most salient issues, as presented in media, are regularly used as evaluative criteria when judging the president on competency (professional judgments) and integrity (moral judgments). Depending on the issues in news stories and reports, some issues
are used only for general competency evaluations while others are included to judge the president on his/her integrity. For example, it was found that unemployment issues affected the president’s perceived competence but not his integrity. It was also discovered that the priming effects were often contingent on how media portrayed responsibility of an issue. When media stories implied, whether implicitly or explicitly, that the president was responsible for a salient issue, his perceived competency and/or integrity rating was subsequently influenced (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

According to Althaus and Kim (2006), contemporary priming studies are grounded not only in Iyengar and Kinder’s (1987) set of experiments, but Krosnick and Kinder’s (1990) findings as well. By analyzing the data acquired from the 1986 National Election Study, Krosnick and Kinder (1990) determined that, in keeping with the priming hypothesis, Americans evaluated Ronald Reagan’s presidential performance (in contrast to a character assessment) on the Iran Contra scandal after the story broke in late November of 1986. In addition, the authors found that priming effects were more pronounced in “political novices” when compared to “political experts” (p. 509). Whereas previous political priming studies in the 1980s took place in the laboratory, Krosnick and Kinder (1990) relied on survey data to ascertain if priming effects were discernible outside of a controlled environment.

Subsequent research has attempted to solidify the priming hypothesis through replication. Iyengar and Simon (1993) sought to understand how public opinion was crystalized during the first Gulf War using a combination of surveys and content analyses. They found that the public based their assessment of then President Bush on foreign policy issues rather than on economic issues. As stated by Iyengar & Simon (1993), “the evidence suggests that the Gulf conflict alerted the principal basic of President Bush’s popularity from the state of the national economy
to foreign policy matters (p. 377). In essence, media were able, by keeping the Iraq War as a salient issue in late 1990 to early 1991, to alter the evaluative standards towards President Bush. Once the war was over, economic issues became the most salient objects on the media agenda, which then acted as evaluative benchmarks throughout the 1992 presidential election. Additional research has found support for this assertion and overall priming effects in general (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Kim & McCombs, 2007; Kiousis, 2011; Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; Lee, 2010; Pan & Krosnick, 1997). Since the priming hypothesis has received strong empirical support in the past 25 years, contemporary priming studies have attempted to examine the moderating factors that strengthen or weaken priming effects.

**Moderating Factors of Priming Effects**

Like the agenda setting theory, priming is not a hypodermic needle theory nor does it assume that priming will affect all people. Instead, priming effects can be strengthened or weakened by several important variables, including the accessibility of the prime, applicability of the prime, individual political awareness, trust in media, media exposure, and interpersonal communication, among others (Althaus & Kim, 2006; Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Carpentier et al., 2008; Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Ha, 2011; Kiousis, 2003; Kiousis & McCombs, 2004; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Lawrence & Bennett, 2001; Peterson, 2004; Sanbonmatsu & Fazio, 1991; Sheafer, 2007; Valenzuela, 2010).

Early research on priming uncovered that priming effects strengthened when the accessibility of the prime was increased (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Accessibility refers to the ease in which individuals can retrieve the most salient objects and/or attributes from memory (Althaus & Kim, 2006; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Kim et al., 2010; Valenzuela, 2009). The most salient objects, as reported on by media, are assumed to be more
accessible in the minds of heavy news consumers. Accessibility depends on the intensity of the prime. Intensity is often defined as the frequency (number of times an individual is exposed to a priming stimulus), duration (the length of a priming stimulus), or recency (the amount of time between exposure to the priming stimulus and the subsequent evaluation of an elected official) of the prime. Taken together, research suggests that multiple exposures to a long-lasting prime as well as a short time lag between the exposure of the priming stimulus and the evaluation of an elected official should reinforce priming effects (Carpentier et al., 2008; Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Peterson, 2004; Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Valentino, 1999). Individuals are more likely to exhibit priming effects if both frequency of a prime is high and the recency between exposure to the prime and the measure of effect is short.

It was first assumed that accessibility was the underlying psychological process that caused priming effects; however, recent research suggests that accessibility is just one factor in the priming process (Althaus & Kim, 2006; Kiousis, 2003; Lawrence & Bennett, 2001; Peterson, 2004). Applicability, or the relevance between the prime and the object and/or attribute, also plays a role in whether priming effects will occur. Applicability builds on accessibility in that they are both positively related to each other. In the short term, accessibility may serve to induce priming effects, but over time, applicability plays a larger role as the cumulative effects of the prime begins to manifest within individual evaluations (Althaus & Kim, 2006; Kim et al., 2010; Wu & Coleman, 2009).

Applicability must not be thought of as dominating component, however. Media may increase applicability of a prime by constant repetition, but news consumers, on their own, are often able to determine what issues are applicable when evaluating a political candidate (Iyengar et al., 1984). For example, during the Lewinsky scandal in the late 1990s, media made then
President Clinton’s sex life especially salient. His personality favorability ratings decreased, but his job performance poll numbers, in some cases, increased (Lawrence & Bennet, 2001). Lawrence and Bennet (2001) argue that this was because most voters did not view President Clinton’s personal life as relevant (applicable) to his job as commander-in-chief. Scholars now argue that applicability should be into account when addressing political priming research (Althaus & Kim, 2006; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; McCombs, 2005b; Wu & Coleman, 2009).

In addition to understanding the accessibility and applicability components of priming, scholars have also attempted to determine how political awareness as well as media exposure can alter the strength of priming effects (Ha, 2011; Hetherington, 1996; Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). On initial glance, it may seem obvious that those with less political awareness will be more susceptible to priming effects given that they must rely on news stories to gather the issues and attributes based upon which to judge political candidates. Several studies have shown this to be the case (Iyengar et al., 1982; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). In their priming study, Krosnick and Bannon (1993) found that “high levels of political awareness enhanced priming, and high levels of exposure and interest reduced priming (p. 972). More contemporary research claims that the relationship between priming effects and political awareness is more complicated and nuanced than initially assumed (Ha, 2011; Valenzuela, 2009).

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) argue that a politically knowledgeable individual has more stored information in which to consider issues whereas the political novice is more influenced by the actual news coverage of the issue. For familiar topics, political awareness and priming effects tend to have a negative relationship, indicating that the type of issue is a key factor to consider before drawing any conclusions related to priming influence (McGraw & Ling, 2003).
It has been found that for newer new issues, both political experts and novices are more susceptible to priming influence, because media have yet to provide a full picture regarding the new issue (McGraw & Ling, 2003). Several scholars have questioned the widely held assumption that political novices are more likely to exhibit priming effects, however (Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). Hetherington (1996) and Balmas and Sheafer (2010) found that those who closely paid attention to the 1992 United States presidential election and the 2006 Israeli election, respectively, were more likely to exhibit priming effects.

In contrast, Valenzuela (2009) and Ha (2011) suggest that priming effects may follow a curvilinear U-shaped relationship in respect to moderating variables, such as political awareness and media exposure. Ha (2011) found a curvilinear relationship between political awareness and priming effects, with individuals having a moderate level of political awareness as being the most susceptible to priming effects. Other studies have found that individuals with low political awareness are sometimes less susceptible to priming effects compared to individuals who are politically aware, since exposure to news media is positively correlated with political awareness (Ha, 2011; Valenzuela, 2009). Thus, citizens with less political awareness tend to expose themselves to fewer news stories, consequently weakening the overall intensity of a prime. Individuals with high political awareness often obtain information through news sources, which should increase priming effects. Nevertheless, politically knowledgeable individuals are able to negate some of the priming affect, because they tend to be more aware of alternative measures in which to judge political candidates. In sum, priming effects tend to be more pronounced in individuals with a moderate level of political awareness (Valenzuela, 2009). Finally, van der Brug, Semetko, and Valkenburg (2007) found that political awareness was not a significant factor in regards to the strength of the overall prime. The results of studies that examined prior
political awareness as a moderating factor to priming effects are mixed. Past scholarship does suggest, however, that political awareness does play some kind of role in strengthening or weakening the effects caused by a prime.

Trust in media is another variable that can inflate or deflate priming effects. Previous research has found that those individuals that trust media in presenting a factual account of current events tend to be more affected by primes when compared to citizens that do not trust media reports (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). This should not be surprising given that source trustworthiness has been a significant factor in determining whether individuals will alter their attitude and/or behavior in response to a message (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Miller & Baseheart, 1969; Ohanian, 1990). Interpersonal communication is also a moderator of priming effects. Whereas most traditional media neither encourage nor invite audience participation, interpersonal conversations are both interactive and participatory (Wyatt, Kim, & Katz, 2000). Research exploring the relationship between interpersonal discussions and media effects has found that the type of conversation and the composition of the individuals that are participating in the discussion can alter media’s overall influence (Cho, 2006; Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Mutz, 2002). Conversations centering on political matters will sometimes encourage individuals to consider alternative perspectives from what is initially reported on in media.

Carpentier and his colleagues (2008) found that while positive primes influenced positive evaluations of the president across conditions, negative priming effects were contingent on the political ideology of individuals. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) found that owned issues are important to recognize when discussing priming effects in relation to political ideology. According to Petrocik (1996), the main political parties in the United States essentially “own”
and have reputations based on certain issues. Based in part on history, policy, and traditional party constituents, citizens have come to conclude that some political parties are more competent to deal with particular issues (Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik, Beniot, & Hansen, 2004).

Iyengar and Kinder’s (1987) data suggests that when owned issues are salient in the media agenda, the party that owns the specific issue is able to prime positive evaluations among individuals that already support the party. Other scholars have found that candidates who stress owned issues tend to perform better at the ballot box (Belanger & Meguid, 2008; Benoit, 2007; Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik et al., 2004). Further, scholars have found that negative valence primes tend to prompt stronger priming reactions from individuals (Sheafer, 2007; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Accordingly, for this study, negative valence primes are expected to strengthen spillover/indirect priming effects when compared to positive valence primes. When taken together, past research suggests that political ideology is an important moderating variable to consider when investigating political priming.

A substantial prime can induce such a powerful effect to alter attitudes and behaviors, yet priming effects are often weakened by a wide variety of moderating factors. Furthermore, priming effects, especially when measured in a laboratory setting are relatively short-lived. Indeed, research indicates that priming effects tend to dissipate after 15 to 20 minutes. In extreme circumstances, the effects can last up to one hour (Carpentier et al., 2008; Druckman, 2004; Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Higgins, Bargh, & Lombardi, 1985; McCombs, 2004). Like the strength of general priming effects, the length of a priming effect is dependent on the accessibility and applicability of the prime. A prime that can be accessed easily and is applicable to the situation tends to last longer than “one-shot” priming effects. Although priming effects tend to be short-lived, even a single exposure to a prime can alter attitudes, behavior, and even
voting intentions (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Jackson, 2011). Constant reinforcement of certain primes is more likely to increase the accessibility of that prime, resulting in greater and sometimes longer-lasting priming effects (Althaus & Kim, 2003; Lau, 1989).

**Types of Priming**

Priming, when observed from an agenda-setting perspective, is a fruitful research path in that both agenda setting as well as priming are used to investigate a host of media-effects research questions (McCombs, 2004; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Several researchers have attempted to discover which agenda setting level, first or second, is more influential during the priming process. The most recent research suggests that, although there is a relationship between first level agenda setting and priming, second level agenda setting is more effective in prompting noticeable priming effects (Althaus & Kim, 2006; Hester & Gibson, 2003; Lee, 2010; Sheafer, 2007). As described by Kuhne and his colleagues (2011), affective priming “can be understood as an alternative form of an activation impulse within the cognitive network that renders certain memory content more accessible” (p. 486).

Basic cognitive priming effects result from first level issue saliency and strengthen attitude formation, whereas affective primes, which tend to enhance priming effects, are based on an emotional response (Kiousis, 2011). Indeed, as explained by Kiousis and others (1999), attributes, especially affective, are emotionally charged, while issue salience, while powerful, has less emotion attached when compared to attributes. Moreover, Wu and Coleman (2009) found that “negative traits of candidates portrayed in the media are more strongly correlated with people’s perceptions than are positive traits” (p. 780). This suggests that not only are affective traits more dominant than both issue salience and substantive traits, but a negative tone will have even a greater effect in terms of salience and priming. Regardless if the attribute is negative or
positive, substantive or affective, salient attributes tend to exert more of an influence on the
corporate agenda than issues/objects (Kiousis, 1999; Kiousis, 2003; Wu & Coleman, 2009).

**Network Theory**

As this project integrates an agenda setting, priming, and network theory perspective, it is
prudent to provide an overview of network theory as it relates to media and this study. Although
network theory has been applied in both the physical and social sciences, the current review will
focus primarily on network theory as it has been used to address social scientific questions. At
its core, network theory is a cross-disciplinary “common paradigm” (Barabasi, 2009, p. 412) that
seeks to “predict the structure of relationships among social entities, as well as the impact of
…structure on other social phenomena” (Butts, 2008, p. 13). Because an almost infinite amount
of networks exists in the social world, network theory is extremely applicable in investigating
both large-scale and small-scale relational webs (Watts, 2003). Network theory is rarely used to
investigate agenda setting and priming, thus it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the
theory before discussing the particular concepts of the theory as they relate to this project.

Although network theory was reintroduced in the late 1990s, it is rooted in graph-based
mathematics, which as a sub-discipline can be traced back to the 18th century (Chung & Lu,
2006). As described by Buchannan (2002), “graph theory is the branch of mathematics that
deals with question concerning the various ways that a group of things can be connected
together, and the theory applies no matter what these ‘things’ might be” (p. 35). In network
studies, these “things” are defined as nodes/vertices and can be classified as almost anything,
including individuals, nation-states, and corporations, among others (Barabasi, 2003; Davis,
Yoo, & Baker, 2003). Nodes are connected via links/edges to one another within a well-defined
or fluid network. These connections can be strong, weak, directed, or non-directed.
Notwithstanding of how a specific network is visualized, the two primary components (nodes and links) are needed to infer structural effects from both the network and the individual nodes that reside in the network (Barabasi, 2003; Buchanan, 2002; Butts, 2008; Chung & Lu, 2006; Knoke & Yang, 2008; Watts, 2003).

At first, graph theory remained an obscure mathematical sub-topic rarely applied outside of the world of mathematics for many years. Although scientists and philosophers, including Durkheim and Comte, were well aware of the potential power an interconnected web could have on the attitudes and behavior of an individual, it was not until the 1940s and 1950s (e.g., Festinger, 1954) that scholars undertook social scientific research in an attempt to empirically investigate the effects of a social network (Borgatti et al., 2009; Lazer, Rubineau, Chetkovich, Katz, & Neblo, 2010; Schnettler, 2009a; Schnettler, 2009b). These studies, while not using contemporary network theory, sought to understand how the social world, and relationships in particular, could influence individual attitudes and behaviors.

While the early studies conducted in the 1940s and 50s helped to advance understanding at it related to the clout of small-scale social networks, it was not until the 1960s did social science researchers actively attempt to understand the typology of networks and the potential of network effects. These two research veins, namely network typology and network effects scholarship, have been the main focus for network scholars within a diverse set of social science disciplines, including political science, psychology, sociology, and media studies (Borgatti et al., 2009; Watts, 2004).

Early network research was limited by the data that could be measured for even the smallest of networks are impacted by an almost unlimited number of variables (Knoke & Yang, 2008). Today, network researchers are able to gather once-hidden data using computer software
to measure and graph networks. Software like UCINET and NodeXL are able to run Social Network Analysis (SNA) and uncover underlying graph properties like degree (defined as the number of individual links an individual node receives and/or gives), closeness (defined as the position of the node in relation to other nodes), density (defined as the overall connectivity of the graph as measured by the number of links present in relation to the number of links possible), and betweenness-defined as the position of a node as a bridge/connector to other clusters within a network (Butts, 2008; Hoppe & Reinelt, 2010; Knoke & Yang, 2008; Panzarasa, Opsahl, & Carley, 2009; Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008; Valente & Fujimoto, 2010).

In addition, links tend to be conceptualized as either strong or weak, yet the variables that contribute to the strength or weakness of a link are often challenging to measure with precision (Knoke & Yang, 2008). Indeed, a strong link that may exist in one social network (e.g., the workplace) may not exist in another network (e.g., a friendship web). As such, the variables that contribute to the strength or weakness of a link will vary between the networks under investigation. Further, because there is a large number of factors that contribute to the strength or weakness of a link, researchers have to choose between one or two variables in order for the model and results to remain parsimonious.

**Network Typology Research**

Network studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s focused primarily on understanding network structure (Crossley, 2008). It was believed that “ascertaining the average degree of separation between agents in that population is a way in which we can begin to model and measure structure” (p. 261). In the now famous “six degrees of separation” (Barabasi, 2002, p. 29) study, Milgram (1967) sought to understand how individuals were associated with one another across time and space by sending a series of letters to random individuals in Omaha, NE.
The residents who received the letters were asked to forward them to a person they knew on a first name basis who would be most likely to be linked to a stockbroker in Boston. Surprisingly, a number of letters reached the stockbroker and the median number of steps (as defined by the number of individuals that it took to pass along the letter) between two seemingly random individuals was 5.5. While the study has been subsequently criticized on methodological grounds, succeeding research has confirmed that individuals, on average, are connected to one another through no more than six steps, suggesting that the global community is indeed a small world (Guiot, 1976; Dodds, Muhamed, & Watts, 2003; Korte & Milgram, 1970; Watts, 2003).

Milgram’s (1967) small world experiment is viewed today as an extension of research first conducted by Pool and Kochen in 1958, but published in 1978 (Pool & Kochen, 1978; Schnettler, 2009a). In their study, Pool and Kochen (1978) attempted to construct social networks using mathematical models. Whereas Pool and Kochen relied on mathematical models to discover network typologies, Milgram (1967) used a completely new methodological technique to understand network typologies at a larger scale.

Although Milgram (1967) and others (e.g., Guiot, 1976; Korte & Milgram, 1970; Stevenson & Gilly, 1991) found a small world in that random individuals seemed to be coupled via a relatively small number of intermediaries, research into the small world phenomena remained relatively stagnant (Schnettler, 2009a). In 1998, Watts and Strogatz published a manuscript that endeavored, using computer simulations, to visualize the small world phenomenon. Up until that time, researchers assumed networks formed randomly, meaning that nodes connected to other nodes without any consideration to individual node and network characteristics (Barabasi, 2003; Watts, 1999; Watts, 2004; Watts & Strogatz, 1998). When networks developed randomly, short path lengths were evident, but clustering was absent. This
type of network, although a useful template for investigating network effects, does not mirror actual social networks. Real social networks are both random and structured in their overall design.

Moreover, short path lengths and a high clustering coefficient define real social networks. As stated by Newman and Park (2003), the clustering coefficient is “the probability averaged over the network, that two of your friends will be friends with one another” (p. 3). A network with a high level of clustering, tends to have nodes that are well connected to one another. In the social world, clustering is common as individuals break off and form clusters with family, friends, and other close associates (Buchannan, 2002; Kossinets & Watts, 2006; Newman & Park, 2003). Whereas random social networks tend to have low path links between any two nodes and a low clustering coefficient, a completely structured network, when arranged as an ordered lattice, tends to have a rather large average distance between nodes, but a high clustering coefficient (Newman, 2000; Watts, 2003).

Both models, structured and random, do not accurately characterize real-world networks (Watts & Strogatz, 1998). To address this glaring problem, Watts and Strogatz (1998) found that by inserting a few random links into a structured lattice, connectivity increased, while clustering remained virtually unchanged. By introducing randomness into the lattice, the network is able to maintain high clustering (a reflection of a true social network), but the average distance between any two nodes drops dramatically. The randomness creates long-range links that connect nodes that would otherwise remain unconnected in the ordered lattice. This discovery helped to usher in a new “science of networks” (Watts, 2004, p. 243) since, for the first time, a simple model could explain a universal set of networks, regardless of the type of link or node under analysis (Watts, 2004). The network that Watts and Strogatz constructed mirrored a real social network
as it was well connected through random links, but still contained a large number of localized clusters (Barabasi, 2003; Buchannan, 2002; Watts, 1999; Watts, 2003; Watts, 2004).

Watts and Strogatz (1998) reintroduced social network theory to both the physical and social sciences. By finding how the small world is arranged, it was then possible to ask additional questions related to networks in general. These small world networks, although more applicable when compared to random networks, were still limited by a number of assumptions. First, small world models were often thought of as static in their evolution. Real social networks, however, are dynamic as they are constantly growing (Barabasi, 2009; Suo & Chen, 2008). Second, random and small world networks assume there exists an element of chance involved in the construction of links. In contrast, the scale free network model assumes that “most real networks exhibit preferential connectivity” (Barabasi, 2009; p. 511). The two components of real networks, growth and preferential attachment, are what drives the network to be scale-free in its design (Barabasi & Albert, 1999; Barabasi, 2003; Barabasi, 2009; Goldenberg, Han, Lehmann, & Hong, 2009; Stephen & Toubia, 2009).

Growth and preferential attachment were not taken into account in both the random and small world models, so the simulations generated by such topologies exhibited a Poisson distribution, which is similar to a normal curve (Barabasi, 2003; Barabasi & Albert, 1999; Chung & Lu, 2006). As such, small world and random models were scalable, in that the mean and variance can be measured accurately. Barabasi and Albert (1999) argue that most social networks, because of growth and preferential attachment, follow a power law distribution. A power law distribution allows certain nodes (often labeled “hubs”) to have a very large number of connections, while the vast majority of nodes are only connected to a handful of other nodes. Power law distributions are quite dissimilar from Poisson, since scale or a precise mean does not
accurately reflect the actual model. In the context of social networks that follow a power law distribution, hubs are usually at the advantage of exerting influence as newer and regular nodes tend to connect to the already well-established hubs. The hubs continue to gain new links and connections, while the newer and regular nodes remain stagnant and link to only a handful of other nodes.

Moreover, the rules that govern node fitness are unique to each network. In this way, a newly introduced node may be at a disadvantage (at first) in collecting additional nodes (e.g., new websites are less connected compared to older websites), because newly introduced nodes tend to connect with nodes that already have the most connections, but over time, the new node may be able to become a hub if the preferential attachment conditions are satisfied (e.g., Google becoming the top search engine at the expense of Yahoo).

The fitness component of network research has been analyzed for different network structures. For instance, Stephen and Toubia (2009) analyzed a social commerce network in an effort to appreciate why networks tend to follow a power-law in their overall distribution. Whereas previous authors have argued that power-law distributions arise out of the properties inherent in the network structure (preferential attachment, growth, triadic closure, etc.), Stephen and Toubia (2009) suggest that unique node properties and characteristics will often drive the probability that a network will follow a power law distribution. Within every unique network, those nodes with a high-degree of fitness will be able to gather a large amount of in-links. Barabasi (2009) does not argue with the proposition that hubs can be created from individual properties of nodes. Rather, he states that the fitness of every node is unique, while growth and preferential attachment transcend the different types of networks. Ultimately, Stephen and Toubia (2009) concluded that reciprocity and business accessibility ultimately guided the
construction of a power law distribution regardless of preferential attachment and/or triadic closure. In the end, measuring and defining network typology allows researchers a descriptive blueprint in which to investigate subsequent network effects. As such, research into network typology has continued into the 21st century (Kim, Barnett, & Park, 2010; Tremayne, 2004; Valente & Fujimoto, 2010; Watts, 2004).

One of the most significant concepts related to network typology and to this project is homophily. As defined by McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook (2001), homophily “is the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people. This concept of homophily suggests that “cultural, behavioral, or material information that flow through networks will be localized” (p. 416). Homophily plays an important role in the development of local clusters. As individuals tend to surround themselves with others that are similar in profession, religious belief, and political ideology, a large network that would otherwise remain lightly clustered has a relatively high clustering coefficient. As explained by McCroskey, Richmond, and Daley (1975) and McCroskey, Richmond, and Stewart (1986), homophily can be described within three core dimensions, including demographic characteristics, background, and overall attitudes. Relationships based on a strong sense of homophily tend to be stronger than affiliations based on chance. Subsequently, individuals tend to evaluate those that share similar traits positively when compared to others who are perceived to be dissimilar.

Within social networks, whether perceived or real, nodes connect to one another in a non-random fashion (Newman & Park, 2003). Individuals tend to form relationships along a wide variety of variables, including ethnicity, education, employment, and geographic distance (McPherson et al., 2001). Depending on the network under investigation, some variables exert
more influence when connecting individuals to one another. Regardless of the underlying variable that links nodes, past scholarship posits that the more common individuals perceive themselves to be with one another, the greater the propensity for strong ties to develop between them (Fiore & Donath, 2005; McPherson et al., 2001; Wright, 2000). Put succinctly, greater homophily between any two nodes will increase the chances that a strong tie will form between them (de Klepper, Sleebos, van de Bunt, & Agneessens, 2010).

Decision-making, and especially when choosing to engage in a new behavior, is a complex process that involves a host of variables (Slater, 1999). Scholars from dissimilar disciplines have attempted to examine what factors contribute to the modification of behavior, and have subsequently proposed models in which to explain behavioral change (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Moreover, homophily research has found that perceived homophily will extend only so far when developing opinions about certain individuals or institutions (Aune & Kikuchi, 1993; Centola, 2011; Walther et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2008); however, research has revealed that perceived homophily can alter attitudes and behaviors within a local cluster (Centola, 2011).

Two nodes perceived to be homogenous along a finite set of variables are often perceived to be similar across additional variables as well (McCroskey et al., 1975; McPherson et al, 2001; Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008). For example, two individuals sharing similar religious belief systems, jobs, and education levels may also be perceived to have similar political views. Studies suggest that perceived homophily is positively related to attraction and higher levels of trust and credibility (Aune & Kikuchi, 1998; Fiore & Donath, 2005; Wright, 2000). Homophily has been studied across a wide variety of mediums as well. Researchers studying homophily examine connections within traditional social settings
(workplace, family, school, among others). Other scholars investigate perceived homophily in non-traditional environments, including online, within a video game universe, and on television (Nowak, Hamilton, & Hammond, 2009; Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008; Wright, 2000).

**Network Effects Research**

In addition to understanding the structure of networks, early work in the 1960s and 1970s also explored the consequences of living within social networks (Feld, 1981; Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter (1973) found that acquaintances tend to be better conduits of new information than close friends. Information disseminated within a cluster of strongly tied friends tends to be recycled, resulting in nearly full saturation within any given local cluster. In contrast, novel information often originates from nodes that reside outside of the social cluster. These weak ties link clusters of individuals to one another, and are necessary for a large social network to be fully connected. Subsequent studies found that individuals using information gleaned from weak ties were more likely to find employment when compared to job prospects found within a tightly knit social cluster (Granovetter, 1974). With respect to network influence, sociology researchers have found that, in addition to the advantage of weak ties in finding employment, the position of the ties matters as well (Granovetter, 1983; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981). The notion that weak links were, in many ways, more important for individuals in terms of receiving new information was an unusual idea when the studies investigating weak tie effects were first published (Granovetter, 1983). In addition to network effects on the acquisition of new employment-related information, scholars have also analyzed network structures and their effect on individual health decisions, geographic displacement, and social support (Atkinson, Liem, & Liem, 1986; Greenbau & Greenbaum, 1985; Hammer, 1983; Rook, 1984)
Social network studies investigating the effects of networks on political participation and mobilization were conducted in the latter half of the 20th century (Lim, 2008). Many of these projects found that one’s position within a social network influences whether an individual would participate in the political process through membership in civic organizations or social movements (Klandermans, 1984; McAdam, 1986). Studies that analyzed the potential for network position as well as network connections to dictate seemingly independent individual actions helped to solidify network theory as legitimate framework within the social sciences. Research in the political science and social communication fields, although not overtly using network theory, has sought to discern how social networks and interpersonal discussions influence independent choices, and especially voting decisions (Ikeda & Boase, 2011; Jelen, 1993; Kenny, 1994; Siegel, 2009).

Because individuals reside in various and often overlapping sets of social networks, network effect scholars have also diversified in the types of networks that they examine. For example, Jelen (1993) investigated the influence of religious affiliation on attitudes. It was found that some groups (e.g., Christian Right) are more influenced by the group dynamic than other groups. Ryan (2011) discovered that uninformed independent voters rely on social network shortcuts more than their partisan counterparts when deciding whether to vote for a particular candidate. By employing computer simulations to analyze the 2000 National Election Survey (NES) data, Ryan (2010) found that an ego’s social network does have an effect on voter choice. As stated by Ryan (2010), “If an individual’s associates are like-minded in their support for a party or candidate, that individual will likely support that party or candidate” (p. 54). The abundance of network-related research in both political science and sociology lends support to examine agenda setting and priming through a network perspective.
Network Theory, Communication, and Media Research

A review of the network theory literature suggests that network theory is applicable in a wide variety of contexts. Because this project also incorporates agenda setting and priming, it is pertinent to review previous communication and media studies that employed network theory and social network analysis as the theoretical framework and methodological tool, respectively. The communication discipline is uniquely situated to benefit from network theory, because the spread of information can be strengthened or weakened by communication networks. As described in Chapter I, diffusion of innovation, as a communication theory, is fundamentally concerned about the process of innovation diffusion through a social network (Rogers, 2003). Indeed, social networks can be characterized as having an inherent communication component. As defined by Rogers and Kincaid (1980), social networks are “interconnected individuals who are linked by patterned communication flows” (p. 82). While the type of communication and link varies depending on the network under investigation, social networks need some form of communication in order to remain connected. Thus, scholars have used network theory, from both an effect and typology standpoint, to better understand organizational webs, agenda setting theory, and the spread of extremism, among others (Feeley, 2008; Franks et al., 2008; Meraz, 2009; Meraz, 2011). For instance, Feeley and associates (2008) found that the propensity for employees to resign from a job was based in part on their position within an employee network as well as the number of links that connect an ego to his/her alters. Individuals more connected to their peers were less likely to resign from their place of employment. In contrast, those with few links were more likely to quit their job.

In a similar organizational communication study, Grosser and colleagues (2010) examined how network structure can affect how gossip is transmitted in the workplace. They
found that the type of tie in the workplace was often a strong indicator into whether gossip was instigated. When individuals were strongly connected via a friendship bond, they were more likely to initiate and transmit rumors and innuendo. Moreover, the number of ties can also affect whether individuals engage in gossip, both positive and negative. Individuals that were better connected (as defined by the amount of in-degree and out-degree links) were more likely to engage in gossip than their less connected counterparts. In this sense, the structure of the employee network dictated, in part, the sort and quantity of gossip communicated.

