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How Presidents Can Become "Hip" by Using High Definition Metaphors Strategic Communication of Leadership in a Digital Age

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How Presidents Can Become “Hip” by Using High Definition Metaphors
Strategic Communication of Leadership in a Digital Age

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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DEDICATION

To my husband, John Stimus

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A great passion for refined communication, expressing visions of leadership, and public engagement inspired this doctoral research. Although I viewed it initially as an exclusively personal endeavor, resembling in many ways my work as political columnist, it became clear in the end that writing a dissertation is not an individual enterprise. It is a collective effort of dedicated individuals who channel with their suggestions the arduous labor of the researcher thus helping with releasing of a better academic product into the world of knowledge. Therefore, I am deeply grateful to the esteemed professors from my Doctoral Committee, Kelly Page Werder, Michael Scott Solomon, Steven Tauber, and Peter Funke for guiding the process and refining this work.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this interdisciplinary research was to see whether American presidents can reach Millennials more effectively in the digital age while publicly advancing the legislative agenda of their administration. The rationale is that presidents need to gain public support to pressure Congress into passing their legislation; while doing that, they can capture the public's interest in politics and educate civically the most inattentive audience. To accomplish the task, strategic messaging adequate to digital media is necessary. Millennials appear as having modest interest and knowledge of politics despite their intense presence on digital media. On the other hand, they represent a third of the electorate— also projected to become the most important economic contributors in society — thus constituting an audience that cannot be ignored. Because metaphors are credited with an important role in processing new information and in branding leadership, I propose a category of new metaphors, labeled High Definition (HD) Metaphors that have three characteristics: they concentrate the policy contained in the message, are novel, and are relevant to the targeted audience.

The most important claim is that HD Metaphors catch the eye of the audience by increasing the message visibility; the corresponding hypothesis is (H1) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more salient than their literal counterparts. Second, I argue that HD Metaphors facilitate the understanding of the message as they have a contribution to the acquisition of new information; hence the second hypothesis: (H2) Presidential messages

containing High Definition Metaphors produce more political knowledge. Last, I claim that metaphors can influence the audience, by producing more agreement with the message; this is reflected in the third hypothesis: (H3) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts.

To test these claims I conducted an experiment with 251 students in a large American university in the southeast, in which two groups were exposed to written, fictitious metaphorical messages sourced by a fictitious president of the U.S. and two groups received the non metaphorical versions of the messages (literal counterparts). One pair of messages was constructed on a topic of high involvement and the other pair was on a topic of low involvement, as determined at a previous date.

Statistical analysis indicated that HD Metaphors increase the visibility of the message especially for audiences less interested in the topic. This is a key finding because it suggests that presidents can capture the attention of Millennials who are in general apathetic to the political discourse. On the other hand, HD Metaphors did not produce more political knowledge or more persuasion, in this particular design.

The importance of this study is theoretical and practical. It advances a new concept, High Definition Metaphors that was empirically tested with the power of an experiment; future work can build on these findings by detecting other effects. This research also connects theoretical models and concepts from various disciplines, thus enriching the scholarly understanding of issues that are not satisfied within the boundaries of a single field. Most importantly, this research has applicability to practice by informing presidential communication in the digital era; additionally, it can enhance the external strategic communication of leadership in non-

governmental and international organizations since HD Metaphors can be adapted to fit other audiences whose attention is desired.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Preamble

Amid the polychromatic communicational landscape that the digital revolution has generated in the recent years, traditional and newly emerged media outlets, nonprofit entities, and public media organizations are contemplating now more than ever the issues of public reach. This concern was brought up with more vigor early this year in two workshops (hosted by Engaging News Projects) by digital strategists from CNN, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Politico, The Daily Beast, NPR, Vox, The Texas Tribune, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Center for Investigative Reporting, Media Impact Funders, The Rita Allen Foundation, USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project, and Solutions Journalism Network (Powers, 2016).

Participants were determined to create momentum in the American society for measuring the audience's awareness and comprehension of information disseminated in media. The grand purpose? Creating an informed citizenry. Why now? Because the variegated news sources, mushrooming with the advent of digital media, seem to blur the target of mass communication, specifically its impact on the public. This concern is not only theoretical, being recently backed up by funding from socially responsible donors. For example, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which places emphasis on media impact, allocated \$30 million in

2015 in media projects (Powers, 2016). “Have they [the audiences] really understood these issues?. . .Do they follow these issues more?”, wondered during the workshop discussions, Manami Kano, deputy director for global media partnerships at the Gates Foundation, in reference to the current issues in the news.

Problematic in the new informational climate is that there are no economic incentives for media outlets to measure awareness and knowledge. Plus, these measurements are not part of the news organizations’ culture, observed Jessica Clark, director of research and strategy at Media Impact Funders (as cited in Powers, 2016). Therefore, investing in such measurements is necessary and worth fathoming, Lindsay Green- Barber, director of strategic research at the Center for Investigative Reporting, noted in the same context. Investments would lead to a better development of these measures toward a “recipe or a cocktail of different methodologies,” said Dana Chinn, Director of USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project. Along these lines, the Center for Investigative Journalism proposed the variables awareness, attitude change, action, civic engagement to measure the impact of information. These methodological efforts converge with other organization’s missions, like the Rita Allen Foundation’s, which is “creating an informed and engaged citizenry”, as the CEO Elizabeth Good Christopherson stated (as cited in Powers, 2016).

This interest to evaluate the impact of information has always been at the top of the list for political communicators, as well, especially during the campaign season, when the impact of candidates’ messaging translates, tangibly, in favorable votes. However, because it is incentivized by urgent political profits, their interest is more to persuade and less to educate the public. Nevertheless, the president, as the leading political figure with transformative power in society, can do both. With a special calibration of his public message, the president can gain

support for his policies and capture the interest of the audiences in public affairs, as well. This belief motivates this dissertation, which casts light on a category of the public that appears inattentive to politics and governance, Millennials, and on the presidents of the digital age who have the opportunity to create, via on line engagement, an informed citizenry.

The Problem - Two Facets

Two aspects give contour to the problem that motivates this study: the modern presidents' need to advance their legislative agenda by persuading the public and the societal concern for the political knowledge and awareness of public affairs among the masses, in general, and among Millennials, in particular. These two facets —presidential influence on one side, and Millennials' knowledge of politics on the other side— intersect in the area of public attentiveness to the political message, therefore evaluations of public attentiveness are necessary to illustrate each side. A definition of this concept is the interest that people have in news about government and public affairs. This summarizes several perspectives on public attentiveness utilized in studies of public behavior, such as people's willingness to think about a public issue (Newig, 2004), MIP (Most Important Problem), a concept widely utilized in national polls, or “capturing curiosity” via the Internet search trends (Ripberger, 2011). The intersection means, first, that the public's exposure to presidential messages is a prerequisite of presidential influence since messages cannot persuade without being “heard” first. Second, it means that political knowledge is built essentially (although not exclusively) on the masses' attention to public affairs and to political messages. For these reasons, I engage data on public attentiveness, aside from other measures, when I depict each of the two facets of this study.

Presidential Influence

The first facet of the problem that motivates this study emerges from the president's need to influence the public in order to pressure Congress to pass the legislation reflecting the policies of his administration. If the public support is secured consistently, presidents enjoy high approval rates, with benefits for their own reelection and for their party. Since this is the desideratum of any presidency, two aspects are particularly relevant: the public sentiment toward the president (expressed in job approvals) and the public's attention to presidential messaging (expressed in the size of the audience for presidential discourses). First, to understand presidential influence, a brief overview of perspectives in presidential studies is necessary.

Perspectives. In his classic study, Neustadt (1960, 1990) refers to presidential persuasion of actors from the other branches as bargaining power, instead of the power to command. This perspective casts light on the elitist persuasion, as opposed to public persuasion. Specifically, by focusing on the president's need to persuade other political actors, this view, advanced before television gained momentum in presidential strategies, does not insist on the relationship between the president and the public. Although fundamentally concerned with this relationship, Edwards (2003) advances a skeptical view, suggesting that the suasory effect of presidential communication with the public is very limited as messages launched from the White House fall mostly on "deaf ears". Tangent in some ways with this perspective is the Wood's (2009) theory of partisan representation, which posits that presidents are limited by the polarized contemporary landscape to catering to a public already secured along the ideological preference; in this context, changing the attitude of the general public is neither possible, nor necessary.

This theoretical sequence of somewhat pessimistic views is interrupted by Kernell (2007), whose "going public" theory acknowledges the dominance of the relationship president-

people in manifestation of leadership. This theory claims that going public is the new strategy of presidential leadership, being marked by verbal communication and public appearances, with the purpose to gain the public support. Because going public is not only conspicuous today but also beneficial to democracy due to the engagement of citizens in public affairs, I consider this model axiomatic, thus a fundamental framework for this study.

The tensions that occur in the process of acquiring presidential influence in the American political system make reaching the public a necessity, which is at least in theory, highly attainable in the era of digital communication. Whether these tensions arise from the relationship with Congress, with the judicial branch, or with the bureaucracy, presidential power gains leverage when the public support is secured (e.g., Kernell, 2007). Since reaching the public has been a constant goal of modern presidents, especially with the advent of television, I argue that now this task can be accomplished by using the unprecedented opportunities of direct, unmediated, and micro-targeted communication that the digital revolution and Web 2.0 provide.