Network theory lends itself to interpersonal and organizational communication research, yet few media researchers have used network theory to answer media-specific questions. Some of the studies that have tried to uncover media’s influence on a network are based in computer science. By using computer models to predict social cohesion, Stocker, Conforth and Green (2003) sought to analyze television’s influence on social cohesion from a network perspective. In their study, the authors created a random network that was subsequently “infected” by television. The first experiment revealed that a network was able to effectively resist the television node if the entire network was connected above a critical value. If not, the television node was able to spread its influence (by turning an opinion from yes to no) to almost all nodes in the network in a relatively short period of time. Based on these finding, the connectivity of an individual node was a powerful predictor to how the node would react when exposed to a contradictory persuasive source. It was inferred that a more connected (especially with strong connections) node will be able to withstand external television pressure better than its less connected equivalent.

Stock and colleagues (2003) suggest that media may have more influence on perceived public opinion when certain critical values are reached within a network. A node/individual that
has few connections may be more influenced by what media portrays as the majority opinion. In contrast, a well-connected node may rely less on media to determine the perceived public opinion, and more on the reference groups that it is connected to. Because nodes tend to link to other nodes based on homophily, projection might arise based on the position of the node within the network. In this case, the spiral of silence effect might only occur in nodes that exist within a certain portion of the network (e.g., on the periphery).

Meraz (2009, 2011) is one of the few media researchers who have melded network theory into traditional media scholarship. In one study, Meraz (2009) found that homophily, a central concept that governs network growth, is evident in the blogosphere. Elite mainstream media blogs tend to hyperlink to other elite mainstream media blogs at the exclusion of independent elite blogs. In this case, the mainstream online blog outlets exhibit network properties. In a similar study, Meraz (2011) investigated the transfer of media attributes from the media agenda to the independent political blogosphere using network theory as a theoretical basis. In addition, she also examined if there was a relationship between the partisan blog networks in terms of attribute agendas. Her research indicates that the left-leaning and right-leaning blogs separate themselves by their use of hyperlinks. It was also found that a few politically moderate blogs exist to connect the two divergent networks, and these two fundamentally distinct networks use a separate set of attributes to define issues. Furthermore, there was a relationship between the attribute agenda of mainstream media blogs, and moderate and liberal blogs, but not for the right-leaning blog network. These results suggest that “elite traditional media’s attribute agenda setting power is no longer guaranteed within socially cohered political groups” (p. 120).

The decline of the gatekeeper model should not surprise network researchers as strong ties that connect clusters tend to grow stronger based on increased homophily and reciprocal
relationships. Over time, the clusters become more isolated unless weak links exist that can bridge the remote clusters. In terms of agenda setting, the network structure of society can influence whether issue and/or attribute salience is transferred from the media to the public agenda. In this sense, the network structure may ultimately strengthen and or weaken agenda setting effects.

Limitations of Network Theory

This is not to say that there are no disadvantages to network research. For all that network research can uncover, the social maps produced are rather simplistic relative to the extreme complexity of even the most basic of networks. Individuals exist and live in a wide assortment of social networks, and these networks tend to overlap with one another. As such, social network research is often limited in the type of network it can describe and explain. It may be possible to measure a perceived political network, but ascertaining the influence of other networks on the perceived network is difficult to measure. According to detractors, “network effects are really just epiphenomenal selection effects due to individuals’ choosing each other on some sort of individual-level basis…” (Lazer et al., 2010). In essence, critics of network effects scholarship argue that the influence of networks is overstated. Nodes choose to connect with other nodes, and the action or inaction of a particular node is based more on the attributes of the node rather than its position within the network itself.

It is also important to acknowledge that social networks are not static. Instead, they are dynamic webs that are constantly in flux. Because of this, a network model taken at one point of time may not accurately reflect the current status of the network (Knoke & Yang, 2008). This is not to say that the study of networks and the use of social network analysis are meaningless endeavors. As the previous readings indicate, network theory and SNA are able to examine
processes that may be left hidden by traditional theories and methodological tools. A network model may only be a “snapshot,” but the snapshot can, as Butts suggests, “contain the structural signatures of the micro processes giving rise to them and can, hence, be used in many cases to test hypotheses regarding such processes” (p. 37).

As we have seen, the intrinsic, and in some cases universal, properties of networks are observed across both social and non-social webs. The position of a node within a network can be used to predict how the node will act and behave over time. A “snapshot” may only be a glimpse into the network, yet in that quick glance one can discover qualities observed across seemingly divergent types of networks.

Finally, social network analysis, when described as a method, is often criticized as being purely descriptive in its design and purpose. Although contemporary SNA is able to represent a network both visually and through quantifiable variables, some researchers are quick to claim that network theory and SNA contribute little to scholarly investigation and theory building. Critics argue that describing a network does little to explain and/or predict how a network functions. This criticism is glaring when considering that even proponents of network scholarship have acknowledged that network studies tend to focus on descriptive indices (Butts, 2008; Watts, 2004) at the expense of causal relationships.

Network research can be descriptive, but it may be also able to examine network data to explain and predict social phenomena. Whereas the majority of the past research has been descriptive, contemporary scholarship continues to further network scholarship and use it to answer pertinent research questions in the social sciences (Hoppe & Reinelt, 2010; Ideka & Boase, 2011; Russo & Koesten, 2005; Susskind, Odom-Reed, & Viccari, 2011). Though network research has been derided as a purely descriptive exercise (and indeed it had been for a
number of years until recently), cutting edge network scholarship is beginning to build upon what was learned in the past decade, and expand it into answering questions that are less descriptive and more explanatory and predictive in their nature. This project was designed to continue to build upon network theory through understanding its tenets via causal effects. As previous research has noted, the action (or inaction) of one node can reverberate and affect other nodes within the network (Jelen, 1993; Grosser et al., 2010; Ryan, 2010. As spillover/indirect priming effects should depend, in part, on the strength of ties between nodes, this project furthers network effects scholarship by observing a small segment of a perceived political network in relation to a prime. Instead of a purely descriptive exercise, this research moves network theory forward in the hopes of strengthening its position as a framework that can not only describe, but can also explain and predict as well.
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this chapter, a series of research questions and hypotheses are proposed. The questions and subsequent hypotheses frame this study from an agenda setting, priming, and network theory standpoint. The first set of questions are more traditional in that they explore direct priming, while the second set of questions are designed to measure spillover/indirect priming effects. The final set of research questions analyze the relationship between priming effects and moderating variables (i.e., political ideology, political interest, political awareness, among others). Because the core theoretical concepts of this project were developed, in part, from political communication research, I primarily discuss agenda setting and priming in relation to presidential politics.

Research Questions

Agenda Setting

As priming is frequently discussed as a consequence of agenda setting, it is prudent to begin this chapter with a conversation of agenda setting as it relates to priming. Previous priming scholars have explored agenda setting in tandem with priming theory (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). Still, both priming and agenda setting can be studied alone. As stated in Chapter II, agenda setting has several different levels. The psychological consequences of agenda setting, often labeled as priming, is just one level within the agenda setting paradigm (McCombs, 2004). As such, agenda scholars are not required to examine priming effects when conducting agenda setting research. Similarly, priming scholars can investigate priming effects without mentioning agenda setting, since priming is merely “a psychological phenomenon that involves activating stored knowledge” (Cho, 2006, p. 297). Although priming is often researched in the context of political communication and media
effects scholarship, its basic premise is not restricted to media studies. Indeed, the priming phenomenon was first demonstrated in experiments that did not include media-specific stimuli (Berkowtiz & LePage, 1967; Srull & Weyer, 1979).

Even though agenda setting and priming can and have been studied separately, both are excellent theories in which to study together, because the agenda setting theory is primarily concerned with the transfer of object salience, while priming scholars tend to investigate how agenda setting affects public opinion. Put succinctly, the agenda setting theory explains the initial step of a comprehensive media effects model (McCombs, 2004). Consequently, the agenda setting theory is incomplete. Incorporating priming theory into the agenda setting framework finalizes a useable and inclusive media effects model (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010). It is necessary and sensible, then, to study agenda setting and priming together as it allows the researcher to glean a more complete picture of media effects.

According to the agenda setting theory, media have the unique ability to transfer the salience of objects/issues from the media to the public agenda by covering certain objects/issues at the expense of others (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; McCombs, 2004). Past research confirms that there tends to be a strong and positive correlation between the salient issues presented on the media agenda and the issues the public deems most important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Because priming is a consequence of the agenda setting process, agenda setting effects are often assumed to exist if priming effects can be accurately measured. This premise is important to note given that this study was not specifically constructed to examine agenda setting, but instead measured priming outcomes.

**Direct Priming**

As this project is principally a priming study, the next series of questions focus on direct
priming effects. More specifically, the following research questions are designed to uncover traditional priming effects along job performance, competency, favorability, and voting intent. Previous priming scholarship suggests that individuals evaluate the job performance of elected officials (and especially presidents) based on the most salient issues on the media agenda (Iyengar et al., 1984; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). The issues on the media agenda are disseminated to the public agenda via news stories that are carried on a wide variety of mediums, including newspapers and television news programs. Priming effects tend to be even more pronounced when the most salient issues are both accessible and applicable for the individual exposed to the priming stimuli (Kim et al., 2002), suggesting that, for this study, priming effects should be observable.

Past research has studied priming in relation to the evaluation of presidents through three main benchmarks: job performance, competency, and integrity. More precisely, researchers have sought to explain how media can influence public perception of a president’s general and issue-specific job performance, general and issue-specific competency, and overall integrity. Performance evaluations, whether general or issue-based, are included in national polls and surveys, and often are used as the primary evaluative yardstick for presidents (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Pan & Kosicki, 1997; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). General job performance measures ask respondents to judge the president on his/her handling of the presidency, while issue-specific performance evaluations ask respondents to judge the president on certain political subjects (e.g., economy, environment, healthcare, and others). These issues can be defined very broadly (e.g., economy) or very specific (e.g., Keystone Pipeline). Whether respondents are asked to assess a president on his/her general job performance or issue-specific performance, researchers have classified performance assessments
as cognitive judgments, meaning the assessments are based primarily on non-emotional standards (Kiousis, 2003).

Similar to job performance evaluations, competency measures have been included in past priming scholarship as well (Cho, 2005; Iyengar et al., 1982; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Competency is defined through knowledge and intelligence, and is used to determine how respondents perceive a president’s understanding of his/her job as president as well as his/her understanding of specific issues. Competency evaluations are based on the perception of a president’s professional traits; though competency has been operationalized as a character-based variable as well (Cho, 2005; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Whereas job performance is usually considered an approval barometer, competency evaluations are more complex in that respondents will often take into account a wide variety of variables when deciding upon a president’s perceived competency. Researchers believe that perceived competency towards an issue is a distinct evaluative standard that may contribute to job performance evaluations (Cho, 2005).

Favorability evaluations, while similar to performance and competency judgments, are only sometimes asked in national polls (ANES, 2008). Whereas job performance assessments are specific and draw upon cognitive judgments, and competency evaluations establish the perceived understanding of the job of president or for specific issues, favorability evaluations are broader in their overall design and rely primarily on emotional criterion (Kiousis, 2003). Favorability has not been tied to any one specific evaluative benchmark, but instead has been defined as a personal feeling towards a president.

Voting intent, although a measure generally incorporated into a host of political communication studies, has rarely been used as a dependent measure in priming research (Sheafer, 2007). This is problematic given that while acute priming effects tend to be short-
lived, these effects still might influence voter decisions. With the myriad of factors influencing voter choice in a close election, a media-based prime, if empirically shown to affect voting intent, could impact tight elections (Jackson, 2011; Sheafer, 2007; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005).

**Network Theory**

For this project, priming was conceptualized in relation to a network of political actors (Huckfeldt, 2009). In this case, the president of the United States was defined as a hub in that he is connected to a wide range of elites and political institutions in the United States and abroad (Heaney & McClurg, 2009; Huckfeldt, 2009; Wood, 2009). The type and strength of the links vary, but the president, as commander-in-chief and head of state of the United States, is uniquely positioned within the American political network to exert a large amount of influence on lesser-connected individuals and groups within the network (Wood, 2009). Regardless of who holds the title of “President,” the position itself is already well established, and in a significant and central position in the political web.

Whereas the president is tied to a wide variety of individuals and groups in the national political network, low-level political elites (e.g., city council member of small town, state representative, mayor of a village, among others) often have fewer connections and can be thought of as being on the periphery of the national political network. Local politicians may be able to exert influence within their own niche political network at the county and/or state level, but their influence and their position within the network differs when observing political network structure at the national level. On the national stage, the local and relatively unknown candidate vying for a United State House of Representatives seat exemplifies a typical node within the national political network, whereas the president is best thought of as a hub.
Few scholars have investigated how media coverage of a specific issue that is associated with a hub (i.e., the president) within the national political network affect a typical node (i.e., a local official running for a U.S. House seat) either strongly or weakly tied to the hub. Being that the hub is in position to influence others around him/her, external events that may damage a hub’s standing within the network may ultimately affect the nodes that are strongly or weakly linked to him/her as these hubs are linked to a wide variety of nodes as per the small world phenomenon. In this case, the political hubs are the “glue” that ties the political world together as they are able to link to regular nodes at both the local and national level. The hubs link to people, organizations, and institutions via short, long, strong, and/or weak ties, indicating that hubs in the political environment are extremely influential due to their unique position.

Question 1 asks whether direct priming effects will be found in terms of general and issue-specific job performance evaluations of the president. Previous research has revealed that general job performance and issue-specific job performance evaluations of political figures are often influenced by news story primes (Iyengar et al., 1984; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Kiousis, 2005; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Lawrence & Bennett, 2001). General job performance evaluations tend to be affected by priming regardless of the type of issue discussed in the news broadcast, while issue-specific job performance evaluations tend to be affected by the type of issue addressed in the news report.

**Direct Priming Questions**

**RQ1:** Will exposure to a news transcript prime affect general job and issue-specific performance evaluations of the president?
H1a: Exposure to a news transcript prime will affect general job performance evaluations of the president.

H1b: Exposure to a news transcript prime will affect issue-specific performance evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

Priming effects have been reliably detected after exposure to a prime (Cho, 2005; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Lee, 2010); however, the direction of the prime is important to establish given that the overall tone of a news story can influence how individuals evaluate the president. Indeed, past studies suggest that prime valence, also defined as affective attributes in line with the agenda setting theory, will sometimes impact the direction of priming effects. Exposure to a negative valence prime often leads to a negative evaluation of the president, while exposure to a positive valence news story can cause the president to be assessed positively (Kiousis, 2011; Kiousis et al., 1999; Sheafer, 2007; Wu & Coleman, 2009). This priming effect is often labeled “affective priming” (Sheafer, 2007, p. 26), because the tone of a news report is able to affect the direction and strength of priming effects. Research question 2 (RQ2) is asked in order to better comprehend how the valence of a prime can affect both general and issue-specific job evaluations of the president.

**RQ2:** Will the valence of a news transcript prime affect general job and issue-specific performance evaluations of the president?
H2a: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will adversely affect general job performance evaluations of the president.

H2b: Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime will positively affect general job performance evaluations of the president.

H2c: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will adversely affect issue-specific performance evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

H2d: Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime will positively affect issue-specific performance evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

Negative affective primes have been shown to be more influential in altering attitudes and behaviors than positive or neutral primes (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Kiousis et al., 1999). Following this line of reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2e: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will lead to a more pronounced priming effect for general job performance evaluations of the president than with exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime.
H2f: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will lead to a more pronounced priming effect for issue-specific performance evaluations of the president than with exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

Job performance, both general and issue-specific, has been a consistent and reliable measure of priming effects for nearly 30 years (Iyengar et al., 1984; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010). In addition to measuring job performance, past studies have also examined competency as measured through perceived knowledge and intelligence (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Previous scholarship suggests that there is a positive relationship between job performance and competency, especially when the issue on the media agenda is seen to be relevant and applicable to both job performance and competency assessments (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990).

**RQ3:** Will exposure to a news transcript prime affect general job and issue-specific competency evaluations of the president?

H3a: Exposure to a news transcript prime will affect general job competency evaluations of the president.

H3b: Exposure to a news transcript prime will affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.
Like job performance, perceived competency is often influenced by the affective attributes/story valence that describes the issue. Thus, the following research question and hypotheses are offered.

**RQ4:** Will the valence of a news transcript prime affect general job and issue-specific competency evaluations of the president?

H4a: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will adversely affect general job competency evaluations of the president.

H4b: Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime will positively affect general job competency evaluations of the president.

H4c. Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will adversely affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

H4d: Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime will positively affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.
H4e: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will lead to a more pronounced priming effect for general competency evaluations of the president than with exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime.

H4f: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will lead to a more pronounced priming effect for issue-specific competency evaluations of the president than with exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

The majority of political priming research defines the dependent variables as job performance, competency, and integrity evaluations towards a president. The few scholars that have attempted to measure favorability have found that there is a positive relationship between favorability, performance, and competency appraisals (Kiousis, 2003; McGraw & Ling, 2003). Therefore, it is expected that favorability towards the president should increase when a positive valence prime is introduced, while favorability towards the president should decrease after exposure to a negative valence prime. Since favorability is conceptualized as an emotional assessment, the type of priming stimulus must be taken account when discussing priming effects in relation to favorability assessments. Previous research suggests that scandals and issues that directly affect character evaluations are more likely to influence favorability judgments rather than job performance appraisals (Kiousis, 2003; Lawrence & Bennett, 2001). The media prime for this study addressed a national issue that may not be directly related to an emotional appraisal, suggesting that, for this experiment, favorability evaluations towards the president may or may not change based on exposure to the stimulus.
**RQ5:** Will exposure to a news transcript prime affect favorability evaluations towards the president?

Like favorability, few scholars have included voting intent as a dependent and measureable variable. Priming scholarship suggests that primes can influence vote choice up to a point (Brosius & Kepplinger, 1992; Hetherington, 1996; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Conversely, persuasion research indicates that it is easier to sway attitudes than behavior, because behavioral change is rooted in altering not only an underlying attitude, but intentions toward the new behavior as well (Aune & Kikuchi, 1993; Hovland et al., 1953; Snyder, Hamilton, Mitchell, Kiwanuka-Tondo, Fleming-Milici, & Proctor, 2004). As this study used politically active individuals as participants and mass communication research shows that political partisanship is often a lens in which individuals perceive and process mediated messages (Feldman, 2011; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2012; Schmitt, Gunther, & Liebhart, 2004; Zaller, 1992), voting intent may or may not change based on exposure to the stimulus.

**RQ6:** Will exposure to a news transcript prime affect the propensity to vote for the president?

In keeping in line with previous priming research, research question 7 is designed to examine the factors that contribute to priming effects. As this study manipulated priming valence and prime valence has been shown to affect assessments of presidents (Balmas & Sheafer, 2005; Kiousis, 2007), prime valence should be a factor that contributes to priming effects. While previous research is mixed on whether political awareness and political interest
strengthen or weaken priming effects (Druckman & Holmes, 2004; Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; McGraw & Ling, 2003; Miller & Krosnick, 2000), past scholarship does suggest that partisan ideology is often a dominant information-processing filter for individuals (Carpentier et al., 2008; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Rahn, 1993; Zaller, 1992). This line of research is important to investigate, because according to Valenzuela (2009), “it sheds light on citizens’ competence to make informed political decisions” (p. 766).

**RQ7:** What factors will contribute to priming effects towards the president?

**H7a:** Prime valence and political ideology will be significant predictors for general job performance evaluations towards the president.

**H7b:** Prime valence and political ideology will be significant predictors for issue-specific performance evaluations towards the president.

**H7c:** Prime valence and political ideology will be significant predictors for general job competency evaluations towards the president.

**H7d:** Prime valence and political ideology will be significant predictors for issue-specific competency evaluations towards the president.

**H7e:** Political ideology will be a significant predictor for favorability evaluations towards the president.
H7f: Political ideology will be a significant predictor for voting intent towards the president.

**Spillover/Indirect Priming Questions**

The next set of research questions are asked to determine if spillover/indirect priming effects can be accurately measured. Research questions 8-14 run parallel to questions 1-7, but instead of probing for direct priming effects in relation to a president’s performance, competency, favorability, and voting intent, questions 8-14 focus on spillover priming effects in relation to a local political candidate who is not implicitly or explicitly mentioned in the initial prime. Since the potential priming effects are spillover in that they only indirectly influence evaluations of a lesser-known politician who is also perceived to have a political association (i.e., either strong or weak) with the president, the concept of homophily and balance theory as they relate to this study, must be addressed in order to construct meaningful and theoretically sound hypotheses.

Previous research suggests that the greater the perceived homophily between two nodes (e.g., Node A and Node B), the more likely attributes that define node A will be used to describe Node B, especially for individuals with a high need for closure (Flynn, Reagans, Guillory, 2010; Walther et al., 2008). Similarly, individuals often perceive their personal social network as more homogenous based on their own personal beliefs, although some empirical evidence suggests this is not often the case (Goel, Mason, & Watts, 2010). Perceived homophily will often influence attitudes and perceptions of members both within the network and outside of the network (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011; Lazer et al., 2010). As such, if a salient issue is used to
evaluate the president, and a lesser-known politician is perceived to be closely tied, whether personally, politically, and/or ideologically to the president, priming effects that were originally intended to influence the evaluations of the president should, based on perceived homophily, also affect the judgments of the lesser-known politician. In contrast, a weak perceived connection between the president and the lesser-known politician should limit the potential for spillover priming effects.

According to Heider’s (1946, 1958) balance theory (Cartwright & Harary, 1956; Newcomb, 1961), individuals will, for the sake of maintaining stability and certainty within one’s perceived social network, go to great lengths to maintain similar attitudes towards individuals and objects in order to maintain a level of “cognitive consistency” (Heider, 1958, p. 201). Subsequent balance theory research has attempted to expand upon Heider’s initial model (Adejumo, Duimering, & Zhong, 2008; Crandall, N’Gbala, Silvia, Tsang, & Dawson, 2007; Hummon & Doreian, 2009; Lachlan & Tamborini, 2008; Montgomery, 2009). For example, a number of scholars have analyzed balance theory through computer simulations (e.g., Abell & Ludwig, 2009; Wang & Thorngate, 2007), while others have focused on relationships from a small group and social network perspective (e.g., Adejumo et al., 2008; Binder, Howes, & Smart, 2012; Hummon & Doreian, 2003). Regardless of how balance theory is studied, connections between entities are regularly defined as binary. Links are either conceptualized as positive (+) or negative (-), depending on the network under investigation (Adejumo et al, 2008). When faced with a perceived network that is unbalanced (e.g., Node A likes [+] Node B and Node C, but Node B and Node C do not like [-] one another), individuals will actively attempt to restructure their cognitive framework in order to ease psychological tension and achieve balance (Binder et al., 2012).
For this study, exposure to an initial news transcript prime should affect (either positively or negatively) how a president is perceived along multiple evaluative criteria. By strongly linking an unknown candidate to the president, participants, according to balance theory, should attempt to take steps to maintain attitudinal uniformity. A news transcript prime, whether portraying an issue positively or negatively, and depicting the president as responsible for the issue, should affect not only evaluations of the president, but of the little-known candidate tied to the president as well.

**RQ8:** Will the strength of the tie between a president and a lesser-known official affect general and issue-specific job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official?

**H8a:** Tie strength will affect general job performance evaluations for the lesser-known official.

**H8b:** Tie strength will affect issue-specific performance evaluations for the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the initial prime.

Similar to job performance evaluations, competency assessments, favorability evaluations, and voting intent should also be based, in some part, on the perceived homophily between the president and lesser-known elected official as well as the desire to achieve cognitive balance. While direct priming effects should be found along job performance evaluations and competency assessments, the prime and the participant population for this study may weaken
priming effects for favorability and voting intent towards the directly primed candidate, thus any
spillover effect in terms of favorability and voting intent towards the lesser-known candidate
may or may not be found.

**RQ9:** Will the strength of the tie between a president and a lesser-known official affect
general job and issue-specific competency evaluations of the lesser-known official?

H9a: Tie strength will affect general job competency evaluations for the lesser-known official.

H9b: Tie strength will affect issue-specific competency evaluations for the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the initial prime.

**RQ10:** Will the strength of the tie between a president and a lesser-known official affect
favorability evaluations of the lesser-known official?

**RQ11:** Will the strength of the tie between the president and a lesser-known official
affect voting intent towards the lesser-known official?

Perceived homophily and the aspiration to achieve cognitive balance may not only
encourage a measureable effect in terms of job performance, competency, favorability, and
voting intent, but the direction of such an effect should be considered to comprehend how the
valence/affective attributes of a prime can transfer from a president directly under scrutiny to a lesser-known politician.

**RQ12:** Will the type of valence of a news transcript prime and the strength of link connecting the president to a lesser-known official affect general and issue-specific job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official?

H12a: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will adversely affect general job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official.

H12b: Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will adversely affect issue-specific job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

H12c: Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known elected official will positively affect general job performance evaluations of the lesser-known elected official.

H12d: Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will positively affect issue-specific job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.
In addition to exploring spillover priming effects for general and issue-specific job performance evaluations, the valence and strength of link must also be examined for competency assessments, both general and issue-specific, as well as for favorability evaluations and voting intent, towards the lesser-known official.

**RQ13:** Will the type of valence of a news transcript prime and the strength of link connecting the president to a lesser-known official affect general job and issue-specific competency evaluations of the lesser-known official?

**H13a:** Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will adversely affect general competency evaluations of the lesser-known official.

**H13b:** Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will adversely affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

**H13c:** Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will positively affect general competency evaluations of the lesser-known official.
H13d: Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will positively affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.

Based on previous research, the prime for this study may not be the most effective stimulus to alter favorability evaluations and voting intent for the directly primed official, thus only research questions are proposed along these two evaluative criteria. As discussed earlier in the chapter, balance theory can be applied to a wide variety of networks, but whereas balance theory conceptualizes links as either positive or negative (e.g., like/dislike, similar/dissimilar), network theory approaches relationships within a network from a more nuanced perspective. Links, as defined in the context of network theory, vary in their strength and/or weakness, and can be measured in precise detail as the degree of betweeness or closeness between nodes (Knoke & Yang, 2008). This allows for more flexibility when recording and measuring a social network. Most social networks are complex in that nodes link to one another based upon a wide variety of variables (Buchanan, 2002). These networks are also dynamic as the strength of these links varies over time. Balance theory may be useful in analyzing a certain portion of a simple network, but network theory allows researchers to measure a more diverse set of network-related phenomena.

**RQ14:** Will the type of valence of a news transcript prime and the strength of link connecting the president to a lesser-known official affect favorability evaluations towards the lesser-known official?
**RQ15:** Will the type of valence of a news transcript prime and the strength of link connecting the president to a lesser-known official affect voting intent towards the lesser-known official?

As with research question 7 (RQ7), research question 16 (RQ16) is designed to investigate what factors predict spillover priming effects. Since no research to date has attempted to investigate spillover priming effects, no hypotheses are offered.

**RQ16:** What factors will contribute to priming effects towards the lesser-known official?

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**Political Party Affiliation/Membership and Priming Questions**

As will be discussed in Chapter IV, this study recruited politically involved individuals as participants. With these special demographic characteristics, a series of questions are offered that are designed to uncover the relationship between both direct and spillover priming effects, and political party affiliation. More specifically, research questions 17 (RQ17) and research question 18 (RQ18) contribute to scholarship that attempts to better understand how political partisanship influences a wide variety of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. Previous priming research usually recruits students or average citizens as participants, so generalizing from non-partisan populations to partisan populations is fraught with problems, thus any proposed hypothesis is dubious at best.

**RQ17:** What is the relationship between political party affiliation/membership and direct priming effects?
H17a: There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along general job performance evaluations towards the president.

H17b: There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along issue-specific performance evaluations towards the president for issues discussed in the initial prime.

H17c: There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along general job competency evaluations towards the president.

H17d: There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along issue-specific competency evaluations towards the president for issues discussed in the initial prime.

H17e: There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along favorability evaluations towards the president.

H17f: There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along voting intent towards the president.

RQ18: What is the relationship between political party affiliation/membership and spillover/indirect priming effects?
The final four research questions are constructed to further previous research investigating how media affects political partisans differently. Past scholarship has found that media may influence Democrats and Republicans in a contradictory manner, and since this type of research is in its infancy, research questions 19 (RQ19), 20 (RQ20), 21 (R21), and 22 (RQ22) may shed light on the relationship between media effects and political party affiliation/membership.

**RQ19:** What factors contribute to direct priming effects for Democrats?

**RQ20:** What factors contribute to spillover/indirect priming effects for Democrats?

**RQ21:** What factors contribute to direct priming effects for Republicans?

**RQ22:** What factors contribute to spillover/indirect priming effects for Republicans?
CHAPTER IV: METHOD

Overview and Procedure

This study employed a 3X2 (“Race to the Top” valence priming by relationship with a local politician) experimental post-test only design. Whereas traditional priming research tends to examine priming effects through experimental settings within a controlled laboratory environment (e.g., Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Iyengar et al., 1982; Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Jackson, 2011), the participants took part in this study online and outside of a laboratory. Online media use has dramatically increased in the last decade (The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012), thus the experiment’s overall realism was increased at the expense of control. The experiment manipulated the valence of a news transcript prime (positive, negative, or neutral) and strength of a link (strong or weak) via a newspaper article, and measured perceived job performance, competency, favorability and voting propensity towards both a primed (i.e., President Obama) and a linked fictional candidate (i.e., Steve Easterly).

Participants were recruited via email. More specifically, an email was sent to Democratic and Republican county chairs across six (6) Midwestern states: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. An online search was conducted in order to find the email addresses of the respective Democratic and Republican County Chairs for every county in the six (6) targeted states. Several county parties did not have an online presence. Even though those county parties that did have a web presence usually included email contact information, some counties did not include an email address on their website. Several invitation emails were sent back due to a broken email link or an email address that was no longer valid. Of the 1,072 emails that could have been sent (two chairs per county in 536 total counties spanning six states), 919 successful invitation emails were sent between July 12, 2012 and July 29, 2012. The
invitation email provided county chairs with basic information about the researcher, experiment, as well as the hyperlink directing them to the informed consent webpage (see Appendix A for the informed consent copy). The invitation email asked the county chairs if they were willing to send the hyperlink over their party email lists (see Appendix B for the first invitation email copy).

From July 30, 2012 to August 2, 2012, a second round of invitation emails were sent to county chairs who did not respond to the first invitation email (see Appendix C for the second invitation email copy). A total of 78 county chairs agreed to send the hyperlink across their respective county email lists (see Table 2 and 3 for more information regarding the counties and county political parties per state that agreed to participate). The data collection ended on August 23, 2012 due to external campaign events, which could have influenced the results of the study (i.e., President Obama released campaign advertisements centering on education issues in some of the states where data was collected).

The hyperlink included in the two invitation emails directed participants to an informed consent form. After indicating they knew the risks and benefits of participating in the experiment, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In each condition, participants were presented with a manipulated online news story transcript about the “Race to the Top” education issue. Whereas one condition received a positive valence news story transcript about the issue, the other two conditions portrayed the issue negatively and in a neutral manner, respectively. After reading one of the three manipulated news story transcripts, participants were randomly assigned to one of two additional conditions and instructed to read a fictional newspaper story that alerted them to either a strong link between President Obama and
the fictional candidate, Steve Easterly, or a weak link between the two officials (see Appendix D and Appendix E for the stimulus texts).

In order to hide the true purpose of the study, a dummy news story transcript and a dummy newspaper story were randomly inserted either before or after the manipulated primes. Both the dummy news story transcript and newspaper story were non-political in nature (see Appendix F for copy of the dummy stories). Because this experiment was conducted entirely online and participants could search within a separate browser tab while they were completing the study, the name of the fictional politician was carefully chosen. With the keyword, “Steve Easterly,” no political figure was found using popular search engines such as Google and Bing.

After reading two news transcripts and reading two newspaper articles, participants were directed to a webpage that contained a series of items measuring attitude and voting intent towards both President Obama and the lesser-known politician, Steve Easterly (see Appendix G for the post-test questionnaire). The items measuring the dependent variables were borrowed from a wide variety of sources (e.g., Althaus & Kim, 2006; Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Carpentier et al., 2008; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993; Dragojlovic, 2011; Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Kim et al., 2002; Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Sheafer, 2007; The American National Election Survey, 2008). Once all questions related to the manipulated primes were answered, participants were asked a series of items that served as manipulation checks in order to ensure that the perceived link and story valence could be verified and homophily established. Finally, participants were asked to provide their basic demographic data, including age, education level, political orientation, and political awareness at the end of the questionnaire.

A total of 15 graduate student volunteers evaluated the manipulated news transcript and newspaper article before the experiment was conducted to verify the validity of the independent
variables. On the final webpage of the experiment, participants were thanked for their time and asked to close their web browser window to ensure privacy (see Appendix H for exact copy). The experiment was approved by the Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) on July 12, 2012 (see Appendix I for HSRB approval document).

Participants

The participant population for the experiment was classified as politically active individuals across the Midwest. Whereas most experimental priming studies use undergraduate students as participants, few have attempted to recruit politically active individuals. Particularly, one of the most important research questions in this project addressed the manner in which people react to an experimental stimulus based on their party affiliation. To properly explore the differences related to political affiliation and ideology, it was imperative to obtain a relevant population, i.e., politically active individuals, as participants. The participants for the experiment all resided in the Midwest, a geographic area considered relatively balanced between the two national political parties when compared to other U.S. regions (Medoff, 1997). In the recent 2012 presidential election, several Midwestern states were considered “swing states” in that they did not vote overwhelming for President Obama nor Governor Mitt Romney (Belson, Cohen, Greenhouse, Lattman, Lovett, Pear, z-Pen, Rivera, Schwartz, & Strom, 2012). Indeed, President Obama won states like Ohio and Iowa by only a few percentage points (Belson et al., 2012; Chicago Tribune Election Center, 2012). The participants for this study, then, were part of a unique voting demographic, and their involvement in the experiment led to unexpected discoveries.
Manipulated Priming Stimuli

News Transcript Prime Stimuli Operationalization

The study manipulated the valence of a fictional news story transcript and the strength of the link between a fictitious candidate and President Obama. Through random assignment, participants were be exposed to either a news story transcript that portrayed the “Race to the Top” education issue as positive, negative, or neutral in its overall tone. The “Race to the Top” issue was selected as the issue prime, because previous research indicates that priming effects tend to be enhanced when obtrusive and tangible issues are salient in the media agenda (Demers, Craff, Choi, & Pessin, 1989; Erbring, Goldenberg & Miller, 1980; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McCombs, 2004; McCombs, 2005b; Smith, 1987; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Moreover, individuals have a tendency to use only certain issues as evaluative benchmarks when judging presidents. Issues that are perceived to be within the scope of a president’s responsibility are often used to gauge a president’s job performance and competency, while issues that are outside of the president’s scope of responsibility are rarely employed as evaluative standards (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Not only is the “Race to the Top” issue, and U.S. education in general, an obtrusive issue in that media consumers are able to relate to American education, but “Race to the Top” was an initiative that President Obama proposed early in his first term, suggesting he should be held responsible for the success or failure of “Race to the Top” (Hester & Gibson, 2003; Hetherington, 1996; McCombs, 2004; Pan & Kosicki, 1997).

The modified news transcripts differed in their overall tone (negative valence vs. positive valence vs. neutral valence) towards “Race to the Top.” All three news transcripts did depict President Obama as responsible for “Race to the Top,” however. Although education issues can be salient benchmarks in which to critique presidents, overtly assigning responsibility for this
particular education issue to President Obama should strengthen priming effects (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The negative valence news transcript portrayed “Race to the Top” as a failure. The positive valence news transcript portrayed “Race to the Top” as a success. The neutral valence news transcript discussed the positive as well as the negative aspects related to “Race to the Top.” The study altered the overall tone of the news transcripts since research has found that second level attributes, and especially affective attributes (i.e., positive, negative, or neutral tone), are able to change attitudes in individuals (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Kim & McCombs, 2007; Kuhne et al., 2011; Lee, 2010; Sheafer, 2007).

Presenting manipulated news reports in order to capture priming effects have been used in the past as well (e.g. Domke, 2001; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar et al., 1982; Iyengar et al., 1984; McGraw & Ling, 2003; Valentino, 1999). In studies that have utilized media stimuli, researchers tend to manipulate news stories and present them to participants in a controlled laboratory environment. The news stories are sometimes altered to make an issue more salient (e.g., Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar et al., 1984), or the news story may be modified to change the number or type of substantive or affective attributes attached towards a particular political candidate or issue (e.g., Iyengar et al., 1982).

**Newspaper Prime**

While overall priming valence was modified by manipulating a news transcript, perceived link strength was presented using a fictitious newspaper article. Participants were instructed to read a newspaper article that alerted them to the link between the president and a fictional candidate (i.e., Steve Easterly) running for an open congressional seat in California. The politician in the newspaper article was imaginary to ensure that attitudes towards the candidate were not influenced by prior knowledge. The article(s) either presented Steve Easterly
as closely tied to President Obama (via a strong endorsement from the president) or weakly tied to the president (via no endorsement from the president). The newspaper article(s) were written to describe President Obama in a neutral manner with only a partial mention to the initial “Race to the Top” issue prime.

Text-based primes have been used in previous research designs (e.g. Domke, 2001; Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Lee, 2010; McGraw & Ling, 2003). These previous primes have resembled an ordinary newspaper or magazine article, oftentimes presented in an online format. For example, Druckman and Nelson (2003) copied a *New York Times* article and replaced its text with copy created by the researchers. Similarly, McGraw and Ling, (2003) asked participants to read a series of articles purported to be from credible news magazines (i.e., *Time, Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report*) in an effort to measure priming effects related to groups. Because text-based stimuli have been used successfully in the past, this study exposed participants to a news story transcript and a newspaper article.

**Measures**

After viewing and reading the stimulus materials, participants were asked a series of Likert-type scale questions measuring their attitude towards President Obama and the linked candidate, and their propensity to vote for the president and the linked candidate. Previous agenda setting and priming studies have used post-test questionnaires to measure appropriate priming effects (Holbert & Hansen, 2006; Iyengar et al., 1982; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Sheafer, 2007). An experimental design is a valid way in which to measure priming effects for according to Thorson and colleagues (2012), experiments “provide the most rigorous way to establish causal relationships between independent and dependent variables…relationships critical for building and evaluating theory” (p. 112). Additionally, experiments are able to capture effects in
a real-time environment, free from spurious variables that may ultimately affect the dependent variable under inspection (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Thorson et al., 2012; Valentino, 1999). As a methodology, experiments are well suited for social-scientific research, yet only 9% to 13% of published mass communication studies actively use an experimental design (Thorson et al., 2012). This study builds upon experimental methodology within mass communication.

**Direct Priming Attitude Measures**

Previous research has measured priming effects along three main attitudinal lines, namely job performance, character standing (integrity), and competency (Iyengar et al., 1984; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). For this study, job performance, competency, and an additional component, favorability, were measured. In order to quantify job performance in relation to the primed issue, the question, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling U.S. education?” was asked. To accurately capture the president’s job performance in general, the question, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama’s is handling his job as president?” was asked. For both questions, answers were coded using a 7-point Likert-type scale with “1” labeled as “strongly disapprove” and “7” labeled as “strongly approve.” These types of questions measuring the president’s performance are asked in *The American National Election Survey* (ANES), and have been used to measure priming effects from a scholarly perspective as well (e.g., Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1997).

Competency and job performance are similar, but distinct evaluative criteria; therefore, a series of items measuring the president’s general competency and issue-specific competency were asked to participants after they had viewed and read the priming materials. Past studies have operationalized competency along two separate conceptual lines, namely knowledge and intelligence (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Participants were asked to rate President Obama’s
competency regarding the economy, foreign affairs, and the environment, as well as his overall competency in his job as president of the United States. For example, participants were asked whether they agreed with the following statement, “Barack Obama is knowledgeable in handling his job as president.” The answers were coded using a 7-point Likert-type scale with “1” labeled “strongly disagree” and “7” labeled “strongly agree.” A “job competency” index and “education issue competency” index were created by averaging the scores measured via the intelligence and knowledge items. The “job competency” index (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .97$) and the “education issue competency” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .96$) index were both highly reliable.

In addition to using a basic Likert-type scale to measure attitudes, a feeling thermometer was utilized to capture favorability towards the president and the fictional candidate, Steve Easterly. The feeling thermometer has been used in national surveys (e.g., ANES) as well as in published priming and agenda setting articles (e.g., Kiousis, 2005; Kiousis, 2011; Wanta et al., 2004; Weber & Thornton, 2012). Participants were asked to record their favorability towards President Obama with the following statement, “Please rate your feelings towards President Obama.” At “0 degrees,” the participants had a “very cold or unfavorable feeling” towards the president while at “100 degrees,” participants had a “very warm or favorable feeling” towards President Obama. For this study, the feeling thermometer was borrowed from the American National Election Survey, as presented in 2008. Although job performance and favorability may be positively related, they are two unique dimensions that the public applies to evaluate a president (Kiousis, 2005; McCombs et al., 1997).

Spillover/Indirect Priming Attitude Measures

The primary purpose of this study was to measure spillover/indirect priming effects, consequently it was necessary to understand participants’ attitudes towards the lesser-known and
linked candidate running for office. As such, a series of questions, measuring attitudes towards Steve Easterly, were also asked. As Steve Easterly was running for an open congressional seat and was not an office-holder, the items measured future job performance along the criteria used to evaluate the president. To quantify education-specific performance evaluations, the question, “If elected to Congress, do you think you would approve or disapprove of the way Steve Easterly would handle U.S. education?” was asked. In order to measure general job performance evaluations, the question, “If elected to Congress, do you think you would approve or disapprove of the way Steve Easterly would handle his job as a congressman?” was also asked. Overall competency and issue-specific competency were measured using a scale that rated the fictional candidate on future knowledge and intelligence evaluations. For example, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed, along a 7-point Likert-type scale, with the following statement, “If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be knowledgeable in his job as a Congressman.”

Like President Obama’s favorability evaluations, a feeling thermometer (ranging from 0-100) was employed as an additional measure to capture overall favorability towards Steve Easterly. More explicitly, the statement, “Using the thermometer below and based on what you know of him, please rate your feeling towards Steve Easterly” was included in the questionnaire.

Voting Intent Measures

In addition to measuring attitudes towards the president and the fictional congressional candidate, voting intent data was also be collected. Few priming studies have attempted to analyze voting behavior. This is problematic because as stated by Sheafer and Weimann (2005), “there is a high positive correlation between evaluations of president’s performances (the dependent variable in most priming studies) and voting for or against them” (p. 350). It is
prudent, then, to include voting behavior measures to accurately capture the propensity to vote for both President Obama and the fictional congressional candidate, Steve Easterly. First, participants were asked, “How likely are you to vote for President Obama in the upcoming election?” Participant answers were coded using a 7-point Likert-type scale with “1” coded as “Not Very Likely” and “7” coded as “Very Likely.” As Steve Easterly was a fictional candidate and very little information was given about him, the following question was asked, “Based on what you know of Steve Easterly, how likely would you be to vote for him in the upcoming election if you were in his district?” in order to measure voting intent. Participant answers were coded using a 7-point Likert-type scale with “1” labeled as “Not Very Likely” and “7” as “Very Likely.”

**Manipulation Check**

To confirm that the stimuli were effective and valid, a series of questions asking participants to link President Obama and Steve Easterly and rate the news transcript’s general tone, were asked. For example, participants were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement via a 7-point Likert-type scale, “The news story transcript about the Race to the Top issue portrayed Race to the Top in an optimistic way.” Answers were coded with “1” categorized as “Strongly Disagree” and “7” as “Strongly Agree.” For tie strength, participants were asked to respond to a series of items like, “President Obama supports Steve Easterly.” Answers were coded using a 7-point Likert-type scale with “1” labeled as “Strongly Disagree” and “7” defined as “Strongly Agree.” In addition, participants were asked to rate President Obama’s responsibility towards the “Race to the Top” issue to ensure that the news transcript prime portrayed President Obama as responsible for the education issue. The item stated, “The news story transcript about the Race to the Top issue portrayed President Obama as responsible
for Race to the Top.” The answers were coded using a Likert-type scale with “1” defined as “Strongly Disagree” and “7” as “Strongly Agree.”
CHAPTER V: RESULTS

Descriptive Results

Manipulation Check

A total of 398 participants completed the experiment in its entirely. Of those participants that finished the experiment, 193 were removed from the final analysis as they failed the valence, tie strength, and issue responsibility manipulation checks. This project measured direct and spillover/indirect priming effects, so it was necessary to apply a rather stringent standard for the manipulation checks. The valence of a prime contributes to the direction of priming effects, hence a valence check was included to ensure participants understood the tone (i.e., positive, negative, or neutral) of the initial news transcript prime. Tie strength was also manipulated, consequently it was required to include a second manipulation check to confirm participants understood how Steve Easterly was linked to President Obama (i.e., strongly or weakly). Finally, research has found that priming effects towards presidents are contingent on the perceived responsibility between a president and the primed issue (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). A responsibility manipulation check was included in the post-test questionnaire to make certain participants understood President Obama was at least somewhat responsible for the “Race to the Top” issue.

For the valence manipulation check, participants were asked five 7-point Likert-type questions designed to measure how they perceived the news transcript prime. Items 29 and 31 were reverse-coded. The scores were averaged to produce a “manipulated valence” index, which was highly reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .98$). Participants who received the positive valence news story transcript were included in the final analysis only if their “manipulated valence” score was greater than or equal to five (5), meaning at a minimum, these participants “somewhat agreed”
that the tone of the transcript was positive. Similarly, participants who received the negative valence news story transcript were included in the final analysis only if their “manipulated valence” score was less than or equal to three (3), meaning at a maximum, these participants “somewhat disagree” that the tone of the transcript was positive. For the neutral condition, participants were included in the final analysis only if their “manipulated valence” score was greater than or equal to three (3) but less than or equal to five (5), meaning these participants either “somewhat disagree,” “neither disagree nor agree,” or “somewhat agree” that the tone of the news story transcript was positive.

In addition to an index designed to measure how the participants perceived the valence of the initial news transcript prime, an index of five 7-point Likert-type questions was also included in the questionnaire to quantify participants’ perception of the link strength between President Obama and the fictional candidate, Steve Easterly. The scores were averaged to produce a new “manipulated tie strength” index, which was also highly reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$). Participants exposed to the strong tie prime were only included if their “manipulated tie strength” score was greater than or equal to five (5), indicating these participants at a minimum, “somewhat agreed” that the newspaper article tied President Obama to Steve Easterly. Participants exposed to the weak link prime were included only if their “manipulated tie strength” score was less than or equal to three (3), meaning these participants at a maximum, “somewhat disagreed” that the news story transcript strongly tied President Obama to Steve Easterly.

The final manipulation check involved measuring participants’ perception of presidential responsibility. More specifically, participants were asked to rate, using a 7-point Likert-type scale, President Obama’s responsibility for “Race to the Top.” Participants who indicated the
President was not responsible or only partially responsible—scores less than five (5)—were excluded from the final analysis. This final manipulation check served two functions. First, it acted as an additional measure in which to ensure that participants were engaged and fully read the news transcript, as the transcript made clear that President Obama was responsible for the “Race to the Top” issue. In addition, it served to confirm participants connected the issue prime to President Obama. This was important to note as the project was designed to primarily observe spillover effects, which are contingent on direct priming effects occurring. From this perspective, the manipulation check was necessary as it excluded those who were less likely to assign the responsibility for “Race to the Top” towards President Obama. In all, 205 ($N = 205$) out of the original 398 participants successfully passed the three manipulation checks and were included in the final analysis.

**Basic Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

In total, 205 participants completed the experiment and passed the manipulation checks. A total of 32.2% ($n = 66$) of participants were assigned to the positive valence prime condition, while 38.5% ($n = 79$) of participants were exposed to the negative valence news transcript prime, and 29.3% ($n = 60$) were assigned to the neutral prime condition. For tie strength, 63.9% ($n = 131$) of participants were assigned to the strong tie prime, and 36.1% ($n = 74$) were exposed to the newspaper article weakly linking President Obama to the fictional congressional candidate. Of those that completed the experiment, 44.4% ($n = 91$) identified themselves as men, while 55.6% ($n = 114$) identified themselves as women (see Table 4 for information in table format). The ethnicity of the participants was rather homogenous as 97.6% ($n = 200$) of participants identified themselves as “White/Caucasian.” A total of .5% ($n = 1$) of participants claimed to be
“Black/African-American,” whereas 1.5% \( (n = 3) \) classified themselves as “Hispanic.” Finally, .5% \( (n = 1) \) answered “Other” for their ethnicity (see Table 5 for information in table format).

In addition to measuring gender and ethnicity, participants were also asked to provide their “annual household income,” education level, and age. In terms of “annual household income,” 9.8% \( (n = 20) \) of the 205 participants indicated they make $20,000 or less per year, 16.1% \( (n = 33) \) earned between $20,001 and 39,999 per year, 24.9% \( (n = 51) \) claimed to gross between $40,000 and 59,999 per year, 21% \( (n = 43) \) earned between $60,000 and 79,999 per year, 12.2% \( (n = 25) \) of participants specified they make between $80,000 and 99,999 per year, and finally, 16.1% \( (n = 33) \) had an “annual household income” of over $100,000 (see Table 6 for information in table format).

For education level, 8.8% \( (n = 18) \) of participants indicated their highest level of education was a “high school degree/GED.” Another 9.3% \( (n = 19) \) earned an “Associates/2-year college degree,” while 29.8% \( (n = 61) \) received a “Bachelors/4-year college degree.” Finally, 33.2% \( (n = 68) \) claimed to have a “Master’s Degree,” and 19% \( (n = 39) \) held a “Professional/Advanced Degree (J.D., M.D., Ph.D.)” (See Table 7 for information in table format).

The final demographic question asked participants to specify in what year they were born. The youngest participant was born in 1993, and the oldest participant was born in 1923. One participant claimed to have been born in 1859, and another claimed to have been born in 1853. These values were removed from the measures of central tendency. The overall birth-year mean of the participants was 1956 \( (n = 203, SD = 15.01) \), signifying that the average participant was either 57 or 58 years of age.
The experiment targeted politically active individuals across six Midwestern States; hence, it was crucial to gather data related to where participants lived. Two questions, asking participants to type their county and state of residence, were included in the post-test questionnaire. A total of 13.7% \( (n = 28) \) of participants were from the state of Iowa, 3.9% \( (n = 8) \) hailed from Illinois, 13.2% \( (n = 27) \) resided in Indiana, 21.5% \( (n = 44) \) lived in Michigan, 25.9% \( (n = 53) \) were from Ohio, and 22.0% \( (n = 45) \) claimed Wisconsin as their state of residence (see Table 8 for information in table format).

**Political Demographic Information of the Participants**

As this study recruited politically active individuals, it was important to note the political affiliation of the participants. In terms of party registration, 62% \( (n = 127) \) identified themselves as Democrat, 21.5% \( (n = 44) \) identified themselves as Republican, .5% \( (n = 1) \) identified themselves as members of the Green Party, .5% \( (n = 1) \) identified themselves as members of the Libertarian Party, and 15.6% \( (n = 32) \) stated they were not registered with any political party. Since some of the six states targeted do not keep official party registration lists, political party affiliation was also measured. Of the 205 participants who completed the experiment and passed the manipulation checks, 67.8% \( (n = 139) \) of the individuals indicated they affiliate with the Democratic Party, 21.5% \( (n = 44) \) of participants stated they affiliate with the Republican Party, .5% \( (n = 1) \) specified an affiliation with the Green Party, 1% \( (n = 2) \) of participants aligned themselves with the Libertarian Party, and 6.8% \( (n = 14) \) of participants did not affiliate with any political party. An additional 2.4% \( (n = 5) \) of participant political party affiliation responses were not recorded due to computer error (see Table 9 for information in table format).

An index of three questions, measuring general political ideology, social issues ideology, and economic ideology, were included in the questionnaire to quantify political ideology on a
continuum. For the three questions, “1” equated to “Very Conservative” and “7” represented “Very Liberal.” A “4” was coded as “Neither Conservative nor Liberal.” For general ideology, the mean was 4.78 ($n = 205$, $SD = 1.95$). For social issues ideology, the mean was 5.26 ($n = 205$, $SD = 2.03$), but for economic ideology, the mean was 4.21 ($n = 205$, $SD = 2.09$). The scores for the items measuring political ideology were averaged to produce an “overall political ideology” rating. This new index was highly reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$). For the “overall political ideology” index, the mean was 4.75 ($n = 205$, $SD = 1.91$). Finally, a single measure was included to gauge political interest. Participants were asked to designate their interest in politics using a 10-point Likert-type scale with “1” representing “no interest at all” and “10” coded as “a great deal of interest.” The mean for this measure was 9.14 ($n = 205$, $SD = 1.17$), suggesting that participants were very interested in politics.

An 11 item index was developed to measure overall political awareness. Although alternative measures exist to measure political awareness, scholars have found that fact-based questions are often the best and most reliable way to assess political awareness using survey tools (Bartle, 2000; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Ha, 2011; Zaller, 1992). For every question answered correctly, participants were assigned one point. As such, the lowest score a participant could have received was “0,” whereas the highest score a participant could have received was “11.” The mean number of questions answered correctly was 10.24 ($n = 205$, $SD = 1.19$), with a minimum score of “5” and a maximum score of “11.” The results suggest that participants were highly knowledgeable in regards to political matters (see Table 10 for information in table format).
Demographic Information of Republican Participants

Descriptive statistics were also gathered by participants’ affiliation and/or registration with the two major political parties as well as for Independents. Participants were categorized as “Democrat” if they indicated they were a registered Democrat and/or affiliated with the Democratic Party. Participants were classified as “Republican” if they claimed to be a registered Republican and/or affiliate with the Republican Party. Finally, participants were considered “Independent” if they specified they were not registered and not affiliated with any political party. In all, 23.4% \((n = 47)\) of participants were categorized as “Republican.” A total of 71.6% \((n = 144)\) of participants were classified as “Democrat” and 5% \((n = 10)\) were considered “Independent.”

Of the 47 Republicans that passed the three manipulation checks, 51.1% \((n = 24)\) were men and 48.9% \((n = 23)\) were women (see Table 11 for information in table format). For ethnicity, 100% \((n = 47)\) of Republicans classified themselves as “White/Caucasian” (see Table 12 for information in table format). In terms of income, 4.3% \((n = 2)\) claimed to earn less than $20,000 per year, 17.0% \((n = 8)\) specified they net between $20,001 and 39,999 per year, 19.1% \((n = 9)\) earned $40,000-59,999 in annual income, 19.1% \((n = 9)\) grossed between $60,000 and 79,999 per year, while 14.9% \((n = 7)\) cleared $80,000-99,999 per year. Finally, 25.5% \((n = 12)\) of Republicans specified they make over $100,000 per year (see Table 13 for information in table format). In respect to education, 12.8% \((n = 6)\) of Republicans had a “High School/GED,” while 14.9% \((n = 7)\) had an “Associates/2-year College Degree.” Nearly half of Republican participants (48.9%, \(n = 23\)) received a “Bachelors/4-year College Degree.” In additional 12.8% \((n = 6)\) of Republicans earned a “Master’s Degree,” while 10.6% \((n = 5)\) specified they held a “Professional/Advanced Degree” (see Table 14 for information in table format).
The average age of Republicans who passed the three manipulation checks was either 52 or 53 as the average birth year among the group was 1960 (\(n = 46, \text{SD} = 12.91\)). The oldest Republican participant was born in 1934, corresponding to an age of 78 or 79. The youngest Republican participant was born in 1990, consistent with an age of 22 or 23.

The Republican participants varied in their state of residence. A total of 23.4\% (\(n = 11\)) hailed from Iowa, whereas 2.1\% (\(n = 1\)) were from Illinois. A total of 23.4\% (\(n = 11\)) specified they live in Indiana, and another 6.4\% (\(n = 3\)) were from Michigan. Finally, 12.8\% (\(n = 6\)) were from Ohio, and 31.9\% (\(n = 15\)) resided in Wisconsin (see Table 15 for information in table format).

Political ideology, interest, and awareness were also calculated for Republican participants. The “overall political ideology” score averaged to 1.74 (\(n = 47, \text{SD} = .67\)), and the general ideology score was also 1.74 (\(n = 47, \text{SD} = .77\)). In terms of their political ideology for social issues, the mean was 2.15 (\(n = 47, \text{SD} = 1.25\)) among Republicans, while the mean was 1.34 (\(n = 47, \text{SD} = .56\)) for economic issues political ideology. For political awareness, Republicans answered an average of 10.19 (\(n = 47, \text{SD} = 1.26\)) out of 11 questions correctly. Finally, the Republican participants were rather interested in politics as the average political interest score was 9.13 (\(n = 47, \text{SD} = 1.51\)). See Table 16 for information in table format.

**Demographic Information of Democrat Participants**

A total of 144 Democrats passed the three manipulation checks. Of this group, 44.4\% (\(n = 64\)) were men and 55.6\% (\(n = 80\)) were women (see Table 17 for information in table format). Similar to their Republican counterparts, Democrats were rather homogenous in their ethnic makeup as 96.5\% (\(n = 139\)) classified themselves as “White/Caucasian,” .7\% (\(n = 1\)) claimed they were “Black/African-American,” while another 2.1\% (\(n = 3\)) indicated they were
“Hispanic.” Finally, .7% (n = 1) specified “Other” when asked about their ethnicity (see Table 18 for information in table format). In terms of “annual household income,” 11.8% (n = 17) claimed to earn less than $20,000 per year, 16.0% (n = 23) indicated they earn between $20,001 and 39,999 per year, 25.0% (n = 36) made $40,000-59,999 per year, 21.5% (n = 31) grossed between $60,000 and $79,999 per year, while 12.5% (n = 18) netted $80,000-99,999 per year. Finally, 13.2% (n = 19) claimed to earn over $100,000 per year in annual income (see Table 19 for information in table format).

In regards to the education level among the Democratic participants, 6.9% (n = 10) had a “High School/GED,” while 8.3% (n = 12) received an “Associates/2-year College Degree.” One quarter of Democratic participants (25.0%, n = 36) had a “Bachelors/4-year College Degree.” In additional 37.5% (n = 54) of Democrats held a “Master’s Degree,” while 22.2% (n = 32) were in procession of a “Professional/Advanced Degree” (see Table 20 for information in table format).

The average age of Democratic participants was either 58 or 59 as the average birth year among the group was 1954 (n = 143, SD = 15.3). The oldest Democratic participant was born in 1923, corresponding to an age of 89 or 90. The youngest Democratic participant was born in 1993, consistent with an age of 19 or 20.

Like the Republicans, the Democratic participants varied in respect to their state of residence. A total of 11.8% of individuals (n = 17) lived in Iowa, whereas 4.9% (n = 7) were from Illinois. A total of 10.4% (n = 15) lived in Indiana, and another 23.6% (n = 34) were from Michigan. Finally, 32.6% (n = 47) resided in Ohio, and 16.7% (n = 24) were from Wisconsin (see Table 21 for information in table format).

The “overall political ideology” score averaged to 5.74 (n = 144, SD = .94), and the general ideology average score was similar at 5.8 (n = 144, SD = .95) among Democrats. In
terms of their political ideology for social issues, the mean was 6.24 ($n = 144$, $SD = 1.0$), while the mean was 5.19 ($n = 144$, $SD = 1.45$) for economic issues political ideology. For political awareness, Democrats answered an average of 10.31 ($n = 144$, $SD = 1.1$) of 11 questions correctly. Similar to Republicans, the Democratic participants were interested in politics as the average political interest score was 9.18 ($n = 144$, $SD = 1.03$). See Table 22 for information in table format.

**Demographic Information of Independent Participants**

Only 10 Independents passed the required manipulation checks. From this group, 20% ($n = 2$) were men and 80% ($n = 8$) were women (see Table 23 for information in table format). Like the Republican and Democrats, Independents were also homogenous in their ethnic makeup as 100% ($n = 10$) claimed to be “White/Caucasian” (see Table 24 for information in table format).

For “annual household income,” 10% ($n = 1$) claimed to earn less than $20,000 per year, 20% ($n = 2$) made between $20,001 and 39,999 per year, 40% ($n = 4$) grossed $40,000-59,999 in annual income, 20% ($n = 2$) netted between $60,000 and $79,999 per year. Finally, 10% ($n = 1$) made over $100,000 per year in household income (see Table 25 for information in table format).

In respect to the highest level of education among Independents, 10% ($n = 1$) held a “High School/GED,” while 10% ($n = 1$) held a “Bachelors/4-year College Degree.” A large portion of Independents were highly educated as 70% ($n = 7$) had a “Master’s Degree.” In additional 10% ($n = 1$) of Independents were in procession of a “Professional/Advanced Degree” (see Table 26 for information in table format).
The average age of the Independent participants was either 52 or 53 as the mean birth year among this group was 1960 \( (n = 10, SD = 19.72) \). The oldest Independent participant was born in 1935, corresponding to an age of 77 or 78. The youngest Independent participant was born in 1993, consistent with an age of 19 or 20. Unlike the Republicans and Democrats, Independents lived in only three states. A total of 10% individuals \( (n = 1) \) were from Indiana, whereas 70% \( (n = 7) \) were from Michigan. A total of 20% \( (n = 2) \) resided in Wisconsin (see Table 27 for information in table format).