Presidential approval and public attention. Despite the growth of the going public strategy since the Kennedy era (Kernell, 2007), the sentiment vis-à-vis the president has not increased over time. Historically, presidential approval and the public attention to presidential messaging do not display optimistic numbers. The average of presidential support did not exceed 50 percent for half of the time in the last 50 years (Edwards & Wayne, 2014, p.117), with the lowest around 20 percent for George W. Bush's performance, at the end of his term (Geer, Schiller, Herrera & Segal, 2016). This is the general trend, with a few exceptions, when presidential approval reached high levels (John Fitzgerald Kennedy- 83 percent; Bill Clinton -73 percent; George W. Bush- 90 percent; Barack Obama- 69 percent (Gallup, 2016).

Moreover, a historical view of presidential influence through media attests shrinkage of the presidential audience by comparison with the golden age of the television from the late 1950s to late 1970s. The average Nielsen ratings of televised presidential addressees and press conferences for Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter were 47 percent, 48 percent, and 49 percent, respectively (Wattenberg, 2004, p.559) but they decreased in the 1980s to 38 percent for Ronald Reagan, 34 percent for George Bush, and 29 percent for Bill Clinton (Baum & Kernell, 1999; Wattenberg, 2004). These numbers attest that the VCRs' (video cassette recorders) and cable's advent affected the erstwhile captive presidential audience.

The digital revolution from the beginning of the 21st century has not changed the decreasing trend of the general public's attention to presidential messaging. The size of the TV audience for the first State of the Union addresses of the last two presidents indicates a decline of interest from 51 million viewers for G. W. Bush in 2002 to 48 million for Barack Obama in 2010 (Nielsen, 2010). Furthermore, Barack Obama's 2015 State of the Union address captured the attention of only 31.7 million viewers (Nielsen, 2015) and reached a record low of 31.3 million viewers in 2016 (Nielsen, 2016), representing only 10 percent of the United States population. All these numbers illustrate the modest or decreasing trend of presidential influence among the general public in the modern era, since the surge of television. In this context, certain aspects bring into attention presidential influence among a specific category of the public, the biggest generation in the United States, Millennials (persons with birth years between 1980 and 2000).

Interestingly, Millennials provided high support during the electoral seasons for Barack Obama, rated at 66 percent in 2008 and 60 percent in 2012 (Pew Research Center, 2012). However, after the elections Millennials' approvals of the president receded to under 50 percent – following the general public trend. On a special note, the public sentiment toward Barack

Obama stayed higher among Millennials than among the averages of other generations. For example, in 2014 Obama's job approval among Millennials was 49 percent as opposed to 35 percent among the Silent generation (people with birth years between 1928 and 1945), 43 percent among the Generation X (people born between 1965 and 1984), and to 44 percent among Baby Boomers (persons born between 1948 and 1964), according to a Pew Research Center's study (2014).

One possible explanation for these differences is the president's use of Internet platforms, where messages travel easier toward the younger audience. In this regard, by seizing the technological opportunity of his times, president Obama, "the first Internet president" (Harnden, 2008), seems to be the harbinger of a new era of presidential communication when direct and customized reach of the large audiences is possible, perhaps paralleling John Fitzgerald Kennedy's use of television in the 1960s. However, it is clear that these opportunities have not been exploited enough since the overall modest numbers of presidential approval and attention to politics persist among Millennials. Specifically, only one in four Millennials report politics and public affairs among their top three interests (Pew Research Center, 2015a). As an expression of interest in politics, only a fifth voted in the last elections (CIRCLE-The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2016). Therefore, the above data combined show an overall reduced presidential influence among Millennials, as well, which underlines the first facet of this problem's study.

In conclusion, considering that Millennials represent a third of the U.S. electorate and the biggest generation projected to reach 35 percent of the electorate by 2020 (Kesler, 2015 with data from U.S. Census Bureau, Bloomberg View), also becoming a more active contributor to the economical development of the society, the future presidents will need to refine the style that

Obama introduced in presidential communication if they want to extend their influence in society. Designing the adequate presidential messages to reach this generation on digital media is one possible avenue to accomplish this goal, which is what this study analyses.

Political Knowledge and Awareness

The second part of the problem that motivates this research pertains to the political knowledge and general awareness of public affairs, especially among the younger generation. When discussing or testing political knowledge in the context of analyzing public opinion, scientists refer, in summary, to the level of political information that a person, a group or a community holds at some point. This has been a concern among the political elite, too, since the inception of the Republic, as expressed in James Madison's plea for "refining and enlarging the public views by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens" (Madison, 1787, Federalist 10) and in Thomas Jefferson's credo, "Educate and inform the whole mass of the people ... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty" (Jefferson, 1818).

The importance of political knowledge in a democracy is based in this study on the rationales of two classic theories: the Jeffersonian model of participation and the civic culture. The Jeffersonian model of participation shows that by involving and educating the public on matters of public affairs democracy benefits because the government accountability increases, as Geer, Schiller, Herrera & Segal (2016) summarize it. Similarly, the civic culture model claims that people's awareness and participation to politics determine the stability of democracy (Almond & Verba, 1963). In both perspectives, participation and political knowledge are interconnected.

Nevertheless, for the last decades of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st century, it seemed that the public has not only been disconnected from politics but it was also non-knowledgeable of the basic rules of governance— reflected by people’s inability to provide answers to elementary questions about political situations (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Among the factors with a role in this picture are ideology, the media- bias, the increased negativity in political communication, the involvement of interest groups, the questionable credibility of the sources, the limited political efficacy, or simply the avalanche of information and the speed of life— mostly measured by the news consumption habits (Prior, 2007). While it is not clear whether all these aspects led to the current situation or not, the appearance of a fracture between the political elite and the public has been intensively investigated (e.g. Deli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Graber, 2012

Measuring political knowledge. This disconnect, reflected by the low levels of public political knowledge, is described in two ways, based on the manner in which political knowledge is measured: differentiated or integrated (Towner & Dulio, 2015; Neuman, 1981). The differentiated approach refers to the traditional methodology based on factual questions utilized in the National Election Studies surveys. On the other hand, the integrated approach describes individuals’ ability to connect and integrate the political facts (Neuman, 1981), thus going beyond the evaluation of factual information. Along the lines of the latter approach, a more modern view refers to the *monitorial citizen* (Schudson, 1998), by reducing political knowledge to what people actually need to know in the modern world in order to understand public policy and make reasoned decisions, considering that the fully “informed citizen” ideal is unattainable. Another definition of political knowledge advances the term *civic IQ* as describing “people’s understanding of the political world in which they live and their ability to determine the

significance of various situations” (Graber, 2012, p.9; see also Graber, 2001). Arguing that the focus should be on evaluating citizens’ ability to participate in the democratic process by fulfilling their citizenship duties, Graber (2012) challenges the National Election Studies’ methodology. She posits that “a broad understanding of political process and likely political outcomes does not hinge on memorizing specific numbers and names. It hinges on the ability to apply past experiences to current situations and then assess their meaning and significance” (p.10). Results of these measurements indicate that Americans can understand politics and do learn from various sources, including TV dramas (Graber, 2012).

Although the integrated approaches conceptualize political knowledge in a manner that is only relevant to its need in a democratic society (thus with fewer expectations of factual information) the concern for public knowledge and comprehension of politics is still present in these views. Additionally, most of the data measuring political knowledge is still obtained today with the classic methodology that tests mostly the retention of current information, perhaps for feasibility reasons. The results obtained by utilizing this method indicate low levels of knowledge. For example, only 10 percent of the public knows the name of the Speaker of the House, only a third is able to name one Supreme Court Justice, and only half of the respondents know which party controls Congress (Geer et al., 2016, p.195). In conclusion, despite the nuances that new approaches bring in assessing political knowledge, the general picture still reflects low levels among the general public.

Millennials and politics. To build a complex image of political knowledge and awareness of public affairs among Millennials, I use not only information regarding their factual knowledge but especially data regarding their attentiveness. The latter is measured mainly by the interest in politics and the news consumption habits in the recent years, especially after 2012,

when Facebook, the largest social media platform, reached 1 billion users across the world (Fowler, 2012). A discussion of these measures requires data about digital media and social media's surge in the current communicational climate. For example, 62 percent of the entire adult population in the U.S. and 72 percent of the Internet users are on Facebook, (Pew Research Center, and 2015b). Millennials, in particular, have a greater presence: 82 percent of the on line Millennials were using Facebook at the beginning of 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2015b) and 91 percent of the entire generation of Millennials were on Facebook by the end of the year (DMR/Facebook statistics, 2016). Moreover, 90 percent of the Millennials are usually on line or on a mix of both (on line and off line) and only 8 percent of this generation is mostly off line (American Press Institute, 2015). This phenomenon has opened the debate – discussed in more detail later in this study– of whether the social networks' popularity favors or not the political knowledge and political engagement of the users of such mediums, the young adults.