The “overall political ideology” score among Independents averaged to 5.13 \( (n = 10, SD = .65) \), and the general ideology average score was similar at 5.2 \( (n = 10, SD = .63) \). In terms of their political ideology for social issues, the mean was 6.1 \( (n = 10, SD = .74) \) among Independents, while the mean was 4.1 \( (n = 10, SD = 1.2) \) for economic issues political ideology. For political awareness, Independents answered an average of 9.3 \( (n = 10, SD = 1.89) \) out of 11 questions correctly. The political interest score among Independents was 8.6 \( (n = 10, SD = 1.35) \), slightly lower than both the Republicans and Democrats (see Table 28 for information in table format).

**Results**

**Direct Priming**

**General job and issue-specific performance evaluations.** Research questions one (RQ1) and two (RQ2) were designed to measure direct priming effects along general job and issue-specific performance benchmarks. Using a 7-point Likert-type scale with “1” representing “strongly disapprove” and “7” coded as “strongly approve,” participants were asked to rate their approval of President Obama’s “handling of education” and “handling his job as president.”
RQ1 asked, “Will exposure to a news transcript prime affect general job and issue-specific performance evaluations of the president?” According to hypothesis H1a, “Exposure to a news transcript prime will affect general job performance evaluations of the president.” As stated by hypothesis H1b, “Exposure to a news transcript prime will affect issue-specific performance evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.”

To test hypothesis 1a and 1b, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence as the independent variable, and general job performance and education issue performance as the dependent variables, was conducted. Statistically significant differences were found, $F(2, 202) = 4.28, \ p = .02, \ \eta^2 = .04$, for prime valence along the education issue performance evaluation only. Statistically significant differences were not detected for prime valence along general job performance evaluations, $F(2, 202) = 2.8, \ p = .06, \ \eta^2 = .03$. Based on the results, H1a was not supported, while H1b was supported.

RQ2 asked, “Will the valence of a news transcript prime affect general job and issue-specific performance evaluations of the president?” A series of hypotheses, based upon previous priming studies, were proposed to answer the question. Hypothesis H2a stated, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will adversely affect general job performance evaluations of the president. Hypothesis H2b stated, “Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime will positively affect general job performance evaluations of the president.” Hypothesis H2c stated, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will adversely affect issue-specific performance evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.” Hypothesis H2d stated, “Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime will positively affect issue-specific performance evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news
transcript prime.” As stated by H2e, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will lead to a more pronounced priming effect for general job performance evaluations of the president than with exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime.” Finally, H2f stated, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will lead to a more pronounced priming effect for issue-specific performance evaluations of the president than with exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.”

To test the four hypotheses proposed for research question two (RQ2), a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence as the independent variable, and general job performance and education issue performance as the dependent variables, was conducted. Statistically significant differences were observed, $F(2, 202) = 4.28, p = .02, \eta^2 = .04$, for prime valence along the education issue performance evaluation only. A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison found that participants exposed to the positive valence prime ($n = 66, M = 4.83, SD = 2.05, p = .02$) rated President Obama more positively than participants exposed to the negative valence prime ($n = 79, M = 4.11, SD = 1.8$). Participants exposed to the positive prime did not diverge from the group exposed to the neutral prime ($n = 60, M = 4.72, SD = 1.69, p = 1.0$). Likewise, participants exposed to the negative prime did not significantly differ ($p = .15$) in terms of group means from those exposed to the neutral prime as well.

As the differences between groups along the general job performance evaluation was marginally significant, $F(2, 202) = 2.8, p = .06, \eta^2 = .03$. A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison was recorded. Participants exposed to the positive valence prime ($n = 66, M = 4.77, SD = 2.35$) did not significantly differ ($p = 1.0$) from those exposed to the negative valence prime ($n = 79, M = 4.66, SD = 2.31$) as well as for those presented with the neutral prime ($n =
60, $M = 5.23, SD = 2.0, p = .08$) along the general job performance evaluative item. In addition, significant differences were not found ($p = .19$) for participants exposed to the neutral valence prime and those exposed to the negative valence prime. Based on the findings, H2a was not supported, H2b was not supported, H2c was supported, H2d was supported, H2e was not supported, and H2f was not supported.

**General job and issue-specific competency evaluations.** Whereas research questions one (RQ1) and two (RQ2) were created to measure direct priming effects along job performance (both general and issue-specific), research questions three (RQ3) and four (RQ4) were constructed to measure direct priming effects along the competency evaluative line.

RQ3 asked, “Will exposure to a news transcript prime affect general job and issue-specific competency evaluations of the president?” Past research suggests that priming can affect competency evaluations among individuals exposed to a prime; therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed. According to H3a, “Exposure to a news transcript prime will affect general job competency evaluations of the president.” H3b posited, “Exposure to a news transcript prime will affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.”

To test the hypotheses for research question three (RQ3), a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence as the independent variable, and job competency and education issue competency as the dependent measures, was conducted. Statistical significance was not found for priming valence along education issue competency, $F(2, 202) = .67, p = .51, \eta^2 = .01$. Statistical significance was detected for job competency, however, $F(2, 202) = 3.46, p = .03, \eta^2 = .03$. Based on the findings, H3a was supported, but H3b was not supported.
RQ4 asked, “Will the valence of a news transcript prime affect general job and issue-specific competency evaluations of the president?” Previous research suggests the valence of a prime should influence competency evaluations, especially if the primed issue is perceived to be a benchmark in which to judge a president’s competency. H4a stated, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will adversely affect general job competency evaluations of the president.” According to H4b, “Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime will positively affect general job competency evaluations of the president.” As posited by H4c, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will adversely affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.” H4d stated, “Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime will positively affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the president for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.” As presented by H4e, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will lead to a more pronounced priming effect for general job competency evaluations of the president than with exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime.” H4f stated, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime will lead to a more pronounced priming effect for issue-specific competency evaluations of the president than with exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.”

To test these six hypotheses, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence as the independent factor, and job competency and education issue competency as the dependent measures, was conducted. Statistically significant results were found for job competency only, $F(2,202) = 3.46, p = .03, \eta^2 = .03$. A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed a statistically significant difference ($p = .03$) between participants exposed
to the positive prime ($n = 66, M = 4.95, SD = 2.41$) and participants exposed to the neutral prime ($n = 60, m = 5.51, SD = 1.86$). Statistically significant mean differences were not found ($p = .69$) for the group exposed to the positive valence prime and the group exposed to the negative valence prime ($n = 79, M = 4.99, SD = 2.17$). Finally, the mean differences between the group exposed to the negative valence prime and the group exposed to the neutral valence prime were not significant as well ($p = .35$).

Along education issue competency, statistical significance was not found, $F(2, 202) = .67, p = .51, \eta^2 = .01$. A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed the mean differences were not significant for all of the three groups. Those exposed to the positive valence prime ($n = 66, M = 4.96, SD = 2.15$) did not significantly differ ($p = 1.0$) from the group exposed to the negative valence news transcript prime ($n = 79, M = 4.63, SD = 1.88$) and those ($p = 1.0$) exposed to the neutral transcript prime ($n = 60, M = 5.0, SD = 1.82$). Finally, there was not a significant mean difference ($p = .92$) between individuals exposed to the negative valence prime and the participants exposed to the neutral valence prime. Based on the results, H4a, H4b, H4c, H4d, H4e, and H4f were not supported.

**Favorability evaluations.** The third evaluative criteria included in the post-stimulus questionnaire measured participants “feelings towards President Obama” using a 0-100 degree favorability thermometer scale. “0” degrees represented a “very cold or unfavorable feeling,” while “100” degrees represented a “very warm or favorable feeling.” “50” degrees was coded as “no feeling at all.” The scale measured favorability as an ordinal variable, meaning that “1” equated to “0-10 degrees,” “2” equated to “11-20 degrees,” “3” equated to “21-30 degrees,” and so on.
**RQ5** asked, “Will exposure to a news transcript prime affect favorability evaluations towards the president?” Whereas job performance and competency evaluations are often tied to the issue-prime, favorability evaluations are broader in their scope, and may not be influenced by policy-specific issue primes (Kiousis, 2005).

To answer research question five (RQ5), a two-way univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, prime valence as the independent factor, and favorability evaluations as the dependent measure, was conducted. Statistical significance was not observed for prime valence along favorability towards President Obama, $F(2,202) = 2.66, p = .07, \eta^2 = .03$.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison recorded no significant mean differences along favorability. Participants assigned to the positive valence news transcript prime ($n = 66, M = 7.0, SD = 3.77$) did not significantly differ ($p = .95$) from those exposed to the negative prime ($n = 79, M = 7.0, SD = 3.53$) as well as those ($p = .07$) assigned to the neutral prime ($n = 60, M = 7.78, SD = 3.21$). Similarly, significant mean differences were not found ($p = .47$) between the group assigned to the negative valence prime condition and the group assigned to the neutral valence prime condition.

**Voting intent.** The final evaluative criterion measured was voting intent towards President Obama. More specifically, participants were asked, “How likely are you to vote for President Obama in the upcoming election?” A 7-point Likert-type scale was used to gauge voting intent with “1” representing “Not Very Likely” and “7” representing “Very Likely.” Past priming studies have rarely examined voting intent (Sheafer & Weimann, 2005).

**RQ6** asked, “Will exposure to a news transcript prime affect the propensity to vote for the president?”
To answer research question six (RQ6), a two-way univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence as the independent factor, and voting intent as the dependent measure, was conducted. Statistical significance was not found for priming valence along voting intent, $F(2, 202) = 1.52, \ p = .22, \ \eta^2 = .02$. A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison recorded no statistically significant mean differences ($p = .53$) between the group exposed to the positive valence news transcript prime ($n = 66, \ M = 5.26, \ SD = 2.7$) and the individual exposed to the negative valence news transcript prime ($n = 79, \ M = 5.33, \ SD = 2.65$) and ($p = .31$) the neutral valence prime group ($n = 60, \ M = 5.7, \ SD = 2.4$). Similarly, no significant differences ($p = 1.0$) were observed between the negative valence prime group and the neutral valence prime group.

**Predicting Priming Effects**

In keeping in line with previous priming research, RQ7 asked, “What factors will contribute to priming effects towards the president?” Of the variables measured, only one (prime valence) has been shown to be a consistent factor in predicting priming effects, but since this project recruited politically active individuals, political ideology should also affect evaluations towards the president. As such, H7a stated, “Prime valence and political ideology will be significant predictors for general job performance evaluations towards the president.” As stated by H7b, “Prime valence and political ideology will be significant predictors for issue-specific performance evaluations towards the president.” As posited by H7c, “Prime valence and political ideology will be significant predictors for general job competency evaluations towards the president.” H7d stated, “Prime valence and political ideology will be significant predictors for issue-specific competency evaluations towards the president.” According to H7e, “Political
ideology will be a significant predictor for favorability evaluations towards the president.”

Finally, H7f stated, “Political ideology will be a significant predictor for voting intent towards the president.”

A series of multiple regression models were created to establish the factors that contributed to priming effects. Previous research suggests that political awareness and political interest should play an important and perhaps moderating role for direct priming effects; therefore these variables were included in the regression model as well (Druckman & Holmes, 2004; Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; McGraw & Ling, 2003; Miller & Krosnick, 2000).

To test H7a, a standard multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest and priming valence as predictor variables, and general job performance evaluations as the dependent variable, was created. All variables were included at the identical time via the “Enter” method in SPSS. Political ideology ($\beta = .87, t = 25.5, p = 0.0$) was the only statistically significant predictor for priming effects towards President’ Obama’s general job performance, $F(203, 1) = 649.11, p = 0.0$. Political interest ($\beta = .02, t = .53, p = .6$), political awareness ($\beta = .07, t = 1.79, p = .07$), and prime valence ($\beta = -.01, t = -.37, p = .7$), were not significant in predicting general job performance evaluations towards President Obama. The model, incorporating political ideology only, explained 76% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .76, p = 0.0$), with a significant and strong Pearson correlation ($r = .87, p = 0.0$). H7a was partially supported (see Table 29 and Figure 1 for information in alternative formats).

To test H7b, a standard multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, and priming valence as predictor variables and education performance evaluations as the dependent variable, was created. All variables were included at the identical time via the “Enter” method in SPSS. Political awareness ($\beta = 0.0, t = .08, p = .94$)
and political interest ($\beta = .01, t = .27, p = .79$) were not statistically significant predictors for priming effects towards President Obama’s education issue performance assessment. The two independent variables that were significant in predicting education issue performance were political ideology ($\beta = .73, t = 15.23, p = 0.0$) and prime valence ($\beta = .14, t = 2.85, p = 0.0$). The model, including political ideology, explained 53% ($R^2_{adj} = .53, p = 0.0$) of the variance, $F(203, 1) = 231.73, p = 0.0$, while the model comprising political ideology and prime valence explained nearly 55% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .55, R^2_{Change} = .02, p = 0.0$), $F(202, 2) = 124.2, p = 0.0$. H7b was supported (see Table 29 for information in table format).

To test H7c, a standard multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest and priming valence as predictor variables, and general job competency evaluations towards the president as the dependent variable, was created. All variables were included at the identical time via the “Enter” method in SPSS. Political interest ($\beta = .07, t = 1.71, p = .09$), political awareness ($\beta = .04, t = 1.03, p = .31$), and prime valence ($\beta = -.04, t = -1.1, p = .29$) were not significant predictors of general job competency evaluations towards President Obama. Political ideology ($\beta = .86, t = 24.7, p = 0.0$) was a significant predictor towards President Obama’s general job competency evaluations, $F(203, 1) = 607.27, p = 0.0$. The model, incorporating only political ideology, explained nearly 75% of the total variance ($R^2_{adj} = .75, p = 0.0$), with a significant and strong Pearson correlation ($r = .87, p = 0.0$). H7c was partially supported (see Table 30 for information in table format).

To test H7d, a standard multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, and priming valence as predictor variables, and education issue competency evaluations towards President Obama as the dependent variable, was created. All variables were included at the identical time via the “Enter” method in SPSS. Prime valence ($\beta =$
0.4, $t = .98, p = .33$), political awareness ($\beta = -.01, t = -.18, p = .86$), and political interest ($\beta = .02, t = .53, p = .6$) were not significant predictors of education issue competency evaluations towards President Obama. Political ideology ($\beta = .79, t = 18.1, p = 0.0$) was a significant predictor towards President Obama’s education issue competency evaluations, $F(203, 1) = 334.86, p = 0.0$. The model, incorporating political ideology, explained 62% of the variance ($R^2_{Adj} = .62, p = 0.0$) with a significant and strong Pearson correlation ($r = .79, p = 0.0$). H7d was partially supported (see Table 30 for information in table format).

To test H7e, a standard multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest and priming valence as predictor variables, and favorability evaluations towards the president as the dependent variable, was created. All variables were included at the identical time via the “Enter” method in SPSS. Political interest ($\beta = 0.0, t = -.02, p = .98$), political awareness ($\beta = .02 t = .56, p = .57$), and prime valence ($\beta = -.03, t = -.88, p = .38$) were not significant predictors for favorability towards President Obama. Political ideology ($\beta = .89, t = 27.43, p = 0.0$) was the only significant predictor towards President Obama’s favorability evaluations, $F(203, 1) = 754.38, p = 0.0$. The model, including only political ideology, explained nearly 79% of the total variance ($R^2_{Adj} = .79, p = 0.0$), with a significant and strong Pearson correlation ($r = .89, p = 0.0$). H7e was supported (see Table 31 for information in table format).

To test H7f, a standard multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest and priming valence as predictor variables, and voting intent towards the president as the dependent variable, was created. All variables were included at the identical time via the “Enter” method in SPSS. Political interest ($\beta = 0.0, t = -.09, p = .93$), political awareness ($\beta = .01, t = .13, p = .89$) and prime valence ($\beta = -.04, t = -1.3, p = .2$) were not
significant predictors for voting intent towards President Obama. Political ideology \((b = .88, t = 26.89, p = 0.0)\) was a significant predictor towards voting for President Obama, \(F(203, 1) = 731.23, p = 0.0\). The model, incorporating only political ideology, explained nearly 78% of the total variance \((R^2_{adj} = .78)\), with a strong and significant Pearson correlation \((r = .89, p = 0.0)\). H7f was supported (see Table 31 for information in table format).

**Spillover/Indirect Priming**

Research questions 1-7 addressed direct priming effects towards President Obama. Research questions 8-14 focused on spillover priming effects towards the unknown and fictional congressional candidate, Steve Easterly.

**RQ8** asked, “Will the strength of the tie between a president and a lesser-known official affect general and issue-specific job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official?” H8a stated, “Tie strength will affect general job performance evaluations for the lesser-known official.” H8b stated, “Tie strength will affect issue-specific job performance evaluations for the lesser-known official.”

To test the hypotheses, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, and prime valence as the covariates, tie strength as the independent factor, and general job and education issue performance evaluations as the dependent variables, was conducted. Statistically significant results were documented for tie strength along general job performance, \(F(1,203) = 14.7, p = 0.0, \eta^2_p = .07\). In terms of issue-specific performance evaluations, statistical significance was recorded for tie strength along education job performance, \(F(1,203) = 9.9, p = 0.0, \eta^2_p = .05\). Based on the results, H8a and H8b were supported.
RQ9 asked, “Will the strength of the tie between a president and a lesser-known official affect general job and issue-specific competency evaluations of the lesser-known official?” H9a stated, “Tie strength will affect general job competency evaluations for the lesser-known official.” H9b stated, “Tie strength will affect issue-specific competency evaluations for the lesser-known official.” To test hypothesis H9a and H9b, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, and prime valence as the covariates, tie strength as the independent factor, and general competency and education issue competency evaluations as the dependent variables, was conducted. As with constructing President Obama’s competency factors, a “job competency” index and “education issue competency” index were created by averaging the scores measured via the intelligence and knowledge items for Steve Easterly. The “job competency” index (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$) and the “education issue competency” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$) index were highly reliable. Statistically significant results were detected for tie strength along general job competency, $F(1,203) = 6.73$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$. For issue-specific competency judgments, statistical significance was found for tie strength along education issue competency, $F(1,203) = 7.6$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$. H9a and H9b were both supported.

RQ10 asked, “Will the strength of the tie between a president and a lesser-known official affect favorability evaluations of the lesser-known official?” To answer this question, a two-way univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, and prime valence as the covariates, tie strength as the independent factor, and favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly as the dependent variable, was conducted. Statistical significance was found for tie strength along favorability, $F(1,203) = 17.16$, $p = 0.0$, $\eta^2 = .08$. 
RQ11 asked, “Will the strength of the tie between the president and a lesser-known official affect voting intent towards the lesser-known official?” To answer research question 11 (RQ11), a two-way univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, political interest, and prime valence as covariates, tie strength as the independent factor, and voting intent as the dependent variable, was conducted. Statistical significance was observed for tie strength along voting intent towards Steve Easterly, $F(1,203) = 40.45, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .17$.

Research questions 8 (RQ8) through 11 (RQ11) were designed to examine general spillover priming effects without taking into account the valence of the initial prime. Research questions 12 (RQ12) through 15 (RQ15) include priming valence in addition to tie strength to further explore spillover/indirect priming effects.

RQ12 asked, “Will the type of valence of a news transcript prime and the strength of link connecting the president to a lesser-known official affect general and issue-specific job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official?” H12a stated, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will adversely affect general job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official.” As stated by H12b stated, Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will adversely affect issue-specific job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.” According to H12c, “Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known elected official will positively affect general job performance evaluations of the lesser-known elected official.” As posited by H12d, “Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will positively affect issue-specific
job performance evaluations of the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.”

To test the hypotheses, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence and tie strength as the independent factors, and general job and education issue performance, was conducted. Statistically significant results were found for tie strength along general job performance, $F(2,199) = 15.53, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .07$. Statistical significance was not found for prime valence along general job performance, $F(3,200) = 1.15, p = .32, \eta^2 = .01$. Interaction effects were not found between prime valence and tie strength, $F(3,200) = .93, p = .4, \eta^2 = .01$. In terms of issue-specific performance evaluations, statistical significance was found for tie strength along education job performance, $F(2,199) = 10.6, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .19$. Statistical significance was not found for prime valence along the education job performance variable, $F(2,199) = .53, p = .59, \eta^2 = .01$. Interaction effects were not found between prime valence and tie strength along the education performance evaluation variable, $F(2,199) = 2.47, p = .09, \eta^2 = .03$.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison found participants exposed to the “strong tie” prime ($n = 131$) rated Steve Easterly slightly higher ($M = 4.47, SD = 1.72$) in terms of education issue performance than participants exposed to the “weak tie” prime ($n = 74, M = 3.70, SD = .92$). For general job performance, participants exposed to the strong tie newspaper prime ($n = 131$) rated Steve Easterly higher ($M = 4.58, SD = 1.83$) than those ($n = 74$) exposed to the weak tie prime ($M = 3.58, SD = 1.12$).

No significant differences were found for prime valence along general job and education issue performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Those exposed to the positive prime ($n =
66, $M = 3.95, SD = 1.79$) did not significantly differ ($p = .91$) from those exposed to the negative valence prime ($n = 79, M = 4.14, SD = 1.6$) as well as from those presented the neutral prime ($n = 60, M = 4.62, SD = 1.6, p = .6$) along general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Similarly, no significant mean differences ($p = .43$) were found between the group exposed to the negative valence prime and the group assigned to the neutral prime condition.

For education issue performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, no significant differences were found between the three prime valence conditions. The group assigned to the positive valence prime ($n = 66, M = 4.12, SD = 1.79$) did not significantly differ ($p = .91$) from those assigned to the negative valence priming group ($n = 79, M = 3.99, SD = 1.35$) and those exposed to the neutral prime ($n = 60, M = 4.53, SD = 1.37, p = .41$). Similarly, no significant differences ($p = .17$) were found between those exposed to the negative prime as well as from those assigned to the neutral prime. Because prime valence was not found to be significant for general job performance and education issue performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, H12a, H12b, H12c, and H12d were not supported.

**RQ13** asked, “Will the type of valence of a news transcript prime and the strength of link connecting the president to a lesser-known official affect general job and issue-specific competency evaluations of the lesser-known official?” H13a posited, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will adversely affect general competency evaluations of the lesser-known official.” H13b stated, “Exposure to a negative valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will adversely affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.” According to H13c, “Exposure to a positive valence news transcript prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official
will positively affect general competency evaluations of the lesser-known official.” H13d proposed, “Exposure to a positive valence news story prime strongly linking the president to a lesser-known official will positively affect issue-specific competency evaluations of the lesser-known official for issues discussed in the news transcript prime.”

To test the hypotheses, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence and tie strength as the independent factors, and general job competency and education issue competency, was conducted. Statistically significant results were detected for tie strength along general job competency, $F(2,199) = 6.81$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2_p = .03$. Statistical significance was not found for prime valence along general job competency, $F(2,199) = 2.29$, $p = .10$, $\eta^2_p = .02$. Interaction effects were not recorded between prime valence and tie strength, $F(3,200) = .66$, $p = .52$, $\eta^2_p = .01$, along general job competency.

In terms of issue-specific competency evaluations, statistical significance was found for tie strength along education issue competency, $F(2,199) = 6.81$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2_p = .02$. Statistical significance was not found for prime valence along the education issue competency variable, $F(3,200) = .22$, $p = .80$, $\eta^2_p = 0.0$. Interaction effects were not found between prime valence and tie strength along the education competency assessment variable, $F(2,199) = .41$, $p = .66$, $\eta^2_p = 0.0$.

Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparisons found participants exposed to the strong tie prime ($n = 131$) rated Steve Easterly slightly higher ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 1.51$) in terms of education competency than participants exposed to the weak tie prime ($n = 74$, $M = 3.82$, $SD = .79$). For general job competency, participants exposed to the strong tie ($n = 131$) rated Steve Easterly
higher \((M = 4.45, SD = 1.49)\) than those \((n = 74)\) exposed to the weak tie prime \((M = 3.85, SD = .96)\).

Mean differences were not found along prime valence. Those exposed to the positive valence newspaper prime \((n = 66, M = 3.96, SD = 1.56)\) did not differ \((p = .13)\) from those exposed to the negative \((n = 79, M = 4.34, SD = 1.2)\) and neutral prime \((n = 60, M = 4.38, SD = 1.35, p = .25)\) along general job competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Similarly, no significant differences were found \((p = 1.0)\) between the group assigned to the negative valence prime condition and the group exposed to the neutral news transcript prime.

Like general job competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, no significant differences were found for prime valence along education issue competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly as well. Those exposed to the positive prime \((n = 60, M = 4.1, SD = 1.57)\) did not significantly differ \((p = 1.0)\) from participants assigned to the negative valence prime \((n = 79, M = 4.16, SD = 1.15)\) as well as from the group presented with the neutral prime \((n = 60, M = 4.31, SD = 1.26, p = 1.0)\). No significant differences \((p = 1.0)\) were found between the negative prime valence group and the neutral prime valence group. Based on the results, H13a, H13b, H13c, and H13d were not supported.

**RQ14** asked, “Will the type of valence of a news transcript prime and the strength of link connecting the president to a lesser-known official affect favorability evaluations towards the lesser-known official?”

To answer research question 14 (RQ14), a two-way univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence and tie strength as the independent factors, and favorability towards Steve Easterly as the dependent variable, was conducted. Statistically significant results were
measured for tie strength along favorability, $F(2,199) = 16.12, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .08$. Statistical significance was not observed for prime valence along favorability, $F(3,200) = 1.0, p = .37, \eta^2 = .01$. Interaction effects were not found between prime valence and tie strength, $F(2,199) = .09, p = .91, \eta^2 = 0.0$.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison found that participants exposed to the strong tie prime ($n = 131$) rated Steve Easterly slightly higher ($M = 6.37, SD = 2.53$) in terms of favorability than participants exposed to the weak tie prime ($n = 74, M = 4.96, SD = 1.4$). No significant differences were found for favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly along the three initial prime valence conditions. Participants assigned to the positive valence news transcript prime ($n = 66, M = 5.53, SD = 2.39$) did not significantly differ ($p = .45$) from the group exposed to the negative valence news transcript prime ($n = 79, M = 5.92, SD = 2.24$) as well as from those exposed to the neutral valence prime ($n = 60, M = 6.15, SD = 2.22, p = .34$). No significant mean differences ($p = 1.0$) were found between the group assigned the negative valence initial prime and the group assigned to the neutral valence prime as well.

RQ15 asked, “Will the type of valence of a news transcript prime and the strength of link connecting the president to a lesser-known official affect voting intent towards the lesser-known official?”

To answer research question 15 (RQ15), a two-way univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with political ideology, general political awareness, and political interest as the covariates, priming valence and tie strength as the independent factors, and voting intent towards Steve Easterly as the dependent variable, was conducted. Statistically significant results were observed for tie strength along voting intent, $F(2,199) = 37.24, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .16$. Statistical significance was not detected for prime valence along voting intent, $F(2,199) = .56, p = .57, \eta^2$
Interaction effects were not recorded between prime valence and tie strength, $F(3,200) = .67, p = .51, \eta^2_p = .01$.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison found that participants exposed to the strong tie prime ($n = 131$) were more likely to vote for Steve Easterly ($M = 4.98, SD = 2.21$) than participants exposed to the weak tie prime ($n = 74, M = 3.24, SD = 1.44$). The mean differences between the prime valence groups were not significant. The group assigned to the positive valence news transcript prime ($n = 66, M = 4.12, SD = 2.26$) did not significantly differ ($p = 1.0$) from the mean of the group assigned to the negative valence news transcript prime ($n = 79, M = 4.3, SD = 2.11$) as well as from those participants presented with the neutral valence prime ($n = 60, M = 4.68, SD = 2.0, p = .35$). Similarly, no significant mean differences ($p = 1.0$) were found between individuals exposed to the negative valence news transcript prime and those exposed to the neutral priming stimulus.

**Predicting Spillover Priming Effects**

In keeping in line with previous priming scholarship, research question 16 (RQ16) asked, “What factors will contribute to priming effects towards the lesser-known official?” To answer this research question, a block of multiple regression models, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, prime valence, and tie strength as predictor variables, were created. All factors were added simultaneously via the “Enter” method in SPSS.

For general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly as the dependent variable, was created. Political interest ($\beta = .11, t = 1.72, p = .09$), political awareness ($\beta = -.03, t = -.52, p = .61$), and prime valence ($\beta = -.05, t = -.8, p = .42$) were not significant predictors of general job performance for the unknown candidate, Steve Easterly. Political ideology ($\beta = .39, t = 6.4, p = 0.0), F(203, 1) = 42.62, p = 0.0, and tie strength ($\beta = -.24, t = -3.83, p = 0.0), F(202, 2)
were significant predictors towards Steve Easterly’s general job performance appraisal. When including only political ideology, the model explained nearly 17% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .17, p = 0.0$); however, the final model, including both political ideology and tie strength, explained 23% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .23, \Delta R^2 = .07, p = 0.0$). See Table 32 and Figure 2 for information in alternative formats.

For education issue performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, a multiple regression model with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, prime valence, and tie strength as predictor variables, and education issue performance evaluations as the dependent variable, was created. Political interest ($\beta = .09, t = 1.38, p = .17$), political awareness ($\beta = -.08, t = -1.27, p = .21$), and prime valence ($\beta = .04, t = .59, p = .56$) were not significant predictors for Steve Easterly’s education issue performance evaluations. Political ideology ($\beta = .42, t = 6.75, p = 0.0$), $F(203, 1) = 47.02, p = 0.0$, and tie strength ($\beta = -.2, t = -3.15, p = 0.0$), $F(202, 2) = 30.5, p = 0.0$, were significant predictors towards Steve Easterly’s education issue performance evaluations. When containing political ideology only, the model explained 18% of the total variance ($R^2_{adj} = .18, p = 0.0$). The model incorporating political ideology and tie strength explained 22% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .22, \Delta R^2 = .04, p = 0.0$). See Table 32 and Figure 3 for information in alternative formats.

For general job competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, a multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, prime valence, and tie strength as predictor variables, and general job competency evaluations towards the unknown candidate as the dependent variable, was created. Political awareness ($\beta = -.1, t = -1.48, p = .14$), prime valence ($\beta = -.12, t = -1.92, p = .06$), and political interest ($\beta = .12, t = 1.8, p = .07$) were not significant predictors of education issue competency. Political ideology ($\beta = .32, t = 4.91, p$
= 0.0), $F(203, 1) = 25.55, p = 0.0$, and tie strength ($\beta = -0.17, t = -2.6, p = .01$), $F(202, 2) = 17.39, p = 0.0$, were significant predictors of Steve Easterly’s general job competency evaluations. The model, incorporating only political ideology, explained nearly 11% ($R^2_{adj} = .11, p = 0.0$) of the variance. The model, comprising political ideology and tie strength, contributed to nearly 14% ($R^2_{adj} = .14, R^2_{Change} = .04, p = 0.0$) of model fit (see Table 33 and figure 4 for information in alternative format).

For education competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, a multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, prime valence, and tie strength as predictor variables, and education competency evaluations as the dependent variable, was created. Political awareness ($\beta = -0.1, t = -1.48, p = .14$) and prime valence ($\beta = -0.03, t = -.46, p = .65$) were not significant predictors for education competency. Political ideology ($\beta = .37, t = 5.9, p = 0.0$), political interest ($\beta = .16, t = 2.38, p = .02$), and tie strength ($\beta = -0.18, t = -2.76, p = 0.0$) were significant predictors of Steve Easterly’s education competency evaluations. The model, including, political ideology only, explained 15% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .15, p = 0.0$), $F(203, 1) = 36.55, p = 0.0$. The model integrating political ideology and political interest did not show model fit ($p = .06$); therefore the final model, including political ideology and tie strength, explained nearly 18% ($R^2_{adj} = .18, R^2_{Change} = .03, p = 0.0$) of the variance, $F(201, 3) = 16.94, p = 0.0$ (see Table 33 and Figure 5 for information in alternative format).

For favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly, a multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, prime valence, and tie strength as predictor variables, and favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly as the dependent variable, was created. Political awareness ($\beta = -.05, t = -.71, p = .48$) and prime valence ($b = -0.08, t = -1.31, p = .19$) were not significant predictors of favorability towards Steve Easterly.
Political ideology ($\beta = .39, t = 6.35, p = 0.0$), political interest ($\beta = .13, t = 2.04, p = .04$), and tie strength ($\beta = -.26, t = -4.14, p = 0.0$) were significant predictors of Steve Easterly’s favorability assessments. When including political ideology only, the model explained nearly 17% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .17, p = 0.0$), $F(203, 1) = 42.15, p = 0.0$. The model integrating political ideology and political interest did not show meaningful model fit ($p = .08$); therefore, the final model, containing political ideology and tie strength, explained nearly 24% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .24, R^2_{Change} = .07, p = 0.0$), $F(201, 3) = 23.08, p = 0.0$. See Table 34 and Figure 6 for information in alternative formats.

Finally, for voting intent towards Steve Easterly, a multiple regression model, with political ideology, political awareness, political interest, prime valence, and tie strength as predictor variables, and voting intent towards Steve Easterly as the dependent variable, was created. Political awareness ($\beta = -.07, t = -1.28, p = .2$) and prime valence ($\beta = -.04, t = -.77, p = .44$) were not significant predictors of education competency. Political ideology ($\beta = .51, t = 9.44, p = 0.0$), political interest ($\beta = .12, t = 2.19, p = .03$), and tie strength ($\beta = -.35, t = -6.36, p = 0.0$) were significant predictors of voting intent towards Steve Easterly. When including political ideology only, the model explains nearly 29% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .29, p = 0.0$), $F(203, 1) = 82.56, p = 0.0$. The model, containing political ideology and political interest did not show model fit ($p = .1$); therefore the final model, incorporating only political ideology and tie strength, contributed to nearly 41% ($R^2_{adj} = .41, R^2_{Change} = .13 p = 0.0$) of model fit, $F(201, 3) = 49.3, p = 0.0$ (see Table 34 and Figure 7 for information in alternative formats).
Political Party Affiliation/Membership and Priming Results

Political Party Affiliation/Membership and Direct Priming

To better comprehend the relationship between political party affiliation/membership and direct priming effects, RQ17 asked, “What is the relationship between political party affiliation/membership and direct priming effects?” As this study recruited politically engaged persons, political ideology should influence how individuals respond to evaluations of a salient and well-known president. As such, H17a stated, “There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along general job performance evaluations towards the president.” H17b stated, “There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along issue-specific performance evaluations towards the president.” H17c stated, “There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along general job competency evaluations towards the president.” H17d posited, “There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along issue-specific competency evaluations towards the president.” According to H17e, “There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along favorability evaluations towards the president.” Finally, H17f stated, “There will be significant differences among Democrats and Republicans along voting intent towards the president.”

In order to answer research question 17 (RQ17) as well as research question 18 (RQ18), participants were divided into three groups, depending on how they responded to items on the post-test questionnaire. As discussed earlier in the chapter, participants were categorized as “Democrat” if they indicated they were a registered Democrat and/or affiliated with the Democratic Party. Participants were classified as “Republican” if they claimed they were a registered Republican and/or affiliated with the Republican Party. Finally, participants were
considered “Independent” if they made clear they were not registered and not affiliated with any political party. Participants who specified they were a member and affiliated with the Green or Libertarian Party were removed from the analyses.

The study measured six separate dependent priming effect evaluative variables, including general job performance, issue-specific performance, general job competency, issue-specific competency, favorability, and voting intent. Because of this, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), with political awareness and political interest as covariates, prime valence and political party affiliation/membership as the independent factors, and general job performance, issue-specific performance, general job competency, issue-specific competency, favorability, and voting intent as the dependent variables, was conducted.

For general job performance evaluations towards President Obama, statistically significant differences were found for political affiliation/membership, \( F(4,196) = 438.71, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .82 \). Statistical significance was not detected for prime valence along general job performance evaluations towards the president, \( F(4,196) = 1.62, p = .2, \eta^2 = .02 \). Interaction effects were not observed for political party affiliation/membership and prime valence, \( F(4,196) = .73, p = .57, \eta^2 = .02 \). H17a was supported.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison found Republicans (\( n = 47, M = 1.3, SD = .72 \)) significantly differed (\( p = 0.0 \)) from both Democrats (\( n = 144, M = 6.05, SD = 1.0 \)), and Independents (\( n = 10, M = 5.4, SD = 1.27, p = 0.0 \)) in regards to general job performance evaluations towards President Obama. There were not significant differences (\( p = .52 \)) between Democrats and Independents, however.

For education issue performance evaluations towards President Obama, statistically significant results were found for political affiliation/membership, \( F(4,196) = 127.58, p = 0.0, \)
\[ \eta^2 = .57. \] Statistical significance was not found for prime valence along education issue performance evaluations towards the president, \( F(4,196) = 2.01, p = .14, \eta^2 = .02. \) Interaction effects were not discovered for political party affiliation/membership and prime valence, \( F(4,196) = .88, p = .48, \eta^2 = .02. \) Based on the results, H17b was supported.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison found that Republicans \( (n = 47, M = 2.02, SD = 1.1) \) significantly differed \( (p = 0.0) \) from Democrats \( (n = 144, M = 5.32, SD = 1.23) \) and Independents \( (n = 10, M = 5.40, SD = 1.27, p = 0.0) \) in regards to education issue performance evaluations towards President Obama. There was not a significant difference between Democrats and Independents along education issue performance evaluations towards President Obama \( (p = 1.0), \) however.

For **general job competency evaluations towards President Obama**, statistically significant results were discovered for political affiliation/membership, \( F(4,196) = 321.48, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .77. \) Statistical significance was not detected for prime valence along general job competency, \( F(4,196) = 1.4, p = .25, \eta^2 = .02. \) Interaction effects were not found between the two independent factors, \( F(4,196) = .43, p = .79, \eta^2 = .01. \) Based on the results, H17c was supported.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed a significant difference \( (p = 0.0) \) between Republicans \( (n = 47, M = 1.77, SD = 1.2) \), and Democrats \( (n = 144, M = 6.23, SD = .95) \) and Independents \( (n = 10, M = 6.05, SD = 1.17) \) in regards to general job competency evaluations towards President Obama. There was not a significant difference along general job competency evaluations between Democrats and Independents \( (p = 1.0), \) however.

For **education issue competency evaluations towards President Obama**, statistically significant results were found for political affiliation/membership, \( F(4,196) = 149.56, p = 0.0, \)
Statistical significance was not found for prime valence along education issue competency evaluations towards the president, $F(4,196) = .37, \ p = .69, \ \eta^2 = 0.0$. Interaction effects were not observed for political party affiliation/membership and prime valence, $F(4,196) = .88, \ p = .48, \ \eta^2 = .02$. H17d was supported.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed a significant difference ($p = 0.0$) between Republicans ($n = 47, \ M = 2.2, \ SD = 1.16$), and Democrats ($n = 144, \ M = 5.73, \ SD = 1.21$). Republicans also differed ($p = 0.0$) from Independents ($n = 10, \ M = 5.8, \ SD = 1.27$). There was not a significant difference between Democrats and Independents ($p = 1.0$) along education issue competency, however.

For favorability evaluations towards President Obama, statistically significant results were found for political affiliation/membership, $F(4,196) = 573.14, \ p = 0.0, \ \eta^2 = .86$. Statistical significance was not found for prime valence along favorability evaluations towards the president, $F(2,197) = 2.04, \ p = .13, \ \eta^2 = .02$. Interaction effects were not discovered for political party affiliation/membership and prime valence, $F(2,197) = .57, \ p = .68, \ \eta^2 = .01$. Based on the results, H17e was supported.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed a significant difference ($p = 0.0$) between Republicans ($n = 47, \ M = 1.47, \ SD = 1.02$) and Democrats ($n = 144, \ M = 9.12, \ SD = 1.39$). Republicans also significantly differed ($p = 0.0$) from Independents ($n = 10, \ M = 8.5, \ SD = 1.65$) in regards to favorability evaluations towards President Obama. In contrast, there was not a significant difference ($p = 1.0$) between Democrats and Independents.

Finally, for voting intent towards President Obama, statistical significance was recorded for political affiliation/membership, $F(2,197) = 623.95, \ p = 0.0, \ \eta^2 = .87$, towards the president. Statistical significance was not found for prime valence along voting intent, $F(2,197) = .26, \ p =
.77, ηp² = .01. There was no interaction between the independent variables, F(4, 196) = 2.25, p = .07, ηp² = .05. Based on the results, H17f was supported.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed a significant difference (p = 0.0) between Democrats (n = 144, M = 6.83, SD = .84) and Republicans (n = 47, M = 1.19, SD = .97). The mean differences between Republicans and Independents (n = 10, M = 5.47, SD = 2.56) significantly differed as well (p = 0.0). Democrats and Independents only marginally differed (p = .06).

Political Party Affiliation/Membership and Spillover/Indirect Priming

Similar to research question 17 (RQ17), research question 18 (RQ18) asked, “What is the relationship between political party affiliation/membership and spillover/indirect priming effects?” In order to answer this question, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political interest and political awareness as the covariates, political party affiliation/membership and prime valence as the independent factors, and general job performance assessments, issue-specific performance evaluations, general job competency evaluations, issue-specific competency judgments, favorability appraisals, and voting intent towards Steve Easterly as the dependent variables, was created.

For general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, F(4,196) = 23.31, p = 0.0, ηp² = .2, were found for political party affiliation/membership. Differences were not found, F(4,196) = 1.46, p = .24, ηp² = .02, for prime valence along general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were not detected for political party affiliation/membership and prime valence, F(4, 196) = .87, p = .48, ηp² = .02.
A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed statistically significant differences ($p = 0.0$) between Republicans ($n = 47, M = 2.94, SD = 1.73$), and Democrats ($n = 144, M = 4.65, SD = 1.46$). Republicans also significantly differed ($p = 0.0$) from Independents ($n = 10, M = 4.6, SD = 1.01$) along general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly. There were no differences ($p = 0.0$) between Democrats and Independents, however.

For education issue performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, $F(4,196) = 28.57, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .23$, were discovered for political party affiliation/membership. No mean differences were found, $F(4,196) = 1.12, p = .33, \eta^2 = .01$, for prime valence along education issue performance assessments towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were not found between the independent variables, $F(4, 196) = 1.31, p = .27, \eta^2 = .03$.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed statistically significant differences ($p = 0.0$) between Republicans ($n = 47, M = 2.91, SD = 1.54$) and Democrats ($n = 144, M = 4.57, SD = 1.29$). Republicans also differed ($p = 0.0$) from Independents ($n = 10, M = 5.0, SD = .94$). Democrats and Independents did not differ ($p = .99$).

For general job competency towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, $F(4,196) = 16.6, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .15$, were observed for political party affiliation/membership. Statistical significance was not found, $F(4,196) = .7, p = .5, \eta^2 = .01$, for prime valence along general job competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were not found for political party affiliation/membership and prime valence, $F(4,196) = 2.1, p = .08, \eta^2 = .04$.

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed statistically significant differences ($p = 0.0$) between Republicans ($n = 47, M = 3.36, SD = 1.59$) and Democrats ($n = 144, M = 4.51, SD = 1.15$). Republicans also differed ($p = .01$) from Independents ($n = 10, M = 4.6, SD = .97$).
along general job competency. Statistical significance was not observed \((p = 1.0)\) between Democrats and Independents, however.

For education issue competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, \(F(4,196) = 22.1, \ p = 0.0, \ \eta^2 = .19\), were found for political party affiliation/membership. Statistically significant differences were not detected, \(F(4,196) = .28, \ p = .76, \ \eta^2 = 0.0\), for prime valence along education issue competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were found for political party affiliation/membership and prime valence, \(F(4,196) = 2.68, \ p = .03, \ \eta^2 = .05\), indicating that the differences between political party affiliation/membership along education competency evaluations were influenced by exposure to prime valence (see Table 35 for mean differences).

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed statistically significant differences \((p = 0.0)\) between Republicans \((n = 47, \ M = 3.23, \ SD = 1.46)\), and Democrats \((n = 144, \ M = 4.49, \ SD = 1.12)\). Republicans also differed \((p = 0.0)\) from Independents \((n = 10, \ M = 4.7, \ SD = 1.18)\) along education issue competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Statistical significance was not observed \((p = 1.0)\) between Democrats and Independents, however.

For favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, \(F(4,196) = 28.87, \ p = 0.0, \ \eta^2 = .23\), were found for political party affiliation/membership. Statistical significance was not found, \(F(4,196) = .36, \ p = .7, \ \eta^2 = 0.0\), for prime valence along favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were not found for political party affiliation/membership and prime valence, \(F(4,196) = 1.53, \ p = .2, \ \eta^2 = .03\).

Bonferroni adjusted multiple comparisons revealed statistically significant differences \((p = 0.0)\) between Republicans \((n = 47, \ M = 4.0, \ SD = 2.15)\) and Democrats \((n = 144, \ M = 6.51, \ SD = 2.04)\). Republicans also differed \((p = .02)\) from Independents \((n = 10, \ M = 5.9, \ SD = .99)\).
along favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Statistical significance was not found ($p = 1.0$) between Democrats and Independents, however.

For voting intent towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, $F(4,196) = 50.3, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .35,$ were discovered for political party affiliation/membership. Statistical significance was not observed, $F(4,196) = .26, p = .77, \eta^2 = 0.0,$ for prime valence. Interaction effects were not found, $F(4,196) = .64, p = .64, \eta^2 = .01,$ between political party affiliation/membership and prime valence along voting intent towards Steve Easterly.

Finally, a Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed statistically significant differences ($p = 0.0$) between Republicans ($n = 47, M = 2.17, SD = 1.57$), and Democrats ($n = 144, M = 5.1, SD = 1.8$). Republicans differed ($p = 0.0$) from Independents ($n = 10, M = 4.4, SD = 1.84$) as well. In contrast, Democrats and Independents did not differ ($p = .71$).

As spillover/indirect priming effects should be influenced by tie strength, a second set of analyses, including tie strength as an independent factor, were conducted. More specifically, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with political interest and political awareness as the covariates, political party affiliation/membership and tie strength as the independent factors, and general job performance, issue-specific performance, general job competency, issue-specific competency, favorability evaluations, and voting intent towards Steve Easterly, was created to further answer research question 18 (RQ18).

For general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, $F(2,199) = 25.46, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .21,$ were found for political party affiliation/membership. Statistical significance was not observed, $F(2,199) = .01, p = .91, \eta^2 = 0.0,$ for tie strength along general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were recorded for political affiliation/membership and tie strength, $F(2,199) =$
103.72, \( p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .52 \), indicating that the differences between political party affiliation/membership along job performance evaluations were influenced by exposure to the tie strength conditions (see Table 36 for mean differences).

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed statistically significant differences \( (p = 0.0) \) between Republicans \((n = 47, M = 2.94, SD = 1.73)\) and Democrats \((n = 144, M = 4.65, SD = 1.46)\). Republicans also differed \( (p = 0.0) \) from Independents \((n = 10, M = 4.60, SD = .97)\) along general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Statistical significance was not found \( (p = 1.0) \) between Democrats and Independents, however.

For education issue performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, \( F(2, 199) = 35.04, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .25 \), were identified for political party affiliation/membership. Statistically significant differences were not found, \( F(2, 199) = .19, p = .66, \eta^2 = 0.0, \) for tie strength along education issue performance towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were observed for political party affiliation/membership and tie strength, \( F(2,199) = 94.14, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .49 \), indicating that the differences between political party affiliation/membership along education issue performance evaluations were influenced by exposure to the tie strength conditions (see Table 37 for mean differences).

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed statistically significant differences \( (p = 0.0) \) between Republicans \((n = 47, M = 2.91, SD = 1.54)\), and Democrats \((n = 144, M = 4.57, SD = 1.29)\). Republicans also differed \( (p = 0.0) \) from Independents \((n = 10, M = 5.0, SD = .94)\) along education issue performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Statistical significance was not found \( (p = .99) \) between Democrats and Independents, however.

For general competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, \( F(2, 199) = 11.95, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .11 \), were found for political party
affiliation/membership. Statistically significant differences were not detected, $F(2, 199) = 0.0, p = .96, \eta^2 = 0.0$, for tie strength along general competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were found for between the two independent factors, $F(2,199) = 48.32, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .33$, indicating that the differences between political party affiliation/membership along general competency evaluations were influenced by exposure to the tie strength conditions (see Table 38 for mean differences).

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison recorded statistically significant differences ($p = 0.0$) between Republicans ($n = 47, M = 3.36, SD = 1.59$), and Democrats ($n = 144, M = 4.5, SD = 1.14$). Republicans also differed ($p = .01$) from Independents ($n = 10, M = 4.6, SD = .97$) along general competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Statistically significant mean differences was not found ($p = 1.0$) between Democrats and Independents.

For education competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, $F(2, 199) = 17.05, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .15$, were found for political party affiliation/membership. Statistically significant differences were not discovered, $F(2, 199) = .02, p = .88, \eta^2 = 0.0$, for tie strength along education competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were found for political party affiliation/membership and tie strength, $F(2,199) = 42.78, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .31$, indicating that the differences between political party affiliation/membership along education competency evaluations were influenced by exposure to the tie strength conditions (see Table 39 for mean differences).

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed statistically significant differences ($p = 0.0$) between Republicans ($n = 47, M = 3.23, SD = 1.46$), and Democrats ($n = 144, M = 4.49, SD = 1.12$). Republicans also differed ($p = 0.0$) from Independents ($n = 10, M = 4.7, SD = 1.18$)
along education competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Statistical significance was not found \((p = 1.0)\) between Democrats and Independents, however.

For favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly, statistically significant differences, \(F(2, 199) = 27.84, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .22\), were found for political party affiliation/membership. Statistical significance was not identified, \(F(2, 199) = .22, p = .64, \eta^2 = .0\), for tie strength along favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were observed between political party affiliation/membership and tie strength, \(F(2,199) = 74.49, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .44\), indicating that the differences between political party affiliation/membership along favorability evaluations were influenced by exposure to the tie strength conditions (see Table 40 for mean differences).

A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison recorded statistically significant differences \((p = 0.0)\) between Republicans \((n = 47, M = 4.02, SD = 2.15)\), and Democrats \((n = 144, M = 6.51, SD = 2.04)\). Republicans also differed \((p = .02)\) from Independents \((n = 10, M = 5.9, SD = .99)\) along favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly, but Democrats and Independents did not differ from one another \((p = 1.0)\).

For voting intent towards Steve Easterly, statistical significance, \(F(2, 199) = 75.53, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .43\), was measured for political party affiliation/membership. Statistical significance was also observed, \(F(2, 199) = 7.91, p = .01, \eta^2 = .04\), for tie strength along voting intent towards Steve Easterly. Interaction effects were found for political party affiliation/membership and tie strength, \(F(2,199) = 84.46, p = 0.0, \eta^2 = .47\), indicating that the differences between political party affiliation/membership along voting intent were influenced by exposure to the tie strength conditions (see Table 41 for mean differences).
A Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison recorded statistically significant differences \((p = 0.0)\) between Republicans \((n = 47, M = 2.17, SD = 1.57)\), and Democrats \((n = 144, M = 5.10, SD = 1.8)\). Republicans also differed \((p = 0.0)\) from Independents \((n = 10, M = 4.4, SD = 1.84)\) along voting intent towards Steve Easterly. Statistically significant differences were not found \((p = .71)\) between Democrats and Independents, however. In terms of tie strength, a Bonferroni-adjusted multiple comparison revealed significant differences between participants exposed to the strong tie \((n = 131, M = 4.98, SD = 2.21)\) and participants exposed to the weak tie \((n = 74, M = 3.24, SD = 1.44)\).

### Democrats and Priming Effects

The final set of analyses were conducted to determine if and/or how Democrats and Republicans respond differently to priming stimuli as per research questions 19 (RQ19), 20 (RQ20), 21(RQ21) and 22(RQ22). Research question 19 stated, “What factors contribute to direct priming effects for Democrats?” In order to answer research question 19 (RQ19), a multiple regression model, with political ideology, political interest, political awareness, and prime valence as predictor variables, was created. One model was created for each dependent variable, with each predictor variable for the six (6) models being included simultaneously via the “Enter” method in SPSS.

For general job performance evaluations towards President Obama, political ideology \((\beta = .33, t = 4.42, p = 0.0)\), \(F(142, 1) = 26.1, p = 0.0\), and political awareness \((\beta = .3, t = 3.85, p = 0.0)\), \(F(141, 2) = 15.42, p=0.0\), were significant predictors for general job performance evaluations towards the president. Political interest \((\beta = .08, t = .98, p = .33)\) and prime valence \((\beta = -.03, t = -.42, p = .68)\) were not significant predictors. When including only political ideology, the model explained nearly 15% of the variance \((R^2_{\text{adj}} = .15, p = 0.0)\), while the model
incorporating, political ideology and political awareness, contributed to 24% ($R^2_{\text{adj}} = .24$, $R^2_{\text{Change}} = .1$, $p = 0.0$) of model fit (see Table 42 and Figure 8 for information in alternative formats).

For education performance evaluations towards President Obama, political ideology ($\beta = .2$, $t = 2.42$, $p = .02$), $F(142, 1) = 5.85$, $p = .02$, and prime valence ($\beta = .24$, $t = 2.92$, $p = 0.0$), $F(141, 2) = 7.36$, $p = 0.0$, were significant predictors for education performance evaluations towards the president. Political interest ($\beta = .1$, $t = 1.2$, $p = .24$) and political awareness ($\beta = .1$, $t = 1.21$, $p = .23$) were not significant predictors. The model, incorporating political ideology only, explained only 3% of the variance ($R^2_{\text{adj}} = .033$, $p = .02$), whereas the model including political ideology and prime valence explained 8% ($R^2_{\text{adj}} = .08$, $R^2_{\text{Change}} = .06$, $p = 0.0$). See Table 42 and Figure 9 for information in alternative formats.

For general job competency evaluations towards President Obama, political ideology ($\beta = .38$, $t = 5.0$, $p = 0.0$), $F(142, 1) = 31.5$, $p = 0.0$, and political awareness ($\beta = .25$, $t = 3.32$, $p = .001$), $F(141, 2) = 23.62$, $p = 0.0$, were significant predictors, while political interest ($\beta = .06$, $t = .7$, $p = .49$), and prime valence ($\beta = -0.5$, $t = -.67$, $p = .51$) were not significant predictors for general job competency evaluations towards the president. When only comprising political ideology, the model explained nearly 18% of the variance ($R^2_{\text{adj}} = .18$, $p = 0.0$); however, the model, integrating political ideology and political awareness, explained 24% of the variance ($R^2_{\text{adj}} = .24$, $R^2_{\text{Change}} = .07$, $p = 0.0$). See Table 43 and Figure 10 for information in alternative formats.

For education competency evaluations towards President Obama, only political ideology ($\beta = .32$, $t = 4.0$, $p = 0.0$), $F(142, 1) = 15.89$, $p = 0.0$, was a significant predictor for education competency evaluations towards the president. Political interest ($\beta = .1$, $t = 1.12$, $p = .26$),
political awareness ($\beta = .07, t = .87, p = .39$), and prime valence ($\beta = .13, t = 1.65, p = .1$) were not significant predictors. The model, incorporating political ideology only, explained 9% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .09, p = 0.0$), with a weak, but significant Pearson correlation ($r = .32, p = 0.0$). See table 43 for information in table format.

For favorability evaluations towards President Obama, political ideology ($\beta = .41, t = 5.3, p = 0.0$), $F(142, 1) = 28.04, p = 0.0$, and political awareness ($\beta = .16, t = 2.1, p = .04$), $F(141, 2) = 16.46, p = 0.0$), were significant predictors for favorability evaluations towards the president. Political interest ($\beta = .08, t = .92, p = .36$) and prime valence ($\beta = -.03, t = -.38, p = .7$) were not significant predictors for favorability evaluations. The model, integrating political ideology only, explained nearly 16% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .16, p = 0.0$), while the model including both political ideology and political awareness explained nearly 18% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .18, R^2_{Change} = .02, p = 0.0$). See table 44 and Figure 11 for information alternative formats.

For voting intent towards President Obama, political ideology ($\beta = .42, t = 5.36, p = 0.0$), $F(142, 1) = 31.06, p = 0.0$, and prime valence ($\beta = -.16, t = -2.14, p = .04$), $F(141, 2) = 18.2, p = 0.0$, were significant predictors, while political interest ($\beta = -.03, t = -.41, p = .68$) and political awareness ($\beta = .15, t = 1.91, p = .06$) were not significant predictors for voting intent towards the president. When only including political ideology, the model explained 17% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .17, p = 0.0$); however the model, containing political ideology and prime valence, contributed to 19% of model fit ($R^2_{adj} = .19, R^2_{Change} = .03, p = .04$). See Table 44 and Figure 12 for information in alternative formats.

**Democrats and Spillover/Indirect Priming Effects**

Research question 20 (RQ20) stated, “What factors contribute to spillover/indirect priming effects for Democrats?” In order to answer research question 20 (RQ20), a multiple
regression model, with political ideology, political interest, political awareness, prime valence, and tie strength as predictor variables, was created. One model was created for each dependent variable, with each predictor variable for the six (6) models being included simultaneously via the “Enter” method in SPSS.

For general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, tie strength \( (\beta = -0.73, t = -12.68, p = 0.0) \), \( F(142, 1) = 167.32, p = 0.0 \), was the only significant predictor for general job performance evaluations towards the fictional candidate among Democrats \( (n = 144) \). Political ideology \( (\beta = 0.01, t = 0.22, p = 0.82) \), political interest \( (\beta = 0.1, t = 1.62, p = 0.11) \), political awareness \( (\beta = 0.07, t = 1.25, p = 0.25) \), and prime valence \( (\beta = 0.05, t = 0.84, p = 0.4) \) were not significant predictors. The model, incorporating tie strength only, explained nearly 54% of the variance \( (R^2_{adj} = 0.54, p = 0.0) \), with a significant and strong correlation \( (r = -0.74, p = 0.0) \). See Table 45 for information in table format.

For education performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, tie strength \( (\beta = -0.67, t = -10.41, p = 0.0) \), \( F(142, 1) = 108.62, p = 0.0 \), and prime valence \( (\beta = 0.16, t = 2.6, p = 0.01) \), \( F(141, 2) = 59.86, p = 0.0 \), were significant predictors for education performance evaluations towards the fictional candidate. Political ideology \( (\beta = 0.05, t = 0.77, p = 0.45) \), political interest \( (\beta = 0.04, t = 0.64, p = 0.52) \) and political awareness \( (\beta = 0.0, t = 0.05) \), were not significant factors. The model, incorporating tie strength only, explained nearly 43% of the variance \( (R^2_{adj} = 0.43, p = 0.0) \), whereas the model comprising tie strength and prime valence contributed to 45% of model fit \( (R^2_{adj} = 0.45, R^2_{Change} = 0.03, p = 0.01) \). See Table 45 and Figure 13 for information in alternative formats.

For general job competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, tie strength \( (\beta = -0.61, t = -8.85, p = 0.0) \), \( F(142, 1) = 80.32, p = 0.0 \), was the only significant predictor for general
competency evaluations towards the fictional candidate. Political ideology ($\beta = .02, t = .3, p = .77$), political interest ($\beta = .11, t = 1.54, p = .13$), political awareness ($\beta = -.03, t = -.48, p = .63$), and prime valence ($\beta = .01, t = .13, p = .9$) were not significant predictors for general job competency evaluations towards the fictional candidate. The model, integrating tie strength only, explained nearly 36% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .357, p = 0.0$), with a significant and moderate correlation ($r = -0.6, p = 0.0$). See Table 46 for information in table format.

For education competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, tie strength ($\beta = -.59, t = -8.57, p = 0.0$), $F(142, 1) = 69.77, p = 0.0$, and prime valence ($\beta = .14, t = 1.99, p = .05$), $F(141, 2) = 37.58, p = 0.0$, were significant predictors for education competency evaluations towards the fictional candidate. Political ideology ($\beta = .04, t = .54, p = .59$), political interest ($\beta = .13, t = 1.73, p = .09$), and political awareness ($\beta = -.06, t = -.79, p = .43$) were not significant predictors. The model, including tie strength only, explained nearly 33% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .33, p = 0.0$), whereas the model consisting of tie strength and prime valence explained 34% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .34, R^2_{Change} = .02, p = .05$). See Table 46 and Figure 14 for information in table format.

For favorability evaluations towards Steve Easterly, political interest ($\beta = .14, t = 2.14, p = .03$), $F(141, 2) = 69.34, p = 0.0$, and tie strength ($\beta = -.69, t = -11.16, p = 0.0$), $F(142, 1) = 129.39, p = 0.0$, were the only significant factors for favorability evaluations towards the fictional candidate. Political ideology ($\beta = .02, t = .24, p = .81$), political awareness ($\beta = -.02, t = -.28, p = .78$), and prime valence ($\beta = .03, t = .55, p = .6$) were not significant predictors. When only including political interest, the model explained 2% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .02, p = .04$); however, the model, containing political interest and tie strength, contributed to nearly 50% of model fit ($R^2_{adj} = .49, R^2_{Change} = .47, p = 0.0$). See Table 47 and Figure 15 for information in
Finally, for voting intent towards Steve Easterly, political interest ($\beta = .14, t = 2.4, p = .02$), $F(141, 2) = 116.65, p = 0.0$, and tie strength ($\beta = -.78, t = -14.67, p = 0.0$), $F (142, 1) = 216.35, p = 0.0$, were the only significant predictors for voting intent. Political ideology ($\beta = .04, t = .66, p = .51$), political awareness ($\beta = -.02, t = -.29, p = .77$) and prime valence ($\beta = .04, t = .78, p = .44$) were not significant predictors. When only including political interest, the model explains 26% of the variance ($R^2_{\text{adj}} = .03, p = .03$); however, the model, incorporating political interest and tie strength, explained nearly 62% of the variance ($R^2_{\text{adj}} = .62, R^2_{\text{Change}} = .59, p = 0.0$). See Table 47 and Figure 16 for information in alternative formats.