Data regarding the use of Facebook for information is somewhat surprising: 61 percent of the on line Millennials access political news weekly on Facebook (Mitchell, Gotfried & Matsa, 2015) and 82 percent of the Millennials access most of their news on line (American Press Institute, 2015). However, the numbers indicating a high presence on line and the use of social media for information are not accompanied by high levels of political knowledge (Baumgartner, Morris & Morris, 2015) since Millennials seem less aware of basic political issues than any other generation. Specifically, a Pew Research Center (2015a) survey indicates that not even half of the Millennials (47 percent) - and even less (39 percent) of the young Millennials (ages 18-24) - know the partisan composition of the Senate. Less than that (45 percent) could identify from four photos the democratic senator Elizabeth Warren, who was in the spotlight as potential candidate to the presidency at the date of the survey. Moreover, Millennials' rates are much lower

regarding the interest in politics; only 26 percent of them reported that news about politics and government are among their top three interests, being the least interested from all the generations (Pew Research Center, 2015a). Millennials are also less aware of the 18 major news sources than the prior two generations are (Gottfried & Barthel, 2015). In addition to these, a vast majority of the Millennials are distrustful of the government: only 25 percent trust the federal government and 37 percent trust president Obama, according to a study of the Harvard Institute of Politics, (2015).

In conclusion, these numbers indicate modest political knowledge and awareness of public affairs among Millennials (despite their presence on platforms that facilitate continuous communication) who are also the least interested of all generations in matters of politics. This describes the second facet of the problem that motivates this study.

Statement of the Problem

The above data attest the double –sidedness of the problem: on one side the reduced presidential influence among Millennials (as part of the general public’s trend) and, on the other side the questionable breadth and depth of this audience’s political knowledge and awareness of public affairs. Two observations enrich the understanding of the problem. First, despite the Millennials’ approval of the president at higher rates than other generations, the presidential influence among them is now far from its potential, considering the projection for the rise of this generation’s share of the electorate in the U.S. to over 35 percent. Second, even with the amendment of the civic IQ and monitorial citizen perspectives — assuming that the audience needs only the essentials of the political mechanisms in order to understand the significance of the political events—Millennials’ political knowledge remains of concern as they are the main

electors and judges of future governance in America. Therefore, the question is how Millennials can be more efficiently reached and kept informed on the essentials of presidential messaging in a highly competitive climate, with so many sources of information that are blossoming at an unprecedented speed? One must acknowledge the difficulty that any political communicator, including the president, encounters in trying to get the attention of such a dispersed audience, much more to secure its support for his policies.

Purpose

I argue that one possible avenue of dealing with this double faceted problem is to craft presidential messages by using verbal imagery adequate to the young audiences. A category that can have a role in this design is represented by metaphors. By definition, metaphors have the ability to transfer information: *meta* means “over” and *pherein* means, “to carry” in Greek. When we say that “A is B”, which is the formula for metaphors, the attributes of B, the base, are transferred to A, the target (Gentner, 1983). The relevance of metaphors to this research is synthesized in a meta- analysis of empirical studies conducted in the last two decades, which states, “metaphor is credited with the capacity to structure, transform, and create new knowledge, as well as evoke emotions, and influence evaluations” (Sopory & Dillard, 2002, p.382).

Metaphors are not new in presidential communication; they were either coined by presidents or by media and they remained attached to each presidency. A few famous examples are NEW DEAL, dating from Franklin Roosevelt’s era, NEW FRONTIER (John F. Kennedy), STAR WARS (Ronald Reagan era), WAR ON TERROR (George W. Bush era), and OBAMACARE, the most dominant metaphor of Barack Obama’s presidency.

From the world of possible presidential metaphors, I propose a special category, labeled in this research *High Definition (HD) Metaphors*. HD Metaphors are designed to concentrate the content of the message, to bring novelty and color to the message, and to resonate with the audiences. They can also circulate easily through the new media's channels and deliver headlines if adopted by traditional media. These features make them also good candidates for further dissemination on social media across the users' networks. This is possible because digitalization has set new requirements for communication such as concision – especially on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (e.g. Trent, Friedenberg & Denton, 2011) – color, and relevance to the audience (Barker, Barker, Bormann & Neher, 2012).

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to determine whether High Definition Metaphors can revitalize the communication between presidents and the young cohorts by increasing the visibility of the message, the political knowledge of the Millennials, and the chances for agreement with the political propositions advanced by the presidents. An interdisciplinary overview of the theoretical models connecting to the issues is necessary to understand the problem in more detail, as summarized next.

Theoretical Framework

The following perspectives constitute the theoretical outline of this study, mentioned in the sequential order from the literature of persuasion: source (presidents) – message (metaphors) – receiver (Millennials). First, evolving within the theory of *going public* (Kernell, 2007) as an expression of the modern leadership strategy, American presidents communicate now by adjusting to their followers' needs, thus behaving more and more as *agile leaders*, the fashionable formula from the new leadership theories (Daft, 2015). *Strategic communication* is

an emerging concept from the business management literature that has not produced theoretical models yet, but it defines this research. By communicating strategically with the public through symbols and especially metaphors leaders can imprint *the design of their leadership style* (Charteris-Black, 2007); they promote their vision and branding their leadership.

Second, the *experientialist* perspective on metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003) claims that metaphors are pervasive frames that dominate people's thoughts and actions. Moreover, metaphors can influence policies' perceptions, according to the *model of policy frames* (Schlesinger & Lau, 2000; Lau & Schelsinger, 2005). Whether metaphors function as central processing triggers or heuristics cues— as in the *elaboration likelihood model* (Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a, 1986b) and the *heuristic- systematic model* (Chaiken, 1987; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Todorov, Chaiken & Henderson, 2002) — they seem to highlight the argument, thus making it more salient and easier to process, according to the *superior organization theory* (Read, Cesa, Jones & Collins, 1990; Mio, 1996).

Third, I engage perspectives on Millennials, who are considered a powerhouse generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000) and are credited with the capacity to determine a makeover and a new political realignment by using non- traditional channels (Winograd & Hais, 2008) – a phenomena still waiting to happen considering its modest interest and awareness of politics, according to current data. Because digital media facilitates for the first time the direct, unmediated, reach of large masses, I discuss, for contrast, traditional *models of political communication* that analyze the role of mediated communication (Lippmann, 1922; Lasswell, 1948; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Klapper, 1960), from which I retain only specific aspects. Finally, being a new phenomenon in society, *digital media* has not produced as of yet powerful theoretical models; however, I mention the characteristics relevant to this study

emerging from current debates: interactivity (Foot & Schneider, 2006), the capacity to determine political engagement in virtual forms (Bakker& de Vreese, 2011), and the potential to produce more political knowledge (Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma & Ponder, 2010; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008). In conclusion, as sometimes it is hard for a specific model or even a specific discipline to find the solution to a problem (hence the gaps in the literature, summarized next) this fusion of models and concepts grounds theoretically this research, aimed to fathom practical solutions to the problem.

Research Question and Hypotheses

In interdisciplinary work the standard search for gaps in the literature (identification of a narrow territory, unexplored yet) takes a special form since the concepts of interest are not identically defined and phenomena are analyzed from different angles in each discipline. Therefore, one can only observe aspects that a certain discipline does not cover but are addressed partially in another. More interesting in this analysis are the connections between concepts and their complementarities across disciplines (National Academy of Sciences, 2005), which the next two chapters reflect in detail.

However, an overview of the broad “gaps” deriving from the very nature of disciplinarity is still useful first. Specifically, leadership studies do not focus on how leadership is communicated, on the linguistics or the semiotics of this process, as the accent falls mostly on the psychological aspects (Charteris- Black, 2007). Additionally, the linguistic studies of metaphors do not engage much the connection between the concept of power and strategic communication. Moreover, strategic communication of leadership is not analyzed yet as a central concept in business management research (Walker, 2015) or in presidential studies. Similarly,

the studies of presidential communication from the political communication arena have not researched enough the relationship presidency - new media (Kaid, 2004) although they allocate many efforts to presidential persuasion (e.g. Edwards, 2003; Kernell, 2007; Wood, 2009). The literature on digital media focuses mostly on campaigns, debating on social media's influence on political knowledge (Hanson et al., 2010; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008) and on civic engagement (Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Kirk & Schill, 2011), without reaching consensus on firm predictors. Further, the political communication literature is struggling now to find a theoretical frame for the unmediated communication that digital media and social networks facilitate (e. g. Perloff, 2014a). Ultimately, High Definition Metaphors have not been analyzed before in any of these fields, as they are an innovation of this research.

Consequently, considering the missing aspects across the literature explored in this research and the problem, the research question is: Can presidents reach more effectively Millennials by using High Definition Metaphors when communicating plans and measures meant to publicly advance their legislative agenda? In order to answer the research question I deconstruct the term “reach” in three layers, laid out here in a logical sequence: salience (message visibility), political knowledge (message comprehension), and persuasion (agreement with the message), and reflected in three hypotheses:

(H1) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more salient than their literal counterparts.

(H2) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors produce more political knowledge.

(H3) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts.

Definition of Terms

Several terms are defined here briefly for a better understanding of the fundamentals of this study: American presidents in a digital age, verbal communication of the legislative agenda, High Definition Metaphors, and reaching the Millennials. The next two chapters address a detailed conceptualization and operationalization of the terms and variables used in this research.