**Republicans and Priming Effects**

As with research question 19 (RQ19), research question 21 (RQ21) was constructed to determine what factors contribute to direct priming effects. Whereas research question 19 (RQ19) sought to discover the factors that contribute to direct priming effects for Democratic participants, research question 21 (RQ21) focused on the factors that contribute to direct priming effects for participants who indicated they were members and/or affiliated with the Republican Party. More specifically, research question 21 (RQ21) asked, “What factors contribute to direct priming effects for Republicans?” In order to answer research question 21 (RQ21), a multiple regression model, with political ideology, political interest, political awareness, and prime valence, as predictor variables, was created. One model was constructed for each dependent variable, with each predictor variable for the six (6) models being included simultaneously via the “Enter” method in SPSS.

For general job performance evaluations towards President Obama, there were no significant predictors for general job performance evaluations towards the president. Political
ideology ($\beta = .24, t = 1.63, p = .11$), political interest ($\beta = .16, t = .99, p = .33$), political awareness ($\beta = -.14, t = -.90, p = .37$), and prime valence ($\beta = .29, t = 1.98, p = .06$) did not reach significance (see Table 48 for information in table format).

For education performance evaluations towards President Obama, political ideology ($\beta = .46, t = 3.5, p = 0.0$), $F(45, 1) = 12.28, p = 0.0$, and prime valence ($\beta = .26, t = 2.05, p = .05$), $F(44, 2) = 8.67, p = 0.0$, were significant factors for education performance assessments towards the president. Political interest ($\beta = .04, t = .28, p = .78$) and political awareness ($\beta = -.1, t = -.67, p = .51$) were not significant predictors. The model, incorporating political ideology, explained nearly 20% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .2, p = 0.0$), while the model including both political ideology and prime valence contributed to 25% of model fit ($R^2_{adj} = .25, R^2_{Change} = .07, p = .05$). See Table 48 and Figure 17 for information in alternative formats.

For general job competency evaluations towards President Obama, political ideology ($\beta = .39, t = 2.85, p = .01$), $F(45, 1) = 8.1, p = .01$, was the only significant predictor for general job competency evaluations towards the president. Political interest ($\beta = .05, t = .38, p = .71$), political awareness, ($\beta = -.18, t = -1.23, p = .23$), and prime valence ($\beta = -.02, t = -.13, p = .9$) were not significant predictors. The model, integrating political ideology, explained 13% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .13, p = .01$), with a significant and weak correlation ($r = .39, p = 0.0$). See Table 49 for information in table format.

For education competency evaluations towards President Obama, political ideology ($\beta = .44, t = 3.26, p = 0.0$), $F(45, 1) = 10.66, p = 0.0$, was the only significant predictor for education competency evaluations towards the president. Political interest ($\beta = .08, t = .54, p = .59$), political awareness, ($\beta = -.1, t = -.67, p = .50$), and prime valence ($\beta = .06, t = .41, p = .69$) were not significant predictors. The model, incorporating political ideology only, explained 17% of
the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .17, p = 0.0$), with a significant and weak correlation ($r = .44, p = 0.0$). See Table 49 for information in table format.

For favorability evaluations towards President Obama, political ideology ($\beta = .31, t = 2.11, p = .04$), $F(45, 1) = 4.7, p = .04$, was the only significant predictor for favorability evaluations towards the president. Political interest ($\beta = 0.0, t = .02, p = .98$), political awareness, ($\beta = -.04, t = -.27, p = .79$), and prime valence ($\beta = .06, t = .4, p = .7$) were not significant predictors. The model, including political ideology only, explained 7% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .074, p = .04$), with a significant and weak correlation ($r = .31, p = .02$). See Table 50 for information in table format.

For voting intent towards President Obama, no significant predictors were found. Political ideology ($\beta = .19, t = 1.26, p = .21$), political interest ($\beta = .13, t = .86, p = .4$), political awareness, ($\beta = -.16, t = -.99, p = .33$), and prime valence ($\beta = .25, t = 1.66, p = .11$) did not reach significance (see Table 50 for information in table format).

**Republicans and Spillover/Indirect Priming Effects**

Research question 22 (RQ22) stated, “What factors contribute to spillover/indirect priming effects for Republicans?” In order to answer research question 22 (RQ22), a multiple regression model, with political ideology, political interest, political awareness, prime valence, and tie strength as predictor variables, was created. One model was created for each dependent variable, with each predictor variable for the six (6) models being included simultaneously via the “Enter” method in SPSS.

For general job performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, tie strength ($\beta = .83, t = 9.3, p = 0.0$), $F(45, 1) = 86.61, p = 0.0$, was the only significant predictor. Political ideology ($\beta = .09, t = 1.05, p = .3$), political interest ($\beta = .02, t = .17, p = .87$), political awareness ($\beta = -.14, t$
= -1.47, p = .15), and prime valence ($\beta = -.19, t = -1.3, p = .2$) were not significant factors. The model, incorporating tie strength only, explained 65% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .65, p = 0.0$), with a significant and strong correlation ($r = .81, p = 0.0$). See Table 51 for information in table format.

For education performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly, political awareness ($\beta = -.17, t = -2.14, p = .04$), $F(44, 2, ) = 73.76, p = 0.0$, and tie strength ($\beta = .89, t = 12.05, p = 0.0$), $F(45, 1) = 130.81, p = 0.0$, were significant predictors. Political ideology ($\beta = .14, t = 1.91, p = .06$), political interest ($\beta = 0.0, t = .05, p = .96$), and prime valence ($\beta = -.12, t = -1.65, p = .11$) were not significant factors in predicting education performance evaluations towards the fictional candidate. When including tie strength only, the model explained nearly 74% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .74, p = 0.0$), while the model comprising tie strength and political awareness, contributed to 76% of model fit ($R^2_{adj} = .76, R^2_{Change} = .03, p = 0.0$) See Table 51 and Figure 18 for information in alternative formats.

For general competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, tie strength ($\beta = .61, t = 5.3, p = 0.0$), $F(45, 1) = 30.86, p = 0.0$, and prime valence ($\beta = -.34, t = -3.22, p = 0.0$), $F(44, 2) = 23.85, p = 0.0$, were significant predictors. Political ideology ($\beta = -.02, t = -.17, p = .86$), political interest ($\beta = .15, t = 1.25, p = .22$) and political awareness ($\beta = -.06, t = -.45, p = .66$) were not significant predictors for general competency evaluations towards the fictional candidate. The model, incorporating tie strength only, explained nearly 40% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .39, p = 0.0$), whereas the model including both tie strength and prime valence explained 50% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .5, R^2_{Change} = .11, p = 0.0$). See Table 52 and Figure 19 for information in alternative formats.

For education competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly, tie strength ($\beta = .62, t =
5.18, \( p = 0.0 \), \( F(45, 1) = 31.49, p = 0.0 \), and prime valence (\( \beta = -.3, t = -2.82, p = .01 \), \( F(44, 2) = 22.14, p = 0.0 \), were significant predictors. Political ideology (\( \beta = .02, t = .2, p = .84 \), political interest (\( \beta = .12, t = .97, p = .34 \)), and political awareness (\( \beta = -.07, t = -.56, p = .58 \)) were not significant predictors for education competency evaluations towards the fictional candidate. The model, incorporating tie strength only, explained nearly 40% of the variance (\( R^2_{adj} = .4, p = 0.0 \)), and the model including both tie strength and prime valence explained nearly 48% of the variance (\( R^2_{adj} = .48, R^2_{Change} = .09, p = .01 \)). See Table 52 and Figure 20 for information in alternative formats.

For favorability evaluations toward Steve Easterly, tie strength (\( \beta = .76, t = 7.41, p = 0.0 \), \( F(45, 1) = 59.65, p = 0.0 \), and prime valence (\( \beta = -.26, t = -.28, p = .01 \), \( F(44, 2) = 38.28, p = 0.0 \), were significant predictors. Political ideology (\( \beta = .12, t = -1.18, p = .24 \), political interest (\( \beta = -.03, t = -.32, p = .75 \), and political awareness (\( \beta = -.1, t = -.9, p = .37 \)) were not significant predictors for favorability evaluations towards the fictional candidate. The model, incorporating tie strength only, explained 56% of the variance (\( R^2_{adj} = .56, p = 0.0 \)), while the model including both tie strength and prime valence explained 62% of the variance (\( R^2_{adj} = .62, R^2_{Change} = .07, p = .01 \)). See Table 53 and Figure 21 for information in alternative formats.

Finally, for voting intent towards Steve Easterly, tie strength (\( \beta = .76, t = 7.26, p = 0.0 \), \( F(45, 1) = 51.5, p = 0.0 \), and political awareness, (\( \beta = -.2, t = -2.0, p = .05 \), \( F(44, 2) = 32.29, p = 0.0 \), were significant predictors. Political ideology (\( \beta = .08, t = .73, p = .47 \), political interest (\( \beta = -.02, t = -1.5, p = .89 \), and prime valence (\( \beta = -.17, t = 1.72, p = .09 \)) were not significant predictors for voting intent towards the fictional candidate. The model, incorporating tie strength only, explained 52% of the variance (\( R^2_{adj} = .52, p = 0.0 \)), whereas the model including tie
strength and political awareness explained 55% of the variance ($R^2_{adj} = .55$, $R^2_{Change} = .04$, $p = .05$). See Table 53 and Figure 22 for information in alternative formats.
CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

Direct Priming Results

Before addressing the direct priming results, it is important to briefly discuss the agenda setting theory as priming is assumed to be a consequence of the agenda setting process (McCombs, 2004). This project did not measure agenda setting effects; therefore, the evidence of agenda setting is based primarily on the priming results. As mentioned in Chapter II, the agenda setting theory posits that news media are able, by increasing the saliency of issues/objects and the attributes that define these issues/objects, to influence what the public deems to be the most important issues/objects as well as how to define the issues/objects under scrutiny. Although discussed in more detail later in this chapter, results suggest that the education prime was somewhat successful in altering attitudes towards President Obama. Further, the valence (affective attribute) of the prime influenced the direction of priming effects, with participants exposed to the negative valence prime rating President Obama negatively, while those assigned to the positive prime condition rating the president positively. Taken together, it could be inferred that agenda setting effects were rather limited, as the news transcript prime seemed to only influence the president along the education performance evaluative line.

Presidents are assessed along a diverse set of conditions, and this study attempted to measure presidential appraisals using performance, competency, favorability, and voting intent as benchmarks. Including such a diverse set of evaluative standards is important because research indicates that individuals perceive elected officials as fulfilling a wide variety of roles, which are in turn influenced by specific salient issues and attributes (Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Pan & Kosicki, 1997). Whereas certain issues, especially when they are highly prominent in the media agenda, may affect a president’s performance evaluation, other salient issues, as
presented in media, may only affect how a president is viewed through the lens of competency (Kiousis, 2003).

Although it was initially believed that incorporating dissimilar evaluative criteria as dependent variables would capture direct priming effects, this seemed not to be the case. Rather, there was no statistically significant difference in terms of how President Obama was evaluated between the groups that received the positive, negative, and neutral valence prime, except on education issue performance and job competency. Along job competency, there was only a significant difference between groups that received the neutral and positive prime, but for the education performance evaluation, significant differences were found between the groups that received the positive and negative valence prime, respectively. When constructing a regression model, the valence of the prime was a significant predictor only for President Obama’s job performance along education. Although prime valence was significant in terms of model fit, the overall change of the coefficient of determination ($R^2_{\text{Change}}$) was rather small. Indeed, prime valence contributed to only 2% in predicting education issue job performance evaluations towards President Obama, while politically ideology contributed to 53% of the model fit.

Several conclusions come to mind to explain the contradictory nature of these results. First, it may have been that the priming topic (i.e., “Race to the Top”) may not have been the most effective subject in which to induce priming effects, since this particular issue and/or the general topic of education may not influence general performance, competency, favorability, and voting intent towards a president. Previous studies have found that the obtrusiveness of an issue can strengthen or weaken priming effects; therefore, it could be reasoned that “Race to Top” was not an obtrusive issue insomuch as participants perceived it as a non-topical and not entirely relatable issue in which to appraise President Obama along most of the dependent measures.
(Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). To be sure, the “Race to the Top” initiative was introduced early in President Obama’s first term, so participants may not have thought it to be the central issue in which to judge the president along non-education evaluative benchmarks, even if the issue was immediately accessible when completing the post-test questionnaire.

Further, the average age of the participants was nearly 60, suggesting that education may not have been an obtrusive issue in which to prompt priming effects for older individuals, apart from the education performance item(s) on the post-test questionnaire. This could well have been the case given that significant differences were found between the groups that received the positive valence prime and those that received the negative valence prime along the education issue performance evaluation, but not along the other assessment standards. Based on these results, the issue may have been accessible to individuals completing the questionnaire, but was perceived as an applicable standard only for education performance judgments.

Another potential reason for why direct priming effects were not found along most of the dependent measures was due to the experimental design itself. This study used a one-time, post-test only experimental framework. As such, participants were exposed to an issue prime and then subsequently asked to answer a series of items related to the stimulus. While scholars have used this design in past priming studies, other experiments have exposed participants to manipulated primes over a longer timeframe. A longitudinal study cannot account for external variables when participants leave the laboratory setting, but the initial prime(s) can be reinforced with additional stimuli over days (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). As political priming relies, in part, on accessibility of an issue in which to make judgments about presidents, repeated exposure over days or even weeks may be needed to measure robust priming effects.
Prior priming studies employing a one-time, post-test only design tend to invite participants to a laboratory in order to increase control over spurious variables (e.g., McGraw & Ling). For this study, participants were asked to complete the experiment on their own time and in a naturalistic environment (e.g., their home and/or place of employment). In this case, external validity was increased at the expense of overall control (Babbie, 2005). Because of this, there is a slight possibility that participants were not fully engaged and/or did not adequately read the manipulated news transcript and newspaper article. Participants may have been watching television, viewing other online content, or even having a conversation with a friend or family member when completing the experiment, yet this can also be a strength as the environment in which the experiment was completed increased external validity. Moreover, the strict manipulation checks strengthen the argument that participants were wholly engaged when reading both the transcript and newspaper article. However unlike a laboratory environment, which is artificial, participants accessed this project’s manipulated primes in a real-time environment, but if participants were not completely involved when completing the experiment, the priming stimuli may not be at fault. Instead, the experimental design may have led to the lack of measureable priming effects, since participants had the option to disengage from the manipulated news primes.

The final design weakness that may have contributed to the relative lack of observable priming effects is with the medium in which the news transcript and newspaper article were presented. Previous studies have used manipulated and fictitious print news reports in which to induce priming effects among participants (e.g., McGraw & Ling, 2003), but few have presented print articles and/or news transcript reports in an online format. Moreover, visual priming stimuli (e.g., manipulated television news stories) may be a more effective tool in which to
prompt and subsequently measure direct priming effects, especially given that individuals receive most of their news information from television (The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012). If a text-based format is indeed ineffective when compared to visual-based stimuli, this may have led to a decreased priming effect along most of the evaluative dependent measures.

Finally, the contradictory findings in regards to direct priming effects may have been influenced by the participants themselves. There is support for this claim particularly when considering the uniqueness of the individuals who were asked to take part in the study. Whereas the participants for past priming studies tend to be undergraduate students, this study’s population was defined as politically active individuals across six Midwestern states. Previous studies have found that ideology, especially among partisans, tends to be a strong filter in terms of information processing (Ha, 2011; Holbert & Hansen, 2006; Zaller, 1992). As ideology affects information processing and can encourage motivated reasoning among partisans (e.g., Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Jost, Krochik, Gaucher, & Hennes, 2009; Lebo & Cassino, 2007; Richey, 2012; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010), participants may have found ways in which to ignore and/or support the initial priming article, depending on the strength and direction of their ideological bent (Carpentier et al., 2008). Indeed, previous studies have found that partisans, when exposed to news reports that either support or contradict their pre-conceived opinion, engage in a wide variety of tactics in which to ensure cognitive consistency in relation to their previous cognitive state, including believing that media reports are biased against their personal views (Hansen & Kim, 2011).

While direct priming effects were not found across most of the dependent measures, significant differences were found along the education job performance measure, meaning that
the prime was somewhat effective in altering job performance evaluations along education in general. In this respect, the results are in line with previous research finding priming effects are more robust for items specifically measuring attitudinal change along the issue presented in the prime. This lends credence to the assertion that the prime was successful, because the primed issue was “Race to the Top,” a national education initiative supported by President Obama, and significant effects were found along education job performance. Moreover, a multiple regression model found that prime valence did play a small part in predicting priming effects for education issue performance evaluations. Taken together, the initial prime, although generally ineffective, did play a small yet significant role towards education issues only, which supports previous priming research (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Lee, 2010; Sheafer, 2007).

**Spillover/Indirect Priming Results**

Although the priming stimulus was unable to evoke direct priming effects across most of the dependent measures, significant mean differences were found between the group exposed to the strong tie and the group exposed to the weak tie prime. Additionally, there were significant differences between the two groups along all of the six dependent measures. Further, tie strength was found to be a significant predictor for Steve Easterly’s job performance and issue-specific performance evaluations as well as for his perceived general job competency, issue-specific competency, favorability, and voting intent. Similar to the results found when measuring direct priming effects, statistical significance was not found for prime valence along the six dependent measures. Based on the data, we can infer several conclusions in respect to spillover/indirect priming effects.

For this study, the affective priming stimuli, concentrating specifically on “Race to the Top” and the president’s responsibility for it, did not seem to be influential in shaping attitudes
and voting intent towards Steve Easterly. Nonetheless, the data does suggest that the tie strength prime was influential in shaping attitudes and potential voting intent change towards the fictional candidate. In sum, participants exposed to the strong tie prime were significantly more likely to rate Steve Easterly higher across all of the dependent measures than participants exposed to the weak tie prime, regardless of the significance (or lack thereof) of the prime valence conditions. As the initial/traditional priming stimulus was found not to be effective in general, it is difficult to discern the potential impact of a tie strength prime not only for this study, but for future spillover/indirect priming experiments as well. With that said, the results do indicate that the strength of a tie between a well-known political candidate and a lesser-known politician should influence the perceptions of the little-known candidate. As the group assigned to the strong tie prime did rate Steve Easterly higher across the dependent measures, one could assume that, regardless of the initial prime, tie strength was a key factor when participants were forming their preliminary attitudes and voting intent towards the little known and fictional congressional candidate.

Steve Easterly received higher marks from participants exposed to the strong tie prime when compared to those exposed to the weak tie prime. This is curious given no significant results were found along prime valence, except for the education issue job performance evaluation. Several possible conclusions may explain these somewhat unusual results. One possible inference that can be drawn from the data centers on the endorsement of Steve Easterly. More specifically, Easterly may have been perceived as a credible candidate because President Obama endorsed him. Unlike the weakly tied Steve Easterly, a highly salient official (i.e., President Obama) supported the strongly tied version of the congressional candidate. As the dependent measures asked participants to evaluate Easterly on his future performance,
participants, regardless of their ideology, may have believed Easterly would be a more suitable choice than a politician not tied to any political official. This could well be the case given that the analyses controlled for political ideology. From this perspective, the strongly tied Steve Easterly was a prominent and established political figure by virtue of his position with President Obama. In contrast, the weakly tied Steve Easterly was an outsider insomuch as he was affiliated with the Democratic Party, but was not endorsed by the president. From this standpoint, participants may have been more comfortable supporting a candidate that was at least tied to a prominent figure in the political network.

Previous research suggests that political parties “own” certain issues (Petrocik et al., 2004). During the campaign season, politicians may benefit from directly addressing the issues that their party owns. This project used a prime referencing an education issue, and Democrats tend to own issues related to education (Petrocik, 1996). The news article explicitly stated that both Obama and Easterly were Democrats, hence the education issue prime strongly linking Easterly to Obama may have encouraged individuals to rate Steve Easterly higher along the dependent measures. This argument is further strengthened by the results of the regression models among Democrats and Republicans. For both education issue performance and education issue competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly among Democrats, prime valence was a significant factor. Similarly, prime valence was a significant factor for education issue competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly among Republicans. Taken together, the belief that Democrats own education issues may have contributed to the higher marks received by Steve Easterly.

The differences between the group exposed to the strong tie prime and those exposed to the weak tie prime may also be attributed to tie strength encouraging individuals to take a
position. The results from research question 14 (RQ14) support this assertion as the group that read the newspaper article strongly tying President Obama and Steve Easterly had somewhat warmer feelings towards Steve Easterly ($M = 6.37$) when compared to the group that read the weak tie newspaper article ($M = 4.96$), that rated President Obama near the mid-point of 5.0. This pattern was visible across the other dependent measures as well. For education performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly (RQ12), the mean score for the group exposed to the strong tie prime was 4.47, while the mean score for those exposed to the weak tie prime was 3.7. As was often the case, the average score for the group exposed to the strong tie prime was not only higher than the mean score of participants exposed to the weak tie prime, but the score also diverged from the mid-point (4.0) of the scales at a higher rate. The mid-point of 4.0 corresponded to a neutral attitude as it was coded as “neither agree nor disagree.” Participants assigned to the strong tie condition not only rated Steve Easterly more positively across most of the dependent measures, but the overall mean scores of participants exposed to the strong tie prime were farther away from the mid-point when compared to the mean scores of participants assigned to the weak tie condition. For example, in the case for the education performance evaluative line, the strong tie group’s mean differed .47 points from the mid-point of 4.0 ($M = 4.47, SD = 1.72$), while the weak tie group differed .3 points from the mid-point ($M = 3.7, SD = .92$). Although a slight difference, the pattern was evident across all six of the dependent measuring designed to capture attitudes and voting intent towards Steve Easterly, suggesting that the strong tie prime encouraged individuals to take a more polarized position towards Steve Easterly when compared to participants exposed to the weak tie prime.

Likewise, the results of this study may also indicate that exposure to a strong tie prime allowed participants to utilize a valuable heuristic in which to judge Steve Easterly. Because
little information was provided about Easterly and his stance on a host of political issues, participants may have had to rely on his perceived relationship with President Obama. The participants for this study were classified as politically active individuals, thus they should have already had an opinion about the president (Lebo & Cassino, 2007). In contrast, participants exposed to the weak tie prime did not necessarily have an accessible comparison heuristic to judge Easterly. As such, participants who read the weak tie newspaper article should have relatively neutral attitudes towards Steve Easterly. As priming effects are often contingent on accessibility and applicability of the prime in question, the lack of any heuristic in which to judge Steve Easterly was evident. Without an anchor point (except for party identification) in which to evaluate the congressional candidate, individuals may not have been able to make a substantive assessment. The evaluations towards Steve Easterly were closer towards the mid-point (4.0) for those exposed to the weak tie prime when compared to the group exposed to the strong time prime, indicating that without any anchor in which to make an informed opinion about Steve Easterly, participants defaulted to the mid-point of 4.0 for most of the dependent measures.

Similar to what was discovered in terms of direct priming effects towards President Obama, political ideology played an important role in contributing to the spillover/indirect regression models. Unlike the direct priming models, however, political ideology contributed to a smaller coefficient of determination change ($R^2_{\text{change}}$) than the models predicting direct priming effects. For example, for voting intent towards President Obama, political ideology contributed to 78% of the model fit, whereas political ideology contributed to 29% of the model fit for voting intent towards Steve Easterly. Since little information was given about Steve Easterly and President Obama is well-known to politically engaged individuals, it was not surprising to
observe a less robust model predicting spillover/indirect priming effects towards Steve Easterly. Indeed, Steve Easterly was a purely fictional candidate, thus political ideology should not play a large of role when initial impressions are formed, especially since Easterly was portrayed as strongly tied or weakly tied to President Obama. Instead, a number of other variables may contribute to the model fit. Participants may have considered Easterly’s gender, state of residence (i.e., California), or even his career (i.e., Physician).

Previous research indicates that factors such as gender and the choice of career does influence how individuals form first impressions (Bernstein, 2000; Kenton, 1989; Koch, 2002; White & Andsager, 1991). Even when individuals are given additional information about a certain person, factors such as the name itself and/or perceived gender impacts initial impressions. For example, research examining how employers screen and select candidates for pre-employment interviews have found that employers often rely on cognitive heuristics to determine whether a job candidate would be a capable employee (Brown & Campion, 1994; Knouse, 1988). These variables may have even been more pronounced given that so little information was given about Steve Easterly and his positions on a multitude of issues. Since participants had to rely on Steve Easterly’s salient demographic data (e.g., gender, state of residence, employment, among others), those factors may have played a significant role when participants were asked to evaluate Steve Easterly. Future research should examine the demographic data of a linked candidate in the context of spillover/indirect priming effects.

Further, tie strength was found to contribute to the overall model fit across all six of the spillover/indirect dependent measures. Although significant, tie strength still added less to the model fit when compared to political ideology. For example, political ideology contributed to 18% of the model fit for evaluations towards Steve Easterly along the education issue job
performance assessments. Including tie strength modified the model by only 4%, with a total predictive strength of 22% for education issue performance evaluations towards Steve Easterly. This pattern was found across all of the spillover/indirect priming measures. Even though tie strength contributed less to the spillover/indirect regression models when compared to political ideology, the variable was still significant and contributed to the overall model fit. Tie strength, then, is a key variable to consider when scholars analyze public opinion towards relatively unknown candidates.

When viewed through a network standpoint, the results from this study are noteworthy as they contribute to network theory. This study manipulated the tie strength between a hub and a typical node in order to determine if spillover priming effects could be found. From the results, tie strength influenced how an ordinary node was perceived. The ordinary node (i.e., Steve Easterly) was rated higher across all of the measures when tied to the hub (i.e., President Obama). It is difficult to say with certainty why this occurred, but the data makes clear that not only were there significant differences across the six dependent variables, but tie strength also contributed to all of the dependent variable regression models.

The overall clout of a hub within a social network should be re-evaluated based on the findings from this study. From what was learned, a hub not only has multiple connections across a network, but the potential impact of these links in altering perceptions towards ordinary nodes may also be relevant as well. Network studies tend to focus primarily on the number of links when defining hub status; however, few have attempted to re-conceptualize a hub as not only a node with many links, but as a node that is able to influence the perception of other nodes within the network via tie strength. In traditional studies, a node that is well-connected to a wide variety of clusters within a network may be labeled a hub (Barabasi, 2003), but if this hub has
little command in terms of changing external perceptions of the nodes that it is tied to, it may not truly be a hub in a real-world setting. Instead of observing the number of links, scholars may have to reassess the definition of what constitutes hub, depending in part, on the power to influence external perceptions.

Moreover, the results of this study indicate that network theory is a more flexible and robust theory when compared to balance theory. As previously discussed, balance theory’s core assumptions regarding ties are rather simplistic, especially when considering how network theory formulates tie strength. Balance theory conceptualizes links between individuals and groups using a plus (+)/ minus (-) dichotomy. Although useful in certain situations, balance theory’s contrast is not always applicable in a real-world setting. Within the political realm, perceived links between individuals and institutions vary, depending on a host of factors. For example, a Democratic congressional candidate running in a conservative district may have to distance him/herself from a more liberal Democratic president in order to win an election. Although the congressional candidate is linked by party affiliation to the president, he/she may actively take policy positions contrary to the president and the Democratic Party in general. In this case, the congressional candidate and the president are neither strongly tied (+) nor completely untied (-), but instead they are weakly linked to one another. Network theory assumes that link strength can vary between individuals and groups, while balance theory assumes links either exist or do not exist. For the present research, prime valence had little effect across most of the dependent measures, yet tie strength was often a significant predictor towards evaluations of Steve Easterly. The link(s) between Steve Easterly and President Obama were not designed to be binary, rather both the strong and weak tie could have varied in their strength or weakness, respectively. If needed, the tie between President Obama and Steve Easterly could have been stronger or weaker,
contingent on the research questions and objectives of the study. Whereas balance theory restricts the researcher to conceptualize links as dualistic, network theory is more malleable and thus more appropriate to answer an assortment of research questions.

**Political Affiliation/Membership and Priming Effects**

Significant differences were found between Democrats and Republicans along all of the direct priming measures. This should not be surprising given that this study targeted politically engaged individuals as participants. As President Obama is a well-known Democratic figure, self-affiliated Republicans and self-affiliated Democrats should perceive him differently, with Republicans opposing and Democrats supporting him. The results support this assertion. In addition, political party affiliation/membership was a significant predictor for all of the direct priming regression models, while prime valence was not a significant variable in contributing to attitudes and voting intent towards President Obama. Again, the results should not be startling given that President Obama is a familiar figure and politically active individuals would already have a well-grounded opinion about him (Holbert & Hansen, 2006). A brief exposure to a manipulated news transcript prime will do little to fundamentally alter attitudes in politically engaged citizens (Lebo & Cassino, 2007; Redlawsk, Civettini, & Emmerson, 2010).

**Political Affiliation/Membership and Spillover/Indirect Priming Effects**

Based on the findings, Democrats were more likely to rate Steve Easterly higher across the six dependent measures when compared to Republicans. The newspaper article, describing the strength of the link between President Obama and Steve Easterly, made it clear that Steve Easterly was a Democrat. As such, the results were not unexpected. What is surprising, however, is the amount of variation, or lack thereof, between the two major political parties and Independents. Republicans significantly differed from Independents on every one of the
dependent measures, while Democrats did not significantly differ from Independents across each of the dependent variables. Steve Easterly was defined as a Democrat, so one could rightly assume that Democrats should significantly differ on their perception of him from Independents, but this was not the case. Statistically speaking, Democrats and Independents did not differ on their attitudes and voting intent towards Steve Easterly. In contrast, Republicans did significantly differ from Independents across all of the dependent measures, suggesting that the Republicans may have been more certain of their opinions towards the relatively unknown congressional candidate. A relatively new research line within political psychology may help to explain these results.

A burgeoning field of research within the social sciences seeks to explain how ideology influences information processing. Scholars from diverse disciplines such as psychology, political science, sociology, and media studies have attempted to ascertain how political ideology can affect seemingly benign behaviors such as encountering new and/or novel information. Although this sub-field of political psychology is in its infancy, studies have confirmed that partisans will often engage in forms of motivated reasoning in order to maintain attitudinal and behavioral consistency. Motivated reasoning can take such forms as de-legitimizing sources/outlets that advocate for a position contrary to the listeners pre-conceived belief system and/or selectively paying attention to bits of information that reinforces their self-concept (Jost et al., 2003; Jost et al., 2009; Richey, 2012; Redlawsk et al., 2010; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010).

The propensity to engage in motivated reasoning is not universal across all partisans, however. Scholars have found that conservatives are more likely than liberals to exhibit a higher level of specific traits than their liberal counterparts. For example, it has been shown that conservatives tend to have a higher need for closure than other individuals (Jost et al., 2003).
According to Kruglanski and Webster (1996), a desire for closure is a need for “a firm answer to a question and an aversion toward ambiguity” (p. 264). The need for closure is inversely related to comfort with ambiguity. Because conservatives are less likely to tolerate vagueness, decisiveness is embraced at the expense of understanding a more nuanced viewpoint.

The results from this study may lend support to the argument that conservatives are more likely to favor certainty rather than vagueness. Although Steve Easterly was a Democrat, self-affiliated Democratic participants were unsure on whether to positively rate and support the congressional candidate. Republicans, in contrast, were more certain of their opinions towards the candidate. As the data suggests, Republicans rated Steve Easterly rather low across the measures and significantly differed from Independents on their attitudes and voting intent towards him. Taken together, the results are not as surprising as was first initially assumed. Conservatives may have been more likely to value decisiveness and certainty, thus their opinion and voting intent were more polarized than both Independents and Democrats. Although this central argument is backed up by some of the data collected, another explanation may help to shed light on what was found.

As Steve Easterly was portrayed as a Democrat, Democratic participants may have utilized Easterly’s political identification as a variable in which to judge the little-known candidate either positively or negatively. Although Democrats rated Steve Easterly more positively than their Republican counterparts, the weakly tied Steve Easterly was perceived less positively than the Steve Easterly strongly linked to the President, among Democrats. In this case, Steve Easterly’s party affiliation may have increased the overall variance of Democratic attitudes towards the congressional candidate when compared to Republicans. Subsequent spillover scholarship should alter the party identification of the political hub to Republican in
order to establish if the conclusions reached here are based on motivated reasoning and a higher need for certainty among conservatives rather than the party identification of the political hub.

**Democrats and Priming Effects**

In regards to direct priming effects among Democrats, political ideology contributed to the model fit across the six dependent variables measuring priming effects towards President Obama. The more liberal the Democratic participant, the more likely he/she gave high marks on attitude and voting intent towards the president. Even though ideology was a significant factor, its contribution was rather small, because the models created were from the Democratic sub-sample with little overall ideological variance. For general job performance, general competency evaluations, and favorability towards President Obama, political awareness contributed a significant, albeit small, role towards model fit, with a 2%-10% $R^2_{\text{Change}}$ range. Democratic participants who were more politically aware were more likely to support and have a high opinion towards President Obama. Prime valence also reached significance on a few of the dependent measures, including education job performance and voting intent. The Democratic participants exposed to the positive valence prime were more likely to rate President Obama higher on his general job performance as well as show more support in the context of voting intent compared to the Democrats exposed to the negative valence news transcript prime. The $R^2_{\text{Change}}$ was rather small, however.

For spillover/indirect effects towards Steve Easterly, tie strength was a significant predictor for all six regression models. Democratic participants exposed to the strong tie between President Obama and Steve Easterly were more likely to rate Steve Easterly higher in terms of job performance, competency, favorability, and voting intent when compared to Democrats who were exposed to the weak tie prime. Tie strength was a rather robust predictor
as it contributed 30%-59% of the model fit, depending on the model under investigation. For example, tie strength contributed to 59% of the model fit for voting intent towards Steve Easterly, but only 34% for education competency evaluations towards Steve Easterly. The data supports a limited spillover effect based on the strength of the tie.

In addition to tie strength, prime valence also showed significance along education issue performance and education issue competency. Democratic participants exposed to the positive valence prime were more likely to rate Steve Easterly positively along the education issue job performance and education issue competency benchmark when compared to their colleagues who were exposed to the negative valence prime, supporting a limited spillover effect from the initial priming stimuli to Steve Easterly. Finally, political interest played a minor role in predicting favorability evaluations and voting intent towards Steve Easterly, with more politically interested Democratic participants being more likely to favor and vote for Steve Easterly.

**Republicans and Priming Effects**

The data suggests that Republicans were rather monolithic in their disapproval towards President Obama as no significant predictors were found for general job performance and voting intent towards the president. Political ideology was a significant factor for education performance, job competency, education issue competency, and favorability evaluations towards President Obama as more liberal Republicans were more likely to rate the president positively across the four measures. Only for education performance evaluations did the valence of the news transcript prime contribute to any meaningful model fit. Republicans exposed to the positive valence prime were more likely to rate President Obama higher on education
performance evaluations, although the change in the coefficient of determination was rather small at 5%.

For spillover/indirect priming effects among Republicans, tie strength was a significant predictor for all six dependent variables. Republicans were more likely to have a positive impression of Steve Easterly when he was weakly tied to the President, indicating a limited spillover effect based not so much on the prime, but on Republican impressions of President Obama. Tie strength explained 40-74% of the variance, depending on the regression model under investigation. Prime valence was a significant predictor for three of the regression models, including general job competency judgments, education issue competency assessments, and favorability. Republican participants exposed to the negative valence prime about “Race to the Top” were more likely to rate Steve Easterly higher and have a warmer feeling towards the congressional candidate. Although significant, the weight of prime valence to the model fit was rather small as it contributed to 7-11%, subject to the model under examination.

Finally, political awareness played a significant, but somewhat small, role towards predicting spillover/indirect priming effects. Political awareness was significant for education performance evaluations and voting intent towards Steve Easterly. Republicans with lower political awareness were more likely to rate Steve Easterly higher on both education performance and voting intent.

Taken together, Democrats and Republicans differed on how they responded to the stimuli. Democratic participants were not as supportive towards President Obama in terms of general job performance evaluations as political ideology played a significant role in regards to their support for the president. In contrast, Republicans were rather united in their opposition towards the president, as political ideology was not significant in predicting general job
performance evaluations, providing some tenuous evidence to back up the claim that conservatives value certainty and absolutes at the expense of a nuanced perspective. Democrats, on the other hand, may have been more susceptible to some of the primes since liberals tend to be more comfortable with ambiguity.

Prime valence did seem to play a role in predicting attitudes and voting intent towards both President Obama and Steve Easterly. Democratic participants exposed to the positive valence prime were more likely to rate President Obama and Steve Easterly higher on several assessment lines. For Republicans, prime valence contributed to one dependent measure (education performance evaluations), lending support to the notion that the initial prime may have only been successful in altering President Obama’s assessments along the general issue of education. While prime valence only slightly (5%) contributed to model fit, it was still significant, indicating that the tone of the news transcript prime did influence the direction of Obama’s education evaluations among Republicans. Republicans exposed to the positive valence prime were more likely to rate President Obama positively.

Finally, tie strength was both a significant and robust predictor for both Democrats and Republicans. As little was known about Steve Easterly, both Democrats and Republicans relied on the link between Easterly and Obama to form an opinion about the little-known candidate. Among Democrats, a strong tie between Obama and Easterly led to a more positive appraisal of Steve Easterly, while the opposite was true among Republicans. Republicans exposed to the weak tie were more likely to have a positive impression of the congressional candidate.

Limitations

Regardless of the theoretical and/or methodological rigor, all studies are limited in what they can accurately explain and/or predict with respect to the variables under scrutiny. As this
study was exploratory in nature, as no other scholar has investigated spillover/indirect priming effects, some limitations are apparent at both the methodological and results level.

Unlike the majority of past priming research, this project used a post-test only design. While not all priming projects have incorporated a pre/posttest experimental scheme, those that have are able to establish a baseline with respect to measuring previously held beliefs among participants (e.g. Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Although a pre-test is not required for a project to be labeled an “experiment,” a pre-test is able to establish the precise amount of change based on a prime. This is not to say that a pre/post-test design is without its drawbacks, however. Administering a pre-test before exposing participants to a prime is also problematic as demand characteristics may arise based on the pre-test itself (Babbie, 2005). Asking participants to answer a series of items related to the prime and/or dependent measures before exposure to the prime may sensitize how participants not only approach the prime, but how they respond to the post-test questionnaire as well. In order to prevent this, a post-test design was utilized. Since this project is limited by its lack of a pre-test, future research, investigating spillover/indirect priming effects, may benefit by including a pre-test in the experimental framework.

This study was also narrowed by the demographic makeup of the participants, demonstrating that generalizability is limited to a larger population pool. Not only were the participants politically involved at the county, state, and even national level, but their political interest as well as political awareness scores were rather extreme and lacked variance. For example, the average political interest score for all participants was 9.14 with a rather small standard deviation point (1.17), while the average number of political awareness items answered correctly was 10.24 out of 11 total items, with a small standard deviation ($SD = 1.19$) as well. The data supports the claim that the participants asked to take part in this study make up a small
portion of the American population, because the majority of Americans do little more than vote to highlight their political activity (Gershtenson, 2003). The findings may not be generalizable to a larger population as one considers the distinctive nature of the individuals recruited to participate in the study.

In addition to the demographic characteristics of the participants, the timeframe in which the study was conducted is rather atypical. The year 2012 was a presidential election year with President Obama running against the Republican candidate, Mitt Romney. As in most presidential elections, media increase their news coverage of both the president and his/her opponent, often from a conflict and/or horserace perspective (Miller & Denham, 1994; Patterson, 2002; Trent & Friedenberg, 2008). Although data was collected during the summer months of 2012, and the summer before Election Day is considered a period of comparatively low campaign activity, politically active citizens are relied upon, especially during the summer months, to build the campaign infrastructure necessary to reach voters during the fall (Trent & Friedenberg, 2008). The effects of this increased campaign activity may have influenced the results of this study. In this case, the findings may not be generalizable to other points in time during the election cycle.

As stated earlier in the chapter, the initial direct prime was rather ineffective in altering attitudes and voting intent towards both President Obama and Steve Easterly, thus attempting to glean any conclusive evidence related to both direct and indirect priming effects is fraught with difficulty. This is not to say that the results are not meaningful nor is the study lacking in theoretical and methodological rigor, rather the results are indicative of the subtle relationship between media exposure and attitude change. It is dubious to conclude that the priming stimuli were able to alter attitudes and voting intent towards President Obama and perhaps Steve
Easterly as well, yet there was significant differences among the group exposed to the strong tie prime and the group exposed to the weak tie prime. The project was constructed using a two-step approach, with the initial valence prime serving as an important component in understanding spillover/indirect priming effects. Because the valence prime was ineffective, any inference from the tie strength prime, which seemed to have an effect, must be made with caution.

**Future Research**

This study was exploratory in its total scope, and the results indicate that future spillover/indirect priming research should be undertaken in order to further expand upon this overlooked component of agenda setting and priming. Additionally, incorporating network theory into future media effects studies may also be advantageous as networks are increasingly playing a central role in how individuals perceive their outside environment (Meraz, 2011).

Social scientists from a wide variety of disciplines have made an effort to recognize the potential power of priming, both in a political and non-political setting, and yet few have tried to investigate spillover/indirect priming effects. Future projects could remedy this situation by researching spillover/indirect priming effects not only form a political perspective, but from a non-political standpoint as well. Indeed, original priming studies from the 1970s were apolitical in their design (Higgins et al., 1977). Just as the original priming theory moved from the psychology discipline to political science and media studies, spillover/indirect priming research can, and indeed should, be applied to projects that explore other topics besides politics. For example, Walter and colleagues (2008) found that impressions of Facebook profiles were governed, in part, by their Facebook “friends.” Although not a priming study, the results of this piece of scholarship does suggest that individuals will sometimes judge and evaluate their peers
based not only on perceived personal traits, but on the characteristics of those believed to be tied to the original individual under scrutiny.

Information communication technologies (ICTs) have only increased the access to an individual’s social network. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn all provide users with a visual representation of separate, yet overlapping personal and professional networks. In this sense, a quick search on Google or Bing or perusing a Facebook profile allows individuals to quickly discover the social networks of their friends, family, and colleagues. It is difficult to remain anonymous in a digital networked environment that continues to attract members and redefine privacy (Wessels, 2012). For instance, Facebook currently has over 1 billion active users worldwide (Facebook Statistics, 2013). As these membership numbers continue to increase, individuals may be defined less by their personal characteristics, and more by who they know or do not know.

For this study, both priming stimuli were text-based from traditional print sources. Although previous scholars have used text-based priming stimuli in political priming research, video may be a better choice for future studies as video may be a more suitable medium to establish not only the valence of a prime, but tie strength as well. As no study to date has formulated tie strength within a priming paradigm, it is difficult to make any such conclusion without any substantive evidence, yet a video endorsement may be a more lasting and influential announcement to establish tie strength between a president and lesser-known official. Research does suggest that visual communication often plays a significant role when individuals form impressions of candidates (Druckman, 2003; Nagel, Maurer, & Reinemann, 2012; Sullivan & Masters, 1988). Another interesting, and perhaps worthwhile research endeavor, would be to present both priming stimuli (prime valence and tie strength) on a social network site like
Facebook and/or LinkedIn. With social network sites, our previously hidden social networks are now visible to a wide variety of individuals, including friends, employers, co-workers, and even strangers. Spillover effects may be more measureable if the information is presented in such a way as to increase an individual’s accessibility to social networks in general.

The majority of political priming scholarship seeks to understand how primes influence presidential evaluations. This project followed this research line by asking if a presidential prime could affect evaluations of a lesser-known candidate via a strong or weak tie; however, future research should expand upon spillover/indirect political priming by developing priming stimuli for persons and/or organizations that are not directly linked to the president. For example, a negative valence prime towards a lesser-known political candidate may spillover to an organization that is perceived to be strongly tied to the official. Similarly, a prime directed towards a little-known politician may even spillover to affect the evaluations of an official with high saliency in the media agenda. Finally, a more detailed demographic composite of both the primed and linked official should be measured, considering that the models predicting attitudes and voting intent towards Steve Easterly were weaker in terms of predicative strength when compared to the models predicting attitudes and voting intent towards President Obama. Future research should attempt to include and measure additional variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, geographic residence) of the primed candidates in an effort to create a model with more predictive strength, especially given the research showing how gender, ethnicity, and even attractiveness influence voters’ perceptions of candidates (McDermott, 1997; McDermott, 1998; Sigelman, Sigelman, & Fowler, 1987).

This project observed just a small segment of the perceived political network. By manipulating the valence of a prime targeting a political hub, it was hypothesized that priming
effects prompted by a manipulated news transcript would spill over to a typical node, perceived to be strongly or weakly tied to the hub under scrutiny. No significant differences were found for prime valence, yet there were significant differences across tie strength. With respect towards the political network, these findings only serve to strengthen the impact of strong and weak ties on network structure. Past research has already confirmed the strength of weak ties and the ability of strong ties to maintain clusters within a network (Granovetter, 1973). Although far from conclusive, the results do suggest that tie strength should not be overlooked when individuals begin to form attitudes and behavioral intent towards little-known nodes. The power of elite nodes to form the basis from which attitudes are derived should not go unnoticed given what was found in relation to the impact of strong and weak ties on evaluations of members in a political network.

This study enrolled politically engaged individuals as participants. This distinctive population composes a small percentage of U.S. voters, and yet their influence on politics at the grassroots level cannot be overstated (Trent & Friedenberg, 2008). The majority of research samples are taken from undergraduate student populations. Although findings from experimental designs are not often generalizable to a greater population set, scholars have warned that students may not make the best participants for certain experimental as well as survey projects (Henry, 2008). As young people tend to be the least politically active Americans, it may be problematic to generalize based on a purely student sample (Henry, 2008; Patterson, 2002). This is not to say that politically involved citizens are the best group to recruit participants, but few studies have sought to recruit politically engaged persons as participants. These individuals are very involved in the political process and vote on a consistent basis, so
future studies should make a concerted effort to recruit this population set as they might differ on how they react to certain media stimuli.

Research investigating the relationship between political ideology and information processing is a fast-growing field within a host of social science disciplines. Research reveals striking differences in how political partisans process both novel and longstanding information. Instead of making rational attitudinal and behavioral decisions based on the most recent and credible information, studies have shown that partisans often perceive reality differently (Jost et al., 2003; Jost et al., 2009). These individuals engage in a form of motivated reasoning to discredit and/or select information that reinforces their previously held viewpoint(s). Future political priming studies should take political ideology into account when investigating both direct and spillover/indirect priming effects in order to determine how ideology may weaken and/or strengthen both direct and spillover/indirect priming effects.

Network theory needs to be further incorporated into future media effects studies regardless of their underlying theoretical assumptions, because the theory may be able to shed light on the interwoven relationship between media and human attitudes and behaviors. As the results of this study suggest, individuals may rely on tie strength when forming an opinion about a little-known political candidate. This is important to consider given that local races receive less media coverage than state and national elections (McCombs, 2004). Oftentimes, voters have to rely on secondary information in order to make a decision on whom to vote for. In addition to political party identification, tie strength may be an additional factor in which citizens’ use when they make their decision at the ballot box. Future research should be conducted to examine how spillover effects impact the electoral process. For example, past research has found that individuals often believe that media have a greater influence on others than on themselves. This
notion, labeled, “the third-person effect,” has been studied quite extensively within media and
communication (Feng & Guo, 2012). By understanding an individual’s network, it may be
possible to explain why certain individuals have a propensity to believe that media does little to
influence their attitudes and potential behaviors. An individual’s place in the network, whether
at the center or on the periphery, may affect how they perceive media’s influence.

Similarly, the concept of network theory is an excellent standard in which to analyze the
priming process at the cognitive level. Previous research indicates that priming occurs because
memory is constructed as to resemble a network model. A prime activates a specific memory
node, which in turn triggers nodes that are linked to the originally primed memory node.
Intensity and recency of the prime are often included as moderating variables for these models
(Carpentier, et al., 2008). As individuals are limited in their cognitive ability to make judgments
about officials with whom they do not have direct contact, they must rely on these cognitive
heuristic shortcuts. This associative memory model could be built upon by incorporating tie
strength into a more complete network outline. As the findings of this study show, tie strength
may be a supplementary and key factor in network models that explain the priming process.

This project analyzed just small portion of the perceived political network. More
precisely, the study manipulated the valence of a news transcript prime in order to affect
individual perceptions towards a hub. The link between the hub and a typical node was also
manipulated to better comprehend if priming effects would spillover from a political hub to an
ordinary political node. Future research should continue to investigate spillover effects, but from
diverse network perspectives. For example, would there be a relationship between spillover
effects and tie strength between two hubs? On a similar line of reasoning, would priming effects
spillover from an ordinary and little-known official to another typical and little-known official?
By understanding small portions of the perceived political network, scholars may, in the future, be able to generalize to a larger political network.
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Cambridge University Press.
CONSENT FORM

The following research study attempts to understand how individuals perceive and use information gathered from text-based news stories. I would like to invite you to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to read two (2) video news story transcripts. After reading each individual news story transcript, you will be asked to read two (2) newspaper article. After reading two (2) short video news story transcripts and reading two (2) brief newspaper articles, you will be asked to answer a series of questions related to the transcripts and news articles. In all, the entire process should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

The results of this study will contribute to our understanding of news perception; however, there will probably be no direct benefit for you as a participant. There are no risks involved in participating in this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

The study is anonymous, thus no identifying information will be collected. The results of the study will probably be published; however, no articles related to the gathered data will contain identifying material. The analysis of the results may also be shared with your registered political party; however, the shared data will not contain identifying material. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have involving the study. You may call or email David Morin (phone: 434-250-5996, email: morind@bgsu.edu) or Gi Woong Yun (phone: 419-372-8638, email: gyun@bgsu.edu) with questions about the study. You may also contact the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) at Bowling Green State University (phone: 419-372-7716, email: hsrb@bgsu.edu) with questions or concerns about participant rights.

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation in this study without penalty, and without affecting your relationship with your registered political party and Bowling Green State University. Whether you choose to participate or not, your relationship with your registered political party and Bowling Green State University will not be affected in any way. At the end of the study, you will need to delete your browsing history and close the browser.

By clicking “Next,” I acknowledge that I have been informed of the above and give my consent to participate in the study.
Dear Mr./Ms. insert name here

My name is David Morin, and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Media and Communication at Bowling Green State University. I am currently working on my dissertation examining how registered voters judge politicians based on media stimuli (e.g., news transcripts and newspaper articles). My dissertation project uses an online experimental design to measure what, if any, effects arise from voters reading text-based news pieces. Although most dissertation projects use students as participants, I am trying to uncover how these text-based stimuli influence registered political party members in insert state here. As county chairman/chairwoman, I would like to know if you would be able to send out a general email to party members with the hyperlink attached.

I understand that you may be hesitant to send out an email with the link attached; therefore, I would be more than happy to set up a time where we can talk about the project in more detail. Moreover, I would be more than willing to share the results with you and the party. If you could get back to me at your earliest convenience, I would appreciate it. I thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Here is the link I would like to send out:

www.mediaresearch1.org

Best regards,

David Morin

David Morin
Doctoral Candidate
School of Media and Communication
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio
(434) 250-5996
morind@bgsu.edu
APPENDIX C. SECOND INVITATION EMAIL COPY

Good Morning,

Last week, I sent you an email in regards to my dissertation project at Bowling Green State University (please see below). Due to the low response rate among other county chairs, I am emailing again to ask whether you would be willing to send the message below to members on your email list. This project is non-partisan in its nature (I am contacting both Democrats and Republicans) and may reveal interesting results, which I would be more than willing to share with you and the Party. Several of your fellow county chairs have already agreed to participate. I understand that you may be hesitant to send out an email from someone you do not know; therefore, I would be happy to discuss the project in more detail. My phone number is (434) 250-5996. Thank you.

Here is the message I would like to send out:

Greetings,

My name is David Morin and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Media and Communication at Bowling Green State University. Please accept this email as a formal invitation to participate in an online experiment examining how individuals use information from text-based news stories. The online experiment is the basis for my dissertation.

Your participation is voluntary, and your answers will be kept anonymous. The entire experiment should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The results will be used to further research in the field of media as well as to improve communications at your county’s Party headquarters. If you would like participate, please click on the link below. It will take you to the informed consent page. I thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

www.mediaresearch1.org

Best regards,

David Morin

David Morin
Doctoral Candidate
School of Media and Communication
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio
(434) 250-5996
morind@bgsu.edu
Negative Valence Prime

--Beginning of News Report--

**Christine Flynn (Anchorwoman):** Transition to education, President Obama has recently campaigned on the perceived success of Race to the Top, a federal program designed to spur innovation and competition for K-12 education, but as Neil Sanderson reports, Race to the Top may have done more harm than good.

**Neil Sanderson (Correspondent):** In New Hampshire, state education officials are still upset about Race to the Top, a federal initiative designed to encourage innovation and competition at the K-12 school level.

State school officials of New Hampshire, a state that finished near the bottom of the nation-wide competition, are still upset. Education officials argue that the project, which cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, did little to help students and teachers.

**Ed Stewart (New Hampshire State Education Official):** President Obama’s administration set an unachievable benchmark. Bureaucrats in Washington set standards that were impossible to achieve. The Obama administration’s policies have cost this country hundreds of millions of dollars, and our schools have lost money from no fault of their own.

**Neil Sanderson (Correspondent):** Other states have also stepped up their criticisms towards Race to the Top. Officials in Washington, a state that finished near the bottom of the competition, were irate when the results came out.

**Sarah Ferguson (Washington State Education Official):** I think I can vouch for most of the states that the benchmarks that the Obama administration set were nearly impossible to reach. It’s a shame that our President doesn't trust local teachers to make the best decisions for their students.

**Neil Sanderson (Correspondent):** Education officials, both Democrats and Republicans, have been quick to critique Race to the Top and other educational initiatives that the President continues to advance.

I contacted several state education officials across the country, and almost all agreed with the assessment that Race to the Top was an utmost failure. Jay Stack, a Democratic analyst with the Brookings Institution, has been at the forefront of this new round of criticisms.
Jay Stack (Brookings Institution): Most Democrats and Republicans agree that Race to the Top was a failure, but President Obama continues to push for more programs that emulate Race to the Top. Studies indicate that Race to the Top and other programs like it do more harm than good. I think when we look at this program down the road; in say 10 to 20 years from now, education officials of all political ideologies…both Democrats and Republicans…will judge Race to the Top, and similar educational programs President Obama has supported, harshly.

Neil Sanderson (Correspondent): With education policy being at the forefront of current policy debates, the Race to the Top program will continue to gain more coverage in the weeks ahead, and this may ultimately hurt President Obama come Election Day. Christine.

Christine Flynn (Anchorwoman): Thank you, Neil.

--End of News Report--

Below is a screenshot of the stimulus page (scaled down to fit on this page).
Negative Valence Prime

--Beginning of News Report--

Christine Flynn (Anchorwoman): Transition to education, President Obama has recently campaigned on the success of Race to the Top, a federal program designed to spur innovation and competition for K-12 education, and as Neil Sanderson reports, Race to the Top continues to help American education.

Neil Sanderson (Correspondent): In Delaware, state education officials are still praising Race to the Top, a federal initiative designed to encourage innovation and competition at the K-12 school level. State school officials of Delaware, a state that finished near the top of the nation-wide competition, are still happy. Education officials argue that the project has done much to help students, teachers, and administrators thrive in a 21st century learning environment.

Ed Stewart (Delaware State Education Official): President Obama’s administration set an achievable and obtainable benchmark. Race to the Top was bottom-up in its approach, and it allowed local school officials to work within our means. The Obama administration made a solid investment in our educational infrastructure, and our students continue to reap the benefits.

Neil Sanderson (Correspondent): Other states have also stepped up their praise of Race to the Top. School officials in South Carolina, a state that finished near the top of the competition, were extremely happy when the results came out.

Sarah Ferguson (South Carolina State Education Official): I think I can vouch for most of the states that the benchmarks that the Obama administration set were very manageable. We are all happy that the president trusted local schools to make the appropriate decisions for the students. This president trusts this country’s educators to make the right decisions, and we should thank him for that.

Neil Sanderson (Correspondent): Education officials, both Democrats and Republicans, have been quick to praise Race to the Top and other educational initiatives that the President continues to advance. I contacted several state education officials across the country and almost all agreed with the assessment that Race to the Top was a resounding success. Jay Stack, a Republican policy analyst with the Cato Institute, continues to note the overall success of the program.
Jay Stack (Cato Institute): Most Democrats and Republicans agree that Race to the Top was a success, and President Obama should continue to push for more programs that emulate Race to the Top. Studies indicate that Race to the Top and other programs like it really helps students to achieve. I think when we look at this program down the road; in say 10 to 20 years from now, education officials of all political ideologies…both Democrats and Republicans…will judge Race to the Top and similar educational programs President Obama has supported in a positive light.

Neil Sanderson (Correspondent): With education policy being at the forefront of current policy debates, the Race to the Top program will continue to gain more coverage in the weeks ahead, and this may ultimately help President Obama come Election Day. Christine.

Christine Flynn (Anchorwoman): Thank you, Neil.

--End of News Report--

Below is a screenshot of the stimulus page (scaled down to fit on this page).
Christine Flynn (Anchorwoman): Transition to education, President Obama has recently campaigned on Race to the Top, a federal program designed to spur innovation and competition for K-12 education, and as Neil Sanderson reports, Race to the Top has its equal share of supporters and detractors.

Neil Sanderson (Correspondent): In New Hampshire, state education officials are still upset about Race to the Top, a federal initiative designed to encourage innovation and competition at the K-12 school level.

State school officials of New Hampshire, a state that finished near the bottom of the nation-wide competition, are still upset. Education officials argue that the project did little to help students and teachers.

Ed Stewart (New Hampshire State Education Official): President Obama’s administration set an unachievable benchmark. Bureaucrats in Washington set standards that were impossible to achieve. The Obama administration’s policies have cost this country hundreds of millions of dollars, and our schools of have lost money from no fault of their own.

Neil Sanderson (Correspondent): In contrast, other states have praised Race to the Top. Officials in South Carolina, a state that was ranked near the top of the competition, were happy when the results came out.

Sarah Ferguson (South Carolina State Education Official): I think I can vouch for most of the states that the benchmarks that the Obama administration set were very manageable. We are all happy that the president trusted local schools to make the appropriate decisions for the students. This president trusts this country’s educators to make the right decisions, and we should thank him for that.

Neil Sanderson (Correspondent): Education officials, both Democrats and Republicans, have been split on their assessment of Race to the Top and other educational initiatives that the President continues to advance. I contacted several state education officials across the country, and half agreed with the assessment that Race to the Top was an utmost failure, while the other half stated that the program was a resounding success. Jay Stack, a policy analyst, continues to examine how Race to the Top has affected American education.

Jay Stack (Policy Analyst): Democrats and Republicans are split on whether Race to the Top was a success or failure. Studies indicate that Race to the Top and other programs like it have helped some schools while hurting others. I think when we look at this program down the road; in say 10 to 20 years from now, education officials of all political ideologies…both Democrats
and Republicans...will be mixed in their overall assessment towards Race to the Top and similar educational programs President Obama has supported.

**Neil Sanderson (Correspondent):** With education policy being at the forefront of current policy debates, the Race to the Top program will continue to gain more coverage in the weeks ahead, and will be a contentious issue come Election Day. Christine.

**Christine Flynn (Anchorwoman):** Thank you, Neil.

--End of News Report--

Below is a screenshot of the stimulus page (scaled down to fit on this page).
APPENDIX E. NEWSPAPER PRIME
Red text not presented to participants.

Newspaper Article-Strong Tie

Below is a screenshot of the stimulus page (scaled down to fit on this page).

Steve Easterly Campaigns With the Help of President Obama.

By CHRIS PARK

IRVINE, C.A. — Three days after speaking to a group of education officials about past and current education issues, President Obama was onstage in Irvine, CA with Steve Easterly, a Democrat running in the Democratic primary for an open U.S. congressional seat representing Irvine and the surrounding community. Obama, a strong supporter of Easterly since he first filed his papers to run for the vacant seat in early 2011, rallied the 300-person crowd in a local gym just outside of Irvine. President Obama said, “I have known Steve for a long time; and I know he would make an excellent representative for your community. He has the ability to make Irvine and the rest of the state a great place to live, work, and raise a family.” Easterly was equally as gracious, stating, “It is an honor to have President Obama here with us today. If elected to Congress, you can count on me supporting President Obama and his policies. I am happy to have him as our president.” Easterly, a former physician, announced he was running for the open congressional seat in early 2011. Easterly has been a staunch Obama supporter ever since announcing his candidacy. Easterly has said that he will openly support all of Obama’s initiatives. At a recent campaign stop, Easterly stated, “I respect President Obama and I will continue to campaign with the President.” Since declaring his candidacy, Easterly has raised $950,000, and is currently polling even with his primary opponent, John Clayson. President Obama will spend the next three days in California campaigning on educational issues before returning to Washington, D.C., while Easterly will continue to campaign for his party’s nomination with several campaign rallies scheduled for the weekend.
Steve Easterly Campaigns Without the Help of President Obama.