American Presidents in a Digital Age

This study discusses the modern American presidents since the advent of television (starting with the 1960s) and their strategic communication with the public, as a leadership choice (Kernell, 2007). However, for obvious reasons, the results of the testing in this research are applicable to the current and future presidents of the United States who are or will be in office during the digital age.

The digital age refers to the current historical period that is characterized essentially by the computerization of information, which affects globally the economy and all the domains of society and by computer miniaturization (the production of small electronic and optical devices to be used in computers). The Digital Revolution, which marks the beginning of the digital age, followed the advent of the Internet (1980s- 2000) and the connection between individual computers by facilitating the manufacturing and distribution of microprocessors. In this study, I refer to the digital era only from the perspective of communication with large audiences; I refer especially to the last couple of years when social media networks, such as Facebook, gained momentum —since 2012 when it reached 1 billion users worldwide, until today, when it reports 1.59 billion monthly active users (Zephoria, 2016) — and media has become mobile (Pew Research Center, 2015c).

Verbal Communication and Advancing the Legislative Agenda

Although presidents try to persuade the public in several ways, such as public addresses, public appearances, and political travel (Kernell, 2007), each of these avenues involves verbal communication with the public. Therefore the accent in this research falls on verbal communication (that includes linguistic formulas such as metaphors) as opposed to non verbal communication (among which are symbols), according to Charteris-Black's (2007) typology. Specifically, verbal communication indicates here the power of words to promote visions and values while branding presidential leadership. A part of this process is promoting the legislative agenda.

Although the president is the head of the Executive branch, he also acts as legislator. "The legislative presidency" (Davidson, Oleszek, Lee & Schickler, 2014, p .280) that emerged mostly after World War II, illustrates the president's participation in the legislative process; sending bills to Congress after the State of the Union address is a big part of the participation to the law making process. When doing it, presidents advance the legislative agenda, which they also promote publicly to gain the citizens support through various messages, thus hoping to influence Congress. This research concentrates on these public messages' design.

In this context, I observe the need for concision in the written political communication. This trend is noticed in presidential rhetoric over time in State of the Union addresses: in the last century presidents used fewer words than before (Peters & Woolley - The American Presidency Project, 2016), which suggests a relative concentration of the message. Moreover, the recent surge of digital media, with a preference for mobile news (Pew Research Center, 2015c) and small screen fitting, is redesigning the strategies of communication to address the needs for concision and vividness. This facilitates quick exposures to more information and the

dissemination of messages through platforms, most of which working with limited space, such as Twitter, where the rule is “writing a speech in 140 characters” (Trent et al., 2011, p 375). I argue that HD Metaphors can address these concerns, due to their concentrating power and vividness.

High Definition Metaphors

Three elements are envisioned when conceptualizing the HD Metaphors: (1) policy - thrust, (2) novelty, and (3) relevance to the audience. The policy-thrust feature defines the ability of these metaphors to encapsulate a policy proposal, a political measure, a plan, or a platform—all meant to advance the president’s legislative agenda. Novelty is the second attribute that refers to newly created metaphors or to the application of formulas utilized before to new and unexpected contexts. The third element is relevance to the audience, based on the detailed characteristics of the targeted audiences, similar to the micro and nanotargeting techniques utilized in presidential campaigns (e.g. Issenberg, 2012; West, 2013). (Explanations of each feature, examples and operationalization details are provided in the third chapter). In summary, HD Metaphors are designed to refine and improve the catchphrases and sound bites emerged in the 1970s, in the television era, which were mostly short and flamboyant. Instead, HD Metaphors are supposed to carry more weight by concentrating the policy and to be more efficient by addressing the specifics of the targeted audience.

Reaching the Millennials

The term “reach” the Millennials from the research question has an ample connotation in this study, described here along three avenues. First, and most importantly, it refers to the visibility (salience) of the message. This is because for disengaged audiences that are exposed to

news of public affairs only incidentally (Mitchell, 2014), the vividness of the message — aside from its recency — facilitates the acquisition of new information (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Second, reach the Millennials refers to helping them to understand the content of the proposed policy and to make sense of politics, which will increase their political knowledge (Graber 2001, 2012). Third, the notion of reaching is completed by the ultimate desire of any political communicator: persuasion. If audiences agree with the message, then the message has a suasive effect, which opens large possibilities for action. This type of effect and its implications are announced in an optimistic key by the Harvard professor Nicco Mele, in reference to the current president, “If the Obama campaign can combine its data efforts with the way people now live their lives on line, a new kind of political engagement – and political persuasion is possible” (as cited in Towner & Dulio, 2015, p. 59).

Millennials represent the younger generation in the United States, specifically people with birth years between 1980 and 2000, plus or minus two years. They are of interest in this study mainly because they represent one third of the United States electorate and are already the biggest generation. Specifically, I am interested in reaching Millennials via written, unmediated messaging since digital technology allows now direct interaction with the users, through political websites, text messaging, and social media.

The direct reach is now *le plat du jour* in political and business marketing strategies. Digital media’s ability to target specific audiences led to the development of permission marketing) —versus interruption marketing (Godin, 1999) —in most industries, which means that the receiver consents to some degree of contact (Barker et al., 2008). Permission marketing takes place when consumers allow advertisers to market them, for example when signing up for alerts or by sharing networks of friends in social media. By contrast, interruption marketing

means that companies buy the right to interrupt the consumers in order to receive their attention. TV advertisement, pop-ups, and radios ads are classic examples in this regard. The strategic message design that I test in this study can also be interpreted as the president's strategy to market the legislative agenda, applicable mostly to permission marketing tactics.

Importance

Due to its interdisciplinary approach, the importance of this particular study resides mainly in analyzing the problem holistically, with theoretical and practical benefits, specifically to scholarship, communication praxis, and teaching. In addition, this work has a symbolic importance by orienting politics to the needs of the individuals, as I explain later in this section.

First, regarding the importance to scholarship, inter-disciplinarity has the merit of connecting concepts from various bodies of literature and of advancing a solution that cannot be accommodated by a single discipline. The “gaps” from each discipline enumerated previously explain this approach. A multi integrated theoretical perspective connects several aspects enumerated here: political science's focus on presidential influence within the tensions from the governmental setting; the concern for communicating the leadership via metaphors from linguistics; the agile leader's need to adjust and elevate the followers from leadership studies; evaluations of metaphor's role in persuasion from social and cognitive psychology literature.

This connected approach, resulting in the conceptualization of a special category of metaphors (HD Metaphors) is another aspect that adds to the scholarly importance of this study. The empirical analysis of these metaphors' effects contributes to a deeper understanding on metaphors' role in general, thus casting light on theoretical models among such as superior organization and the experientialist perspective. Theories of presidential influence that underline

the role of communication with the public such as going public model are also served by this research.

Second, this study's importance to practice resides in the advancement of a concrete solution by testing new ways of shaping political communication so that elites and the public speak the same language. By employing a special category of metaphors, political communicators optimize their chances to reach the audience, since metaphors connect the new with the familiar. Essentially, as Beer and de Landtsheer (2004) observe, "metaphors are crucial devices in framing discourse, in maintaining and shifting political ideas" (p.6). The concrete proposition of utilizing a specifically conceptualized category of metaphors, High Definition Metaphors, and testing their influence in an experiment explains the practical applicability. Presidents can use the results of this research in designing actual messages for their communication with the public.

Other than presidents, political strategists, political marketing consultants and media specialists can benefit from the empirically tested knowledge gained by this investigation and adapt it in constructing messages for other political communicators than the president. The new trends in political marketing (micro targeting and nanotargeting) have been redefining political communication especially during campaigns (e. g. Issenberg, 2012; West, 2013). Nonetheless, these approaches are utilized more and more during governance, as well— as we have been experiencing permanent campaigns —to which this study can contribute. By adding corresponding HD Metaphors to the messages directed to each sub -group, in addition to developing marketing strategies for placing these messages on the favorite Internet platforms, websites, and social networking sites of these subgroups, these practitioners can refine their

approaches at the “cellular” level while helping political leaders to reach the public en detail rather than en bloc.

This study is important, as well, due to its potential benefit to Millennials. Aside from the societal benefit of increasing the political knowledge and from the personal advantage for the president of advancing his legislative agenda, restoring the communication between president and the young generation could be beneficial for Millennials, as well. Basic political calculation leads candidates and presidents to invest less energy during campaigns or while in office in the electoral groups that do not vote. This is because of the low “return of investment,” in marketing lingo, meaning that the effort and the funding directed toward disinterested voters do not bring tangible electoral benefits. If Millennials reenter the picture they could profit from more attention and more programs addressing their needs, as part of presidential agendas. However, it is important to mention that the population in this study does not match precisely the characteristics of the whole generation of Millennials in the U.S. therefore generalizations of the results are made with a great deal of caution.

Third, in regard with teaching, this work adds to research in political communication and communication studies due to its focus on the most prominent communicators of public policies, the American presidents, and on the design of their messages. Since Aristotle, the source (ethos) and the content of message (logos) have received attention in the analysis of rhetoric; this study adds to advancement of knowledge in these directions. Moreover, the emphasis on unmediated communication in this design goes along the new fashion of political communication theoretical debates, which are shifting now from the traditional media to the direct forms of reach facilitated by digital media. In this regard, aspects from this study are interesting beyond the geographical

boundaries of the United States, considering the digitalization of the globe and the role of metaphors in branding leadership across cultures (Charteris-Black, 2007).

Ultimately, this research is important from a symbolic perspective. The “zooming in” approach, from large audiences to groups and subgroups has another benefit, aside from the practical one: humanizing the conduct of politics. Issenberg (2012) explains: “most sophisticated new thinking about who votes and why...has naturally turned attention to the individual as the fundamental unit of our politics. The revolutionaries are taking a politics distended by television’s long reach and restoring it to a human scale” (p.13). The same logic can be applied to governance, too aside from campaigns. Next chapter will explain in more detail, the rationale of this study and its importance by connecting theoretical perspectives from various bodies of the literature.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study's purpose is to check whether United States presidents can reach Millennials with a special design of messaging when they publicly advance their legislative agenda. Specifically, I test the High Definition Metaphors' effects on three aspects: the visibility of presidential messaging, the audiences' comprehension of public policies, and the message's persuasive power.

This chapter addresses the research question with an interdisciplinary approach. I engage perspectives from various domains, organized in the three sections that are typically studied in communication and persuasion: source (president), message (metaphors), and receivers (Millennials). The "quilt" image for each of the three sections illustrates that these views and concepts enrich with their own specificity the general picture, as opposed to indicating precise gaps in each discipline. In this regard, the widely cited view on interdisciplinary studies of Klein and Newell (1998) explains that drawing into various insights of more disciplines leads to the "construction of a more comprehensive perspective" (p. 393-4). By comparison to studies conducted in the perimeter of a single discipline, which concentrate on narrow gaps in the literature, interdisciplinary approaches integrate views from different bodies of research in order

to advance propositions that cannot be envisioned through the specific lens of one discipline. A National Academy of Sciences' report (2005) states in this sense:

Interdisciplinary research is a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice (p.26).

This also explains the need for more contexts in answering the research question, which is what this chapter provides. Using the conceptual axis from the literature of persuasion, this chapter begins with presidents (source), it follows with metaphors (message), and it ends with Millennials (receivers).

Source: Presidents

This section discusses presidential influence in the tensed setting of the American design and the presidents' need to reach the public when they advance their legislative agenda. I engage theories and concepts from political science, leadership studies, linguistics, business, and organizational management that coalesce in explaining the need for public reach. I start with an inventory of the classic theories of leadership, from which the agile leader model is retained due to the emphasis on reaching the followers (Daft, 2015). Then, while showing that the power of the U.S. presidents manifests within the tensions between the three branches of the governmental design, I discuss several major theories of presidential influence by focusing on the relationship with the public. The model of "going public" (Kernell, 2007) emerges as axiomatic for this study mainly due to its democratic essence and consistent implementation. Despite the presidents'

efforts to reach the public, presidential influence and the general interest in government have decreased among the American public, since the golden era of television (1950s -1970s) until now, on the rise of the digital age. An overview of the data depicts this image of modest presidential influence that applies to the young cohorts, as well. However, the surge of the digital media and its popularity among Millennials brings hope that young people might still be reached on their favorite platforms, especially as it appears that they do not discount political news during casual encounters (Mitchell, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014d). By doing that, presidents refine their strategic communication, a novel concept in business management applicable to political leaders. The last subsection dedicated to presidents claims that this effort could contribute to the branding of their leadership as well when messages include the adequate metaphors. A model relevant to this claim is the design of leadership style, which considers metaphors (along with symbols) brand builders of leadership (Charteris-Black, 2007).

Perspectives on Leadership

Political and organizational leaders do not manifest their influence in a vacuum, but in specific environments that undergo historical evolutions. The variety of the theoretical models of leadership throughout time reflects these evolutions by showing the way leaders were perceived in each period. First, there was the “Great Man” era, with theories of leadership postulating that natural heroic characteristics and born traits such as intelligence, self-confidence, and alertness were sine qua non conditions for great leaders (Stogdill, 1948). This view of mythical leadership was followed by the “rational manager” era, when leaders were analyzed based on their managerial skills, as individuals controlling organizations, somehow impersonally, through precise rules and procedures, as Daft (2015) summarizes it. A different perspective, the “team

leader”, marked the end of the century, accounting for the horizontal ruling of the organization, where the leader was accompanied by a team in decision making; the roles of leadership were transferred between the team members based on specific competencies needed in particular projects (Pearce, 2004).

Ultimately, the Internet era and the accessibility of communication led to a new approach, called the “agile leader” (Daft, 2015), according to which leaders and followers influence each other when leadership is exercised. Instead of unilaterally exerting their authority from the top, agile leaders learn from the followers and experiment with different avenues for accessing them more efficiently. By reaching and stimulating their followers, leaders benefit from their active contribution to the progress of the organization. This escapes the somewhat static approach of the great leader and rational manager models by favoring an analysis of leadership more suited to the contemporary times. Such a novel approach emphasizes the dynamics of influence by distinguishing between leaders that advance their interest through *transaction* (when the purpose is the mutual exchange of values) and leaders who pursue their goals through *transformation*, when the purpose is the mutual elevation of leaders and followers to “high levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978, p.20). The essential difference between the two is that transformational leadership is concerned with the ultimate effects of its actions for the organization beyond the quotidian transactions employed in moving the agenda, whereas the transactional leadership discounts this concern. The emphasis on the transformational view in this study indicates the assumption of ethics in leadership (in general and in presidential leadership, in particular) and the presumption that leaders have also vision, a prominent concept in New Leadership studies, describing “a picture of an ambitious, desirable future for the organization or team” (Daft, 2015, p.14). In other words, all leaders are more or

less transactional but they can be considered transformational if vision, high ethics, and morality motivate their transactions in the manifestation of leadership.

Although accents from all the perspectives of leadership enumerated here have applicability in the realm of the U.S. presidency, the agile leader with transformational powers model is particularly suited to the possibilities of mass communication today and the specifics of the American Government in which presidential power is exerted. The tensions that accompany the exercise of this power within the governmental setting of checks- and- balances preclude the president from succeeding by simply using the mythical powers of a “Great Man” or by relying exclusively on rules and procedures, in disconnect from his constituents and from other political actors, as the rational manager model suggests. By contrast, the agile leader perspective of presidential leadership places emphasis on the continuous adaptation and transformation of the leader in the process of reaching the followers while responding to the demands of the tensions in the American design, outlined further.

The President and the Shared Powers

The dynamics of the shared powers between the legislative, executive, and the judicial branch ensure the functionality of the American government. The president operates within a system of competing influences among the Congress, the courts, and the bureaucracy, which determine presidential strategies in advancing the goals. A major component of the analysis of American presidency and its influence in the context of shared powers, concerns the relationship between the president and the public, which is the focus of this study. The next sections elaborate on presidential influence on this avenue.

I start by discussing the shared powers, the tensions, and the direct actions that the president has at his disposal in relation to Congress, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy. In competing for influence, one of the main strategies is appealing to the public. Neustadt's (1960, 1990) classic approach of presidential influence as bargaining power is viewed in this study as an opening act that sets the stage for the going public theory (Kernell, 2007). I further argue that the going public model is axiomatic due to its democratic essence. I then inventory the evolution and tensions of the relationship between president and the public from the golden age to the new media era, while analyzing the "shrinkage" in the relationship president – public, in the sense of limited persuasion (Edwards, 2003) and partisan representation (Wood, 2009). I also advance the proposition of *going High Definition* as part of the going public axiom—considering the need for salience and micro targeting in political communication – with the purpose to increase presidential influence.

Sources of tension. The American Constitution allocates not only powers but also constraints to the three governmental branches, the legislative, the executive, and the judicial branch. As chief of the executive branch, the president competes for power in this mechanism with the other two branches and with the bureaucracy as well. Some of the tensions arising from this complex setting are enumerated here with an emphasis on the contention with Congress, another branch with intrinsic sensitivity to the public due to the electoral process.

Congress. The competition between the president and the Congress is the most complex relationship among the three branches because the president, the chief of the executive branch, has legislative powers, as well. Another aspect that complicates the picture is the political composition of the Congress that can be, fully or partially, dominated by the opposing party. Tensions arise on the law making stage and manifest through the president's veto and pocket

veto powers and, symmetrically, through Congress's power to override the vetoes. The veto powers demand special attention due to their categorical dimension, underlining presidential influence in relation to Congress. Once the president vetoes a bill, the bill cannot be amended, but Congress can override it with two thirds of the votes in each chamber. Nevertheless, the legislative branch rarely wins this battle, its success rate being only 4.3 percent from 1789 until the end of the president Obama's first term (Davidson et al., 2014, p.293). This demonstrates that presidents, otherwise not shy in exerting their veto power (over 2000 times in the history of the presidency) are in general victorious – an argument that vetoing and its threat are powerful tools in managing the dynamic with the Congress.

Other powers that illustrate the executive influence of the president on the legislative territory do not involve direct confrontation with Congress. Executive orders, for example, are directives that the president issues when instructing federal employees to take specific actions or to apply specific policies, without having to request Congress's approval. This is an obvious source of tension between the president and the Congress, because of the relative autonomy of the president and its capability to advance policies exclusively through executive orders, thus shortcutting the legislative branch (e.g. Mayer, 1999). Two classic examples in the history of presidency are the Executive Order 9981 through which president Harry Truman introduced in 1948 equal treatment in the army regardless of race, ethnicity, and religion and the Executive Order 10730, issued by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1957 to enforce the end of segregation in Central High School in Little Rock Arkansas by sending the military (Geer et al., 2016).

Another source of tensions can occur in regard with the signing statements: remarks accompanying the law that reveal president's interpretation and his vision on how to be implemented, sometimes reflecting his disagreement with the law's provisions. Further in the list

of checks and balances between the president and the Congress, is the declaration of war (needing Congress's approval after solicited by the president), an aspect that has elicited many debates, especially in the last decades. Ultimately, tensions arise, among others, from the fact that the Senate has the power to ratify treaties with foreign nations managed by the president (the most recent example of discontent being the Iran nuclear deal of 2015) and from the need for Senate's approval of the judges appointed by the president (the most recent conflict referring to the Senate's refusal to consider filling out the vacancy in the Supreme Court created by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia in 2016). The ultimate expression of the tension between the president and the Congress is the impeachment of the president (removal from office for flagrant misconduct) started in the House of Representatives and ruled by the Senate during a trial presided by the Chief Justice. Impeachment occurred only twice in the history of the U.S. presidency: Andrew Johnson was impeached in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998. Both presidents remained in the office as the Senate rejected their removal (Geer et al., 2016).

The judicial branch. Regarding the tensions between the presidency and the judiciary, the most important comes from packing the Supreme Court, a process in which the chief executive (together with the Senate) has significant power. Although traditionally the Senate is influential in this regard because the confirmation of the nominees takes place on its floor, the president is the one who nominates the Supreme Court Justices, which makes him more important in the process. Because of the influence of the Supreme Court in the judicial system and in society, presidents strive to nominate justices that will likely support their policies which can conflict with the ideologies of other justices appointed by previous presidents.

In addition, presidents, can influence judicial decisions through litigations where the executive branch is a litigant. This control is exercised indirectly through the Solicitor General,

who is appointed by the president, with the approval of the Senate. Additionally, the president has influence in courts even when the executive branch is not a party. Via *amicus curiae* briefs, the presidential position is expressed in major cases that do not concern the executive branch directly. Courts take into account president's position and often this is reflected in decisions as Edwards and Wayne (2014) note, "because the government has participated in almost every major controversy decided by the courts in the past fifty years, the potential influence of the executive branch on public policy through the courts is substantial" (p. 392).

On the other hand, the Supreme Court's power increased after World War II, which suggests an evolution from "the least dangerous branch" to a "super legislature" (O'Brien, 2005). Since its fundamental mission is to interpret the law and the Constitution, the Supreme Court can overturn previous court decisions, congressional, state and other institutional laws, thus monitoring the American Government and influencing the functioning of the entire society. Most importantly, the Supreme Court can overturn presidential decisions through the judicial review by qualifying them as unconstitutional.

The bureaucracy. Aside from the tensions coming from other branches, the chief of the executive encounters pressure coming from its own bureaucratic apparatus. Although the president is supposed to have commanding powers over bureaucracy to implement public policies, this implementation is not a smooth process in real life. Edwards and Wayne (2014) argue in this direction by providing an inventory of sources of contention in the relationship between president and the bureaucracy among which are various networks of interests and the intricacies of the governmental structure, the executive funds' dependence on Congress, the scarcity of resources for policy implementations, staff related issues, fragmentation in the executive branch's apparatus, rigid standard operating procedures, and miscommunications of

presidential decisions. In this context, the president has limited resources to address each category of issues, the main being using political appointments in staffing the bureaucracy. However, a quarter of these positions are not his exclusive prerogative (since they need Senate's confirmation), which adds to the problem.

From all the tensions enumerated here, the one describing the relationship between the presidents and the Congress is the most important, since from all presidential duties, working with the legislative branch is at the top of the list. Edwards and Wayne (2014) summarize in simple words this dependency, "presidents must influence Congress because they generally cannot act without its consent" (p.330). Although the Constitution did not assign extensive legislative powers to the president, since this was mainly the "job" of the legislative branch — Article 2, paragraph (2) stipulates, among the four presidential responsibilities: "to recommend necessary and expedient legislation." — things have changed since the inception of the Republic. Edwards and Wayne (2014) observe in this regard that "over the years, presidents have employed their legislative responsibilities to enlarge their congressional influence" (p.329). Specifically, in the last century presidents formulated legislative proposals on a regular basis; starting with Harry Truman, most the presidents even included them in the State of the Union addresses. Today, after delivering the address, the president sends the bills to Congress to be introduced in his behalf, a practice that makes the president also "chief legislator" (Davidson et al., 2014).

As mentioned, to succeed in passing the legislation, the president needs the Congress's approval. While presidential influence over the Congress is acquired in various ways, including private bargaining, presidents are also interested to gain the public's support for their policies,

which would then pressure the Congress. In this study I focus only on the public avenue used by presidents in their effort to advance their legislative agenda.

In conclusion, American presidents do not act as absolute commanders. They evolve in a complicated system with shared authority, which inherently generates frictions. The dynamic of political parties, including the president's party, increases the complexity of the picture. This makes the act of leadership a creative enterprise that evolves based on the context, audiences, and available means, aside from the preferences and personal traits of each president. Such a demand for innovation in expressing presidential power requires an agile leader, in the lingo of general leadership theories and the public support. The public approval for his policies is the most important ammunition that a president can have for advancing his agenda in such a tensed environment. Several major perspectives in the literature of presidency illustrate the intricacies of this job while advancing various propositions for understanding presidential influence. I discuss them further by concentrating on the way they engage with the relationship between the president and the public.

Theories of presidential influence. The tensions that the president must face in the governmental setting affect the exercise of leadership. In this light, presidential influence represents a major concern in the vast literature of the presidency, from which several views are discussed here in regard with the public reach. The first important attempt to analyze presidential influence brought in the concept of bargaining in exercising this power (Neustadt 1960, 1990) by challenging the general belief at the time that “a reasonable President would need no power other than the logic of his argument” (Neustadt, 1990, p.37). On the contrary, Neustadt revealed that “presidential power is the power to persuade” the other political actors, adding that the president, “despite his ‘powers’ he does not obtain results by giving orders” (Neustadt, 1990, p.11). Such

power is exercised based on demands coming from different directions such as Congress, his partisans, citizens, in general, from abroad, and from other executive officials, but Neustadt also admits that the president has an advantageous position in this bargaining due to its position, authority, and — with specific interest for this study— publicity.

Surprisingly, Neustadt, who developed his theory in the late 1950s and reappraised it in 1990, did not elaborate on the president's relationship with the public, not even in the updated version, when he reevaluated the variables comprising presidential influence such as reputation, and prestige. Albeit Neustadt noted in 1990 that "persuasion in a sense akin to bargaining remains for major purposes the order of his[president's] day" (p.199), he discounted the revolutionary effect of media up to that date in the relationship president- public. This is a limit of Neustadt's theory's applicability today. Nevertheless, considered innovative at that time, this perspective opened up the analysis of the institution of presidential power to what it is today (when it is seen as a complex enterprise that requires public persuasion and bargaining), thus setting the stage for new frameworks.

A different theory discussing the manifestation of presidency claims that presidents mostly fail at persuading the public, thus their messages fall on "deaf ears" (Edwards, 2003). In a longitudinal analysis, Edwards (2003) revealed that presidential persuasion was limited or counterproductive because 75 percent of the public was only marginally attentive and 20 percent was entirely apolitical. The problem is that "the permanent campaign is antithetical to governing", in Edwards's (2003, p.247) view, because the communication necessary to combat the limited attention span of the public hurts instead of favoring the process of building coalitions required in the process of governing. Consequently, the attempt to persuade the public damages the relationship with other political actors and the act of governance, in his opinion.

Going into more depth, some issues with framing presidential communication are worth discussing in relation to this view. While presidents try to reach the public by using symbols or frames that facilitate understanding a policy issues, this task encounters difficulties in the audience's territory. As the public is exposed to multiple messages, the competition between frames complicates the job. Moreover, Edwards (2003) notes that policy frames fall often on preexistent settings and that certain predispositions might influence their reception. He integrates these issues in a presidential communication analysis, adding to the mix the dependence on media to propagate the message, to conclude that for the president "persuading the public to think about his policies and his performance in his terms is difficult to do" (Edwards, 2003, p.184). Consequently, the solution is *staying private*, meaning that the president should conduct private negotiations with the other political actors in order to reach necessary compromises for policies advancement. This way, Edwards (2003) claims that negotiating in private is also justified by the need to not harm the partisan base, which could occur if the ideological core of the messaging was softened.

Despite its obvious merit, Edwards's proposition of cutting the public out of the picture is debatable in regard with the democratic essence of the American setting. Dismissing the concept of going public has implications regarding people's participation to debates of policies that concern them, which ultimately might affect the democratic deliberation and even the public officials' accountability. Albeit Edwards (2003) does not claim the total abandonment of going public, his emphasis on privacy in manifesting presidential leadership is still problematic because it touches the sensitive edges of aspects considered fundamental for a democracy of quality. Specifically, a democracy of quality and stability presupposes essentially the engagement of the citizens in public affairs, in the logic of the classic Jeffersonian and the civic

culture models (Almond & Verba, 1963). For these reasons, Edwards's (2003) proposition is considered antithetical with the perspective of this study.

From a different angle, the partisan theory of representation (Wood, 2009) posits that the president's partisanship, and not the public at large, determines presidents' behavior and communication. This is rather a "natural" tendency of the American system, induced by the constitutional setting and the occurrence of political parties— according to Wood— in contrast with the traditional view (the centrist approach) that sees presidents as representing the entire nation. Wood (2009) argues that "presidents are natural partisans in their manner of political representation" (p.38) and explains that there is no incentive for presidents to move to the center. By doing so, they could risk to frustrate their supporters on whom they are heavily dependent. Wood suggests that, instead, presidents can cater to the persuadables (those without strong attitudes and ideological commitments) trying to pull them toward their partisan base. The size of this category of the public depends on the political climate. In the modern context of highly polarized politics, persuadables do not form a large group, thus there is no political stimulus for trying to convince them, according to the same theory.

Interestingly, Wood's argument does not dismiss the efficiency of persuasion, as Edwards's (2003) does. Instead, it posits that presidents do not have important incentives to move to the center of the political spectrum in the current climate. Wood's (2009) solution to control the partisanship effect is to educate the public so it could identify the centrists and not endorse partisans in presidential elections. Nevertheless, it unclear in his proposition why and how centrists would even try to compete in a polarized market that essentially favors partisans. However, Wood's emphasis on political literacy converges with this study's claim for educating the public along with the acknowledgment of the need for persuasion.

From all the views on presidential influence, one is of particular importance to this study. The going public theory (Kernell, 2007) posits that, since no modern president has chosen to perform his tasks without trying to reach the constituents, going public has developed as a new strategy of presidential leadership. Going public is defined by public addresses, public appearances, and political travel (Kernell, 2007). Public addresses include State of the Unions address, inaugural messages, weekly addresses, news conferences, press briefings, and statements of administration policy.

Three presidents who represent landmark cases in communication with the public- Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and John Fitzgerald Kennedy – are listed in Kernell's (2007) work. Regarding himself as steward of the people, Teddy Roosevelt went public by giving access to the media at the White House (while also controlling it by designating insiders and outsiders among the press corps) and coined the term "bully pulpit" (Kernell, 2007). The "FDR system" is another landmark case of the going public strategy, characterized by hard news (news about politics and business) and open communication administered by the White House. The third example is the "Kennedy system", a model for presidents who go public, characterized by direct communication with the public through live, televised press conferences (Kernell, 2007). Kennedy's personal charisma touched the public through television and served his image and his public approval, thus bolstering the pragmatic dimensions of going public's strategy and its role in defining presidential leadership due to direct communication with the public.

The development of this strategy indicates that presidential power is now not only more transparent but also highly dependent in its manifestation on the public dimension in competing for influence with the other branches. In this light, Kernell (2007) observes, "the degree to which presidents go public determines the kind of leaders they will be" (p.141). This goes beyond the

practical calculations seen by Davidson et al. (2014): “the rhetorical president’s ultimate objective is to produce an outpouring of public support that encourages lawmakers to push his ideas through the congressional obstacle course” (p.285).

As opposed to Neustadt’s (1960, 1990) view, where the going public card was only played to enhance the bargaining context, Kernell’s (2007) underlines the importance of the public influence in defining the leadership and in acquiring political success. Furthermore, by going public, presidents do not only acquiesce more political capital and public prestige, but they also connect to the masses and take into account their wishes (Kernell, 2007), thus engaging citizens in the public affairs debate as a form of participation, which is quintessential for democracy, as explained previously.

As a strategy of leadership, going public is obviously not a perfect enterprise. A few drawbacks are political polarization and the explosion of media channels with their appetite for sensationalism, the incessant campaigns saturating the public sphere with negative messaging and questionable content; all indicate the establishment of *media politics* (Iyengar, 2011), which means that politics is mostly conducted through media. However, a much more important dimension of the going public strategy outweighs the disadvantages of conducting politics from a glass cage: recapturing the democratic essence of the political system. When presidents go public, they do not only advertise for specific policies, but they also receive feedback. Regardless of how imperfect this exchange is, it indicates that governors and governed have a dialogue and that both parties are connected and perform on the same stage while developing a relationship that exists within the democratic realm.

In summary, presidential appeal to the public shaped each administration in modern times and the institution of presidency in general. The power to persuade, instead of the power to

command revealed by Neustadt (1960) changed the early views of power mechanisms by casting light on the burden of exerting presidential attributes. This burden continues today, as the president still needs to persuade the other political actors, but this is done today mostly by engaging the public. From this perspective, one can say that modern presidents converted and integrated the elite bargaining from Neustadt's model into public bargaining. In this light, I see Neustadt's model of presidential bargaining as rather laying the ground for than conflicting with Kernell's (2007) going public theory. Consequently, Neustadt's perspective on presidential persuasion is rather a preface of Kernell's going public, which is regarded here as an axiomatic framework that can satisfy the manifestation of leadership in advancing the presidential agenda and the need for public elevation within the democratic design.

In the digital era the going public strategy could take specific forms. Since political strategists have started to utilize the micro targeting approaches in presidential campaigns by integrating digital marketing techniques (e.g. Trent et al., 2011; Issenberg, 2012), presidents could utilize similar methods while in office, instead of returning to the elite bargaining era discussed by Neustadt (1990) or of staying private, as Edwards (2003) proposes. The new platforms' capabilities and the development of social networks that led to refined marketing techniques might open new avenues for reaching the public. In this context, *going High Definition* (by communicating with High Definition Metaphors, the focus of this study) might emerge as a variation of the going public strategy, adjusting presidential leadership accordingly, as further explained.

As most studies are legitimately concerned with the breadth of presidential influence achieved by moving large masses at once, the High Definition approach suggests that, instead, possibly numerous distinct categories of voters can be reached and reengaged in public affairs

via customization of presidential messaging for each category. Consequently, if the public is eventually moved “piece by piece” with the adequate framing, more persuadables— in Wood’s (2009) lingo—can be reached and the concern about underrepresentation will be eventually assuaged, as well. This could be an indicator of a new era in the relationship between the president and the public via mass media, which had a meandering trajectory throughout history, as further described.

Appealing to the Public- Evolutions

As discussed previously, modern presidents try to reach the public in various ways. In these endeavors, the media context plays an important role in their success and for a long time, presidents dominated the news by securing a significant audience. Nevertheless, a brief historical overview, starting with the 1950s and the advent of television until present times, indicates shrinkage of the public attention for the U.S. presidents, which constitutes a part of this study’s concern.

The golden age. From the late 1950s through the end of 1970s, three TV channels (NBC, ABC, and CBS) dominated the news in the U.S., with presidents as main characters — a period described as the “golden age of presidential television” (Baum & Kernell, 1989). For example, Richard Nixon’s speech of 1971 regarding his policies in Vietnam was watched live by over half of the population (51.2 percent). Furthermore, 69 percent of the citizens received information about the president’s speech from a newspaper and 58 percent of Americans watched one of the three nightly shows broadcasted later that day (Wattenberg, 2004, p.558). In addition, the average Nielsen ratings of televised presidential addressees and press conferences for Richard

Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter, showed that they were reaching almost half of the adult population (Wattenberg, 2004, p.559).

Moreover, “the news, except in extraordinary times, was generally positive toward the president” (Cohen, 2004, p.501), an observation indicating a climate favorable to most presidents with the exceptions of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. With a captive audience, media was as influential as the president was, sometimes even setting the public’s agenda before the president could do it. The information was compact since media was offering the public “essentially the same news”, with the effect of opinion - shaping (Cohen, 2004, p.501).

The cable TV era. Two elements changed significantly the media environment in the United States in the 1980s, with major consequences for presidential communication with the public: the rising of cable TV and the proliferation of VCRs. As the public escaped the dominance of the three main networks, now choosing between many options for entertaining, the presidential audience went in decline. The mean rating for Ronald Reagan’s appearances -The Great Communicator - reached only 37 percent after 1981 and continued to decline years after. In addition, Bill Clinton’s audience averaged at only 29 percent of the population (Wattenberg, 2004, p.559). This was the time when the number of VCRs exploded, from one percent of the homes owning a VCR in 1981, to 69 percent in 1990 (Wattenberg, 2004, p.560).

Between so many alternatives on TV, only high dramas could bring people’s attention back to presidential messaging. Two examples are Bill Clinton’s 1998 State of the Union address following the Monica Lewinsky scandal (watched by 37 percent of the Americans) and later, George W. Bush’s State of the Union from 2003, regarding the war in Iraq, which captured 40 percent of the audience (Wattenberg, 2004). As these were only exceptions, the general trend

was a decline in audience for presidential speeches, accompanied by a general decline of news media and newspapers' consumption.

Two sets of numbers illustrate the decrease of interest on these communicational platforms. The high figures of television audience from the golden age went down to an average Nielsen rating of 37.3 percent in 1980 - 1981 and to 20.8 percent in 2002-2003, for NBC, CBS and ABC nightly news (Wattenberg, 2004, p.564). Similarly, the percentages of daily newspaper readers decreased from 76.3 in 1957, to 53 in 1982, and to 42.5 percent in 2002 (Wattenberg, 2004, p.568). Other numbers of presidential audience complete this descending trend. President Bill Clinton's first national address in 1993 captured 67 million viewers, but George W. Bush could not interest more than 40 million viewers in his first address in 2001. More than 52 million viewers watched Barrack Obama's first address in 2009, but the size of his audience dropped to 32 million viewers in the same year (Edwards & Wayne, 2014).

A particular observation important for this study is that the presidential audience did not only shrink, but it also "became" older. Wattenberg (2004) observed a generational gap across the data when analyzing the audiences for presidential speeches, and for news media and newspapers in general. Starting with Ronald Reagan's term, this gap became obvious: only eight percent from the people in the age group 18-24 at the time of the survey watched all Reagan's televised addresses as opposed to 40 percent of the people of 65 years or older (Edwards, 2003). Furthermore, more than half (54 percent) of the young adults did not hear or read anything about Reagan's televised addresses, while only 27 percent of the seniors were in the same situation (Edwards, 2003).

The digital era. The digital era changed presidential communication climate fundamentally, by offering new opportunities for direct reach. On the other hand, the audience is

even more scattered between the multitude of sources, which makes the president's effort to be heard more difficult. These two facets, opportunity and challenge, structure the modern debates around digital media's offer to political communication regarding political engagement in general, and in reference to the presidential agenda, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Data regarding the audience for news on digital media for the general population in the U.S. overlap with the information regarding Millennials because they are the most avid consumers of digital media, 91 percent of them being on Facebook (DMR/ Facebook Statistics, 2016), the largest social media site. (Data focusing on Millennials features will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

A dominant of the digital era among the general public is a reduced interest in politics, which has bearing on the presidential audience. Only 34 percent of the Baby Boomers (persons born between 1946 and 1964) and 45 percent of the Generation X (people born between 1965 and 1986) list politics and government among their three top interests (Pew Research Center, 2015e). Millennials are the least interested, of all generations: only 26 percent place news about politics and government among their top three interests.

While these figures do not provide new information, considering the low political awareness among the general public, the digital media habits bring interesting details in the picture. In this regard the state of the news media report issued by Pew Research Center in 2014 shows that half of the Facebook users get news on this platform but Millennials (the 18-to-29-year-olds) encounter news at the highest rates. From the Facebook users who get news on this site, more than half (55 percent) watch national government and politics (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Although half of the Facebook users turn only incidentally on news, many do not ignore the information. Mitchell (2014) observes in this regard: “ On social sites and even many of the new digital-only sites, news is mixed in with all other kinds of content – people bump into it when they are there doing other things. This bumping into means there may be opportunity for news to reach people who might otherwise have missed it” (para. 16). Specific to Millennials’ news consumption habits, the American Press Institute (2015) reports that 88 percent of the Millennials get news from Facebook.

In this context of new media habits, presidential approval for the president continued the decline from the previous eras. For all the age groups, the approval for the president decreased from 64 percent at the beginning of his presidency, in 2009, to 46 percent in 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2016). Additionally, the public perception of Obama, measured in words describing his character traits is not very flattering, either: those describing him as a good man (35 out of 746 respondents) are on par with those characterizing the president as incompetent (33 out of 746 respondents), as another Pew Research Center’s poll (2015f) indicates.

All these figures show that despite the digital media capabilities, the national job approval for the president in the digital era (2009-2015) stayed under the sensitive threshold of 50 percent and that people’s interest in public affairs in the digital age does not show a clear increase. However, a relatively high presence on digital media with even marginal interest in politics suggests that there might be possibilities of revitalizing the interest in politics in general and for presidential messaging, as well.

The developments of the digital presidential campaigns support this statement. First is the unprecedented on line mobilization in support of Barack Obama campaigns (Trent et al., 2011). The usage of digital avenues in his campaigns, leading to the election of Barack Obama brought

a new twist in the picture of political engagement (with support from a large number of small contributors). Second, is the large mobilization and multiple donations via Internet for the Democratic contender Bernie Sanders in the presidential campaign of 2016, considered the winner of social media during primaries (Reuters, 2016). Third, is the energetic presence and the audience of the republican candidate Donald Trump campaign in the same season with 6.2 million followers only on Twitter (Roussi, 2016). The popularity of digital campaigns inspired this study's claim that digital media platforms offer new possibilities of communication beyond the campaigns season, when presidents are in office.

These opportunities have been seized by the White House especially in the second term of Obama's presidency when the digital strategy implemented by the presidential apparatus was conspicuous: an active and elaborated website presence, Facebook pages for the White House, Barack and Michelle Obama, and Twitter accounts, including personal accounts on Facebook and Twitter for the first family.

In this new technological landscape of mass communication the president's strategy to communicate with the public across the new channels, in the hope of increasing his influence, leads logically to the necessity of new message designs. Presidential communication via social media needs to be crafted strategically, not only in regard to the content, but also to the format. A good message can reach instantly its target but it can produce massive damages as well, considering the speed at which information propagates on the new channels. As television led to the conversion of political messages in sound bites in the last century, digital media is now reshaping the language based on its own characteristics, but along the same lines of concision and color, because of the short messaging demands (e.g. Trent et al., 2011). It is not clear yet, what terms and formats will be more effective as the language in itself is dominated more and

more by the digital slang. This study tests the effects of specific metaphors (HD Metaphors) that describe policies from the presidential legislative agenda in ways that can be relevant and compelling to the young audiences, while fitting the digital media demands. The use of metaphors, in general, is an element of the strategic communication of presidential leadership, essential in branding the leadership style, as I will further discuss.

The Strategic Communication of Leadership

A concept borrowed from the military jargon, strategy means, in simple terms, to establish a target and the plan to reach it. Although invoked across various disciplines, strategy does not seem to be a theoretically established concept, much less the focus of theoretical models in the disciplines of communication, as Walker (2015) observes. Therefore, any discussion about strategic communication borrows aspects from other concepts such as strategic management, developed in the second half of the last century, that describes the “guiding principles for decision making” (Walker, 2015, p.3); strategic communication is seen as part of management strategy. Nevertheless, the expansion of technologies of communication today demands the placement of strategic communication at the center of a wider theoretical debate in order to address the new requirements of leadership. If strategy means analyzing the “big picture” and tactic is the way to implement the strategic plan (Walker, 2015), strategic communication could be placed at the intersection between these two levels because it involves both, analysis and action.

Although this perspective comes from a discipline that sees management strictly as a business enterprise, leaders of all organizations, especially political leaders, utilize strategies and tactics in order to achieve their goals. This is of particularly important for the present research

that analyzes forms of strategic communication and the attainment of presidential influence. The difference between managers and leaders is an argument of interest for strategic communication of political leadership. Walker (2015) argues that the difference is the influence over the followers: while managers only coordinate the activities of an organization, leaders do more than that, by also influencing people in the organization. This distinction connects to the argument for transformational leadership versus transactional, discussed previously in this chapter.

One major avenue for exercising this influence is verbal communication, on which this research concentrates. When presidents communicate publicly, they transfer their vision to the followers (in the lingo of the leadership theories); in the process, they brand their leadership and transform the public in the same time. In this light, strategic communication becomes essential for the trademark of leadership, as embodied in a specific model of leadership coming from linguistics, which I discuss further.

Designing the Leadership Style

In the paradigm of transformational leadership, leaders do not only lead and followers do not only follow. There is also a transfiguration that occurs in this relationship, which is possible because of the common territory of expectation established between the two parties. Charteris Black (2007) explains, “leaders are change agents who communicate the changes that are necessary and explain why they should be made. They do this by creating symbols that embody value systems and are able to articulate hidden or suppressed yearning of followers. Leaders therefore communicate the things followers already half-know” (p.21).

Building on this presumption, Charteris- Black (2007) advances a modern theory of leadership based on communication with the public, called the design of leadership style. This

model, developed in the European literature of communication of leadership, posits that along with non-verbal communication, verbal communication represents the trademark of leadership. Considered “flexible enough to apply across cultures” (Charteris- Black, 2007, p. 21), the theory shows that leaders communicate primarily through metaphors (as an example of the verbal channel) and through symbols (as an illustration of the non-verbal channel). Specifically, world leaders promote their visions by transferring values through the interaction of metaphors and symbols. Notably, instead of concentrating on the psychological perceptions, which is a dominant trait in the leadership literature, the model underlines the linguistic performance, by focusing on “*how* leadership is communicated” (Charteris Black, 2007, p.20). From this theoretical model, I concentrate on the contribution of metaphors.

Similarly with the present research, the design of leadership style theory operates with the assumption that metaphors are fundamental to our process of thought — as Lakoff and Johnson (2003) posit as well—elicit affective responses, and are persuasive by determining conceptual shifts (Charteris- Black, 2007; Musolff, 2004). This model is also built on the principle that metaphors are important in leadership, which Bennis and Nanus (1985) established, “ We found in our discussions with leaders that vision can often be communicated best by metaphors or models ... In fact, the right metaphor often transcends verbal communication altogether ;like a good poem, or song, it is much more than mere words, it ‘