By CHRIS PARK

IRVINE, C.A. --- Three days after speaking to a group of education officials about past and current education issues, President Obama was onstage in Irvine, CA campaigning for local congressional candidates. Obama rallied the 300-person crowd in a local gym just outside of Irvine by saying of the local candidates on-stage, “I know the people in front of you would make excellent representatives for your community.” In a nearby campaign event, Steve Easterly, a Democrat running in the Democratic primary for the congressional seat representing Irvine and the surrounding community, attempted to distance himself from President Obama. “Both President Obama and I are Democrats, but we disagree on many fundamental issues. President Obama has not endorsed me, and I will not ask for his endorsement.” Easterly, a former physician, announced he was running for the open congressional seat in early 2011. Easterly has never officially announced his support for President Obama’s re-election. Easterly has stated that although he is a Democrat, he will not automatically support all of Obama’s initiatives. At a recent campaign stop, Easterly made clear his disagreements with President Obama. “I respect President Obama and we are part of the same political party, but I am hesitant to automatically support the President.” Since declaring his candidacy, Easterly has raised $950,000 and is currently polling even with his primary opponent, John Clayson. Obama will spend the next three days in California campaigning on educational issues, while Easterly will continue to campaign for his party’s nomination with several campaign rallies scheduled for the weekend.
Dummy News Transcript

--Beginning of News Report--

Leslie Erinson (Anchorwoman): Finally tonight, a voyage deep into the sea. An explorer made the journey yesterday to the bottom of the Pacific, a place known as the Mariana Trench's Challenger Deep, some 300 miles Southwest of Guam. Tom Clarke has the story.

Tom Clarke (Correspondent): He has climbed Mt. Everest, but this was William Murray’s most ambitious project yet.

Man: Above all, have fun.

William Murray (Adventurer): Have fun, exactly.

Tom Clarke (Correspondent): He set off in the middle of the night, but it makes no difference when you are heading to the darkest place on Earth. Once in the water, the sub turns vertical to drop like a torpedo to the bottom. Sinking like a stone, it still took William Murray two-and-a-half-hours to reach the bottom. His descent took him straight past the depth of the English Channel at just 180 meters. He was not even halfway when he passed the depth of the Titanic at 3,700 meters. That is more than two miles. And his journey into the abyss even took him beyond the height of a submerged Everest, before he finally reached the bottom of the trench, 11 kilometers, nearly seven miles deep. He was three hours at the bottom and an hour coming back.

So what exactly did the self-proclaimed thrill seeker see? Well, you will have to wait for the 3-D movie being released sometime in the near future. But the ocean's deepest spot might not be a blockbuster.

Man: You did it, man!

William Murray (Adventurer): We all did it. This is a vast, you know, frontier down there that's going to take us a while to understand that -- the impression to me was that it was a very lunar, very desolate place, very isolated. My feeling was one of complete isolation from all of humanity.
Tom Clarke (Correspondent): It may be featureless, but videos from British researchers using robotic subs have recently revealed remarkable animals, like snailfish on a giant shrimp-like arthropod from four miles down. Who knows what Murray’s team might find.

Tom Clarke (Correspondent): William Murray admits diving the Mariana Trench is a boyhood dream fulfilled. And now it's attracting some other big fish too. Fred Grandon and Google's Sam Markin are now building deep-diving subs as well. The abyss, so far William Murray’s private domain, is about to become the new frontier.

Leslie Erinson (Anchorwoman): Thank you, Tom.

--End of News Report--

Below is a screenshot of the stimulus page (scaled down to fit on this page).
Painting Fills Key Gap in Art Institute's Collection

By KEVIN SANDERS

CHICAGO, I.L. --- The Art Institute of Chicago announced it has received an important new gift: "Water Lily Pond," circa 1919, part of a late series of Monet's paintings of the Japanese-style pond on his country estate in Giverny, France.

"For a long time we've had a very important collection of Monet works from every decade of his career from the 1860s to the 1920s, but what we were missing was an exceptionally fine example of his latest decade in extraordinary condition and quality," museum director James Cuno said.

And the Art Institute's new acquisition is especially important because it has rarely been seen by the public. "Water Lily Pond" was never exhibited during Monet's lifetime. It was owned by his estate until the mid-1950s, when the artist's son, Michel, sold it to art collector Paul Rosenberg. It's cleaner now, too. For the past several months, the museum has conducted a lengthy conservation of the painting, cleaning it and removing a thick layer of yellowed varnish that had covered the work for decades. As a result, the painting's newly revealed surface is now brighter -- pinks and lavenders that had been obscured to the point of invisibility are now vibrant.

The painting is also notable for the way it captures Monet's push toward the edges of abstraction in his last years. "It's among the least descriptive of the water-lily paintings, but it's still based on his experience," Cuno said. "If you step back several feet, the surface of the water reappears."
APPENDIX G. QUESTIONNAIRE
Red text not presented to participants.

In the next section, you will be asked several questions related to the transcripts and newspaper articles you have just read.

Please do not go back to re-read the articles

Please read the questions carefully and answer based on your current attitudes and beliefs. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please click on the link below to begin answering the questions. Thank you.

Click to Continue

Primed Effects—Performance Evaluations for Barack Obama

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling U.S. education? (pq001)
   (1 = Strongly Disapprove, 2 = Disapprove, 3 = Somewhat Disapprove, 4 = Neither Disapprove nor Approve, 5 = Somewhat Approve, 6 = Approve, 7 = Strongly Approve)

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling our relations with foreign countries? (pq002)
   (1 = Strongly Disapprove, 2 = Disapprove, 3 = Somewhat Disapprove, 4 = Neither Disapprove nor Approve, 5 = Somewhat Approve, 6 = Approve, 7 = Strongly Approve)

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling environmental issues? (pq003)
   (1 = Strongly Disapprove, 2 = Disapprove, 3 = Somewhat Disapprove, 4 = Neither Disapprove nor Approve, 5 = Somewhat Approve, 6 = Approve, 7 = Strongly Approve)

4. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president? (pq004)
   (1 = Strongly Disapprove, 2 = Disapprove, 3 = Somewhat Disapprove, 4 = Neither Disapprove nor Approve, 5 = Somewhat Approve, 6 = Approve, 7 = Strongly Approve)

Primed Effects—Performance Evaluations for Steve Easterly

5. If elected to Congress, do you think you would approve or disapprove of the way Steve Easterly would handle U.S. education? (pq005)
   (1 = Strongly Disapprove, 2 = Disapprove, 3 = Somewhat Disapprove, 4 = Neither Disapprove nor Approve, 5 = Somewhat Approve, 6 = Approve, 7 = Strongly Approve)
6. If elected to Congress, do you think you would approve or disapprove of the way Steve Easterly would handle our relations with foreign countries? *(pq006)*

(1 = Strongly Disapprove, 2 = Disapprove, 3 = Somewhat Disapprove, 4 = Neither Disapprove nor Approve, 5 = Somewhat Approve, 6 = Approve, 7 = Strongly Approve)

7. If elected to Congress, do you think you would approve or disapprove of the way Steve Easterly would handle environmental issues? *(dq007)*

(1 = Strongly Disapprove, 2 = Disapprove, 3 = Somewhat Disapprove, 4 = Neither Disapprove nor Approve, 5 = Somewhat Approve, 6 = Approve, 7 = Strongly Approve)

8. If elected to Congress, do you think you would approve or disapprove of the way Steve Easterly would handle his job as a congressman? *(dq008)*

(1 = Strongly Disapprove, 2 = Disapprove, 3 = Somewhat Disapprove, 4 = Neither Disapprove nor Approve, 5 = Somewhat Approve, 6 = Approve, 7 = Strongly Approve)

**Priming Effects-Competency Evaluations for Barack Obama**

9. Barack Obama is knowledgeable when handling education issues.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) *(cq001)*

10. Barack Obama is knowledgeable when handling foreign affairs issues.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) *(cq002)*

11. Barack Obama is knowledgeable when handling environmental issues.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) *(cq003)*

12. Barack Obama is knowledgeable in his job as president.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) *(cq004)*

13. Barack Obama is intelligent when handling education issues.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) *(cq005)*

14. Barack Obama is intelligent when handling foreign affairs issues.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) *(cq006)*

15. Barack Obama is intelligent when handling environmental issues.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) *(cq007)*
16. Barack Obama is intelligent when handling his job as president.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq008)

**Priming Effects-Competency Evaluations for Steve Easterly**

17. If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be knowledgeable when handling education issues.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq009)

18. If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be knowledgeable when handling foreign affairs issues.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq010)

19. If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be knowledgeable when handling environmental issues.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq011)

20. If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be knowledgeable in his job as a congressman.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq012)

21. If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be intelligent when handling education issues.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq013)

22. If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be intelligent when handling foreign affairs issues.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq014)

23. If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be intelligent when handling environmental issues.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq015)

24. If elected to Congress, Steve Easterly would be intelligent when handling his job as a congressman.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree) (cq016)
25. Using the thermometer below, please rate your feeling towards President Obama. Please click on the button that most accurately describes your feeling. (fq001)

91-100 Degrees (10)
81-90 Degrees (9)
71-80 Degrees (8)
61-70 Degrees (7)
51-60 Degrees (6)
41-50 Degrees (5)
31-40 Degrees (4)
21-30 Degrees (3)
11-20 Degrees (2)
0-10 Degrees (1)
**Priming Effects-Favorability Evaluations for Steve Easterly**

26. Using the thermometer below and based on what you know of him, please rate your feeling towards Steve Easterly. *(fq002)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>°F</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Very warm or favorable feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Quite warm or favorable feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Fairly warm or favorable feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>A bit more warm or favorable than cold feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>No feeling at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>A bit more cold or unfavorable feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Fairly cold or unfavorable feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Quite cold or unfavorable feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Very cold or unfavorable feeling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please click on the button that most accurately describes your feeling.

- 91-100 Degrees (10)
- 81-90 Degrees (9)
- 71-80 Degrees (8)
- 61-70 Degrees (7)
- 51-60 Degrees (6)
- 41-50 Degrees (5)
- 31-40 Degrees (4)
- 21-30 Degrees (3)
- 11-20 Degrees (2)
- 0-10 Degrees (1)
27. How likely are you to vote for President Obama in the upcoming election?
(1 = Not Very Likely, 2 = Not Likely, 3 = Somewhat Not Likely, 4 = I have yet to decide, 5 = Somewhat Likely, 6 = Likely, 7 = Very likely) (vq001)

28. Based on what you know of Steve Easterly, how likely would you be to vote for him in the upcoming election if you were in his district?
(1 = Not Very Likely, 2 = Not Likely, 3 = Somewhat Not Likely, 4 = I have yet to decide, 5 = Somewhat Likely, 6 = Likely, 7 = Very likely) (vq002)

29. The news story transcript about the Race to the Top issue portrayed President Obama negatively. (mq001)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

30. The news story transcript about the Race to the Top issue portrayed President Obama positively. (mq002)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

31. The news story transcript about the Race to the Top issue portrayed Race to the Top in a pessimistic way. (mq003)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

32. The news story transcript about the Race to the Top issue portrayed Race to the Top in an optimistic way. (mq004)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

33. The news story transcript about the Race to the Top issue portrayed President Obama as responsible for Race to the Top. (mq005)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)
34. In general, was the news story transcript about Race to the Top more negative or positive in its tone? (mq006)
(1 = Very Negative, 2 = Negative, 3 = Somewhat Negative, 4 = Neither Negative nor Positive, 5 = Somewhat Positive, 6 = Positive, 7 = Strongly Positive)

Manipulation Check-Strength of Link

35. President Obama thinks like Steve Easterly. (mq007)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

36. President Obama and Steve Easterly have similar beliefs. (mq008)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

37. President Obama and Steve Easterly have similar political beliefs. (mq009)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

38. President Obama supports Steve Easterly. (mq010)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

39. Steve Easterly supports President Obama. (mq011)
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

In the next and final section, you will be asked several demographic and political awareness questions.
Please read the questions carefully.

Please do not search online for the answer.

Please click on the link below to begin answering the questions. Thank you.

Click To Continue

Demographic Information

1) What is your party registration? (dq001)
(1 = Democrat 2 = Republican 3 = Green 4 = Libertarian 5 = I am not registered to a specific political party.)
1a) What is your party affiliation? **(pa001)**
(1 = Democrat 2 = Republican 3 = Green 4 = Libertarian 5 = I do not affiliate with a specific political party)

2) In general, what is your political ideology? **(dq002)**
(1 = Very conservative, 2 = Conservative, 2 = Somewhat Conservative, 3 = Neither Conservative nor Liberal, 4 = Somewhat Liberal, 5 = Liberal, 6 = Very liberal)

3) In general, how conservative or liberal are you in terms of *social issues*? **(dq003)**
(1 = Very conservative, 2 = Conservative, 2 = Somewhat Conservative, 3 = Neither Conservative nor Liberal, 4 = Somewhat Liberal, 5 = Liberal, 6 = Very liberal)

4) In general, how conservative or liberal are you in terms of *economic issues*? **(dq004)**
(1 = Very conservative, 2 = Conservative, 2 = Somewhat Conservative, 3 = Neither Conservative nor Liberal, 4 = Somewhat Liberal, 5 = Liberal, 6 = Very liberal)

5) How interested are you in politics? Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means no interest at all and 10 means a great deal of interest? (0 = No Interest At All, 10 = A Great Deal of Interest) **(dq005)**

6) What is your gender? **(dq006)**
Male (1)______  Female (2)_______

7) What is your annual household income? **(dq007)**
(1 = Less than $20,000, 2 = $20,001-39,999, 3 = $40,000-59,999, 5 = $60,000-79,999, 6 = $80,000-99,999, 7 = $100,000 or more)

8) What is your ethnicity? **(dq008)**
(1 = White/Caucasian, 2 = Black/African-American, 3 = Hispanic, 4 = Asian, 5 = Other)

9) What is your education? **(dq009)**
(1 = Less than high school, 2 = Some High School, 3 = High School Degree/GED, 4 = Associates/2-year College Degree, 5 = Bachelors/4-year College Degree 6 = Master’s Degree, 7 = Professional/Advanced Degree (J.D., M.D, Ph.D.)

10) In what year were you born? **(dq010) __________**

**Political awareness-Knowledge variable is the sum of the scores. Bolded answer is the correct answer.**

*Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Please do not search online for the answers. Thank you.*
11) Who currently is the Secretary of Education of the United States? (kq001)
   (a) Leon Panetta, (b) Arne Duncan (c) Rob Portman (d) John Bryson

12) Who currently is the Secretary of State of the United States? (kq002)
   (a) Tim Geithner (b) Thomas Vilsack (c) Hillary Clinton (d) Kathleen Sebelius

13) Who currently is the Speaker of the House? (kq003)
   (a) John Boehner (b) Eric Cantor (c) Harry Reid (d) Nancy Pelosi

14) Who currently is the Governor of Ohio? (kq004)
   (a) Edward Kennedy (b) John Kasich (c) Ted Strickland (d) Harriet Snowe

15) Who currently is the Majority Leader in the United States Senate? (kq005)
   (a) Joe Biden (b) Jack Lew (c) Eric Shinseki (d) Harry Reid

16) Who currently is the Attorney General of the United States? (kq006)
   (a) Eric Holder (b) Lisa Jackson (c), Karen Mills (d) Ronald Kirk

17) Who currently is the mayor of New York City? (kq007)
   (a) Rahm Emanuel (b) Antonio Villaraigosa (c) Thomas Menino (d) Michael Bloomberg

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Please do not search online for
the answers. Thank you.

18) What percentage of both houses of congress is required to override a presidential veto? (kq008)
   (a) 1/2    (b) 3/4     (c) 1/3    (d) 2/3

19) What branch of government is responsible to determine the constitutionality of law? (kq009)
   (a) Judicial   (b) Executive   (c) Legislative   (d) Each share equal responsibility

20) What political party has the most members in the United States House of Representatives? (kq010)
   (a) Democrats (b) Republicans (c) Equal Number of Members   (d) Libertarians

21) Which member of the executive branch is able to break ties in the United States Senate? (kq011)
   (a) Secretary of Education (b) Speaker of the House  (c) President (d) Vice President

22) In what STATE do you reside in? (lq001)

23) In what COUNTY do you reside in? (lq002)
Thank you for completing the study.

Purpose:
Thank you for your participation in this research study examining news perceptions and the use of information gathered from text-based news sources. The preceding study tests how individuals perceive and judge political actors from information gathered in news stories. We believe that individuals use the tone of the coverage as well as issue importance and the strength of the link between political officials to judge well-known and little-known political candidates.

Methodology:
Again, thank you for your participation. In the preceding study, you were asked to read video news transcripts and print news articles, and then answer questions related to the video news transcripts and print news articles. If you know, or are friends with, any person who may also be a participant in the study, we ask that you do not discuss the experiment with him/her until he/she has completed it. We greatly appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Anonymity:
This study is anonymous, meaning that no identifying material will be attached to the results of the study. If you wish to withdraw your consent or have your answers removed from the study’s results, you can contact David Morin (phone: (434) 250-5996, email: morind@bgsu.edu) or Professor Gi Woong Yun (phone: (419) 372-8638, email: gyun@bgsu.edu).

Contact:
If you have any additional questions related to the study, or would like to learn more about the study’s objectives, please contact David Morin by phone or email (phone: (434) 250-5996, email: morind@bgsu.edu) or Professor Gi Woong Yun (phone: (419) 372-8638, email: gyun@bgsu.edu).

Thank you for your participation. Please close your browser now. Thank you.
APPENDIX I. HSRB APPROVAL DOCUMENT

DATE: July 12, 2012
TO: David Morin
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [337090-2] Come a Little Closer: Examining Spillover Priming Effects from a Network Perspective
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: July 12, 2012
EXPIRATION DATE: June 21, 2013
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Exempt review category # 2

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please add the text equivalent of the HSRB IRBNet approval/expiration date stamp to the “footer” area of the electronic consent document.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 600 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on June 21, 2013. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
### Table 1

3X2 Experimental Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valence</th>
<th>Tie Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of Cells: 6

### Table 2

Number of Counties that Agreed to Participate by State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Ohio</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Table 3

*Total Percentage of Counties that Agreed to Participate by State*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>205</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Annual Household Income*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Household Income</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$20,000 per year</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001-39,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-59,999</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-79,999</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000-99,999</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$100,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>205</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Highest Education Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Education Level</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Degree/GED</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates/2-year College Degree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors/4-year College Degree</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Advanced Degree</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
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<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for Participant Residence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
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<th>% of Total Participants</th>
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<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for Political Party Registration & Affiliation*

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<td>Political Party Registration</td>
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<td>127</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Political Party Affiliation</td>
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<td>139</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>14</td>
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*Five (5) participants were removed based on computer error*

Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics for Political Ideology, Awareness, and Interest*

<table>
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<th>Political Demographic Variables</th>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Political Ideology</td>
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<td>4.75</td>
<td>1.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Political Ideology</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Political Ideology</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Issues Political Ideology</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>10.25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
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<td>1.17</td>
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Table 11

*Descriptive Statistics for Gender Among Republicans*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12

*Descriptive Statistics for Ethnicity Among Republicans*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 13

*Descriptive Statistics for Annual Household Income Among Republicans*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Household Income</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$20,000 per year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001-39,999</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-59,999</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-79,999</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000-99,999</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$100,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 14

*Descriptive Statistics for Highest Education Level Among Republicans*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Education Level</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Degree/GED</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates/2-year College Degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors/4-year College Degree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Advanced Degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15  
Descriptive Statistics for Participant Residence Among Republicans 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16  
Descriptive Statistics for Political Ideology, Awareness, and Interest Among Republicans 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Demographic Variables</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Political Ideology</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Political Ideology</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Political Ideology</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Issues Political Ideology</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10.19</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17

Descriptive Statistics for Gender Among Democrats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics for Ethnicity Among Democrats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 19

*Descriptive Statistics for Annual Household Income Among Democrats*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Household Income</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$20,000 per year</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001-39,999</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-59,999</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-79,999</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000-99,999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$100,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 20

*Descriptive Statistics for Highest Education Level Among Democrats*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Education Level</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Degree/GED</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates/2-year College Degree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors/4-year College Degree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Advanced Degree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21

*Descriptive Statistics for Participant Residence Among Democrats*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22

*Descriptive Statistics for Political Ideology, Awareness, and Interest Among Democrats*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Demographic Variables</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Political Ideology</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Political Ideology</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Political Ideology</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Issues Political Ideology</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>9.18</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 23

*Descriptive Statistics for Gender Among Independents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Independents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 24

*Descriptive Statistics for Ethnicity Among Independents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Independents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 25

*Descriptive Statistics for Annual Household Income Among Independents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Household Income</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Independents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$20,000 per year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001-39,999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-59,999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-79,999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$100,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 26

*Descriptive Statistics for Highest Education Level Among Independents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Education Level</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Independents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Degree/GED</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors/4-year College Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Advanced Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 27

Descriptive Statistics for Participant Residence Among Independents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Total Independents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28

Descriptive Statistics for Political Ideology, Awareness, and Interest Among Independents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Demographic Variables</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Political Ideology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Political Ideology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues Political Ideology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Issues Political Ideology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 29

*Predictors for Job Performance and Education Issue Performance Towards the President (N = 205)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Job Performance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Education Issue Performance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 30
Predictors for Job Competency and Education Issue Competency Towards the President (N = 205)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>General Job Competency</th>
<th>Education Issue Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( R^2_{\text{Change}} ) ( \beta )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.75 .86 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.0 .07 ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0 .04 ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0 -.04 ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 31

Predictors for Favorability and Voting Intent Towards the President (N = 205)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Favorability</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Voting Intent</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 32

Predictors for Job Performance and Education Issue Performance Towards Steve Easterly (N = 205)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Job Performance</th>
<th>Education Issue Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(R^2_{\text{Change}})</td>
<td>(\beta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 33

Predictors for Job Competency and Education Issue Competency Towards Steve Easterly (N = 205)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>General Job Competency</th>
<th>Education Issue Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$ $\beta$ $p$</td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$ $\beta$ $p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.11 .32 **</td>
<td>.15 .37 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>.04 -.17 **</td>
<td>.03 -.18 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.01 .16 ns</td>
<td>0.02 .16 ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.01 .04 ns</td>
<td>0.0 -.1 ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>.02 -.12 ns</td>
<td>.02 -.03 ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
### Table 34

*Predictors for Favorability and Voting Intent Towards Steve Easterly (N = 205)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Favorability</th>
<th>Voting Intent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant*
Table 35
Means for Political Party Affiliation/Membership & Prime Valence Along Steve Easterly’s Education Issue Competency Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation/Membership</th>
<th>Prime Valence (#Cases)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Positive (16)</td>
<td>2.72 (1.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Negative (20)</td>
<td>3.73 (.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Neutral (11)</td>
<td>3.09 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Positive (46)</td>
<td>4.62 (1.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Negative (56)</td>
<td>4.33 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Neutral (42)</td>
<td>4.57 (1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Positive (3)</td>
<td>4.5 (.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Negative (2)</td>
<td>4.0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Neutral (5)</td>
<td>5.1 (1.52)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total Number of Cells = 9
Table 36
Means for Political Party Affiliation/Membership & Tie Strength Along Steve Easterly’s General Job Performance Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation/Membership</th>
<th>Tie Strength (#Cases)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Strong (26)</td>
<td>1.69 (1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Weak (21)</td>
<td>4.48 (.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Strong (95)</td>
<td>5.42 (.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Weak (49)</td>
<td>3.16 (1.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Strong (8)</td>
<td>4.75 (1.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Weak (2)</td>
<td>4.0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total Number of Cells = 6

Table 37
Means for Political Party Affiliation/Membership & Tie Strength Along Steve Easterly’s Education Issue Performance Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation/Membership</th>
<th>Tie Strength (#Cases)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Strong (26)</td>
<td>1.73 (.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Weak (21)</td>
<td>4.38 (.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Strong (95)</td>
<td>5.18 (1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Weak (49)</td>
<td>3.39 (.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Strong (8)</td>
<td>5.25 (.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Weak (2)</td>
<td>4.0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total Number of Cells = 6
Table 38
Means for Political Party Affiliation/Membership & Tie Strength Along Steve Easterly’s General Job Competency Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation/Membership</th>
<th>Tie Strength (#Cases)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Strong (26)</td>
<td>2.46 (1.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Weak (21)</td>
<td>4.48 (.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Strong (95)</td>
<td>5.01 (.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Weak (49)</td>
<td>3.55 (.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Strong (8)</td>
<td>4.75 (1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Weak (2)</td>
<td>4.6 (.97)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total Number of Cells = 6

Table 39
Means for Political Party Affiliation/Membership & Tie Strength Along Steve Easterly’s Education Issue Competency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation/Membership</th>
<th>Tie Strength (#Cases)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Strong (26)</td>
<td>2.40 (1.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Weak (21)</td>
<td>4.26 (.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Strong (95)</td>
<td>4.95 (.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Weak (49)</td>
<td>3.6 (.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Strong (8)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Weak (2)</td>
<td>4.7 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total Number of Cells = 6
**Table 40**

*Means for Political Party Affiliation/Membership & Tie Strength Along Steve Easterly’s Favorability Evaluations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation/Membership</th>
<th>Tie Strength (#Cases)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Strong (26)</td>
<td>2.58 (1.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Weak (21)</td>
<td>5.81 (1.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Strong (95)</td>
<td>7.52 (1.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Weak (49)</td>
<td>4.55 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Strong (8)</td>
<td>6.13 (.99 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Weak (2)</td>
<td>5.0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total Number of Cells = 6

**Table 41**

*Means for Political Party Affiliation/Membership & Tie Strength Along Voting Intent for Steve Easterly*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Affiliation/Membership</th>
<th>Tie Strength (#Cases)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Strong (26)</td>
<td>1.15 (.61 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Weak (21)</td>
<td>3.43 (1.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Strong (95)</td>
<td>6.11 (.95 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Weak (49)</td>
<td>3.16 (1.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Strong (8)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Weak (2)</td>
<td>2.5 (2.12 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total Number of Cells = 6
### Table 42

*Predictors for Job Performance and Education Issue Performance Towards the President Among Democrats (n = 144)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th><em>Job Performance</em></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th><em>Education Issue Performance</em></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant*
Table 43

Predictors for Job Competency and Education Issue Competency Towards the President Among Democrats (n = 144)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>General Job Competency</th>
<th>Education Issue Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 44

Predictors for Favorability and Voting Intent Towards the President Among Democrats (n = 144)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Favorability</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{change}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$R^2_{change}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 45

Predictors for Job Performance and Education Issue Performance Towards Steve Easterly among Democrats (n = 144)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Job Performance</th>
<th>Education Issue Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( R^2_{\text{Change}} )</td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 46

Predictors for Job Competency and Education Issue Competency Towards Steve Easterly among Democrats (n = 144)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>General Job Competency</th>
<th>Education Issue Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 47

Predictors for Favorability and Voting Intent Towards Steve Easterly Among Democrats (n = 144)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Favorability</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Voting Intent</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R² Change</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>R² Change</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 48

*Predictors for Job Performance and Education Issue Performance Towards the President Among Republicans (n = 47)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Job Performance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Education Issue Performance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.1</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 49

Predictors for Job Competency and Education Issue Competency Towards the President Among Republicans (n = 47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>General Job Competency</th>
<th>Education Issue Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 50

Predictors for Favorability and Voting Intent Towards the President Among Republicans (n = 47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Favorability</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( R^2_{\text{Change}} )</td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 51

*Predictors for Job Performance and Education Issue Performance Towards Steve Easterly among Republicans (n = 47)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Job Performance</th>
<th>Education Issue Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant*
Table 52
Predictors for Job Competency and Education Issue Competency Towards Steve Easterly among Republicans (n = 47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>General Job Competency</th>
<th>Education Issue Competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
Table 53
Predictors for Favorability and Voting Intent Towards Steve Easterly Among Republicans (n = 47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Favorability</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Voting Intent</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$R^2_{\text{Change}}$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.1</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.2</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Valence</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R2</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All predictor variables were entered simultaneously.

*<.05, **<.01, ns = Not Significant
APPENDIX K. FIGURES

Figure 1. Significant Predictors for Education Issue Performance Evaluations Towards President Obama

Note: **<.01
Figure 2. Significant Predictors for Job Performance Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly

Note: **<.01
Figure 3. Significant Predictors for Education Issue Performance Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly

Note: **<.01
Figure 4. Significant Predictors for General Job Competency Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly

Note: **<.01
Figure 5. Significant Predictors for Education Issue Competency Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly

Note: **<.01
Figure 6. Significant Predictors for Favorability Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly

Note: **<.01
Figure 7. Significant Predictors for Voting Intent Towards Steve Easterly

Note: **<.01
Figure 8. Significant Predictors for Job Performance Evaluations Towards President Obama Among Democrats

Note: **<.01
Note: **<.01

*Figure 9.* Significant Predictors for Education Issue Performance Evaluations Towards President Obama Among Democrats
Figure 10. Significant Predictors for General Job Competency Evaluations Towards President Obama Among Democrats

Note: **<.01
Note: **<.01, *<.05

*Figure 11. Significant Predictors for Favorability Evaluations Towards President Obama Among Democrats*
Figure 12. Significant Predictors for Voting Intent Towards the President Among Democrats

Note: **<.01, *<.05

Figure 12. Significant Predictors for Voting Intent Towards the President Among Democrats
Figure 13. Significant Predictors for Education Issue Performance Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly Among Democrats

Note: **<.01, *<.05
Figure 14. Significant Predictors for Education Issue Competency Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly Among Democrats

Note: **<.01, *<.05
Figure 15. Significant Predictors for Favorability Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly Among Democrats

Note: **<.01, *<.05
Figure 16. Significant Predictors for Voting Intent Towards Steve Easterly Among Democrats

Note: **<.01, *<.05
Figure 17. Significant Predictors for Education Issue Performance Evaluations Towards President Obama Among Republicans

Note: **<.01, *<.05
Figure 18. Significant Predictors for Education Issue Performance Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly Among Republicans
Figure 19. Significant Predictors for General Job Competency Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly Among Republicans

Note: **<.01
Figure 20. Significant Predictors for Education Issue Competency Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly Among Republicans

Note: **<.01
Figure 21. Significant Predictors for Favorability Evaluations Towards Steve Easterly Among Republicans

Note: **<.01, *<.05
Note: **<.01, *<.05

*Figure 22. Significant Predictors for Voting Intent Towards Steve Easterly Among Republicans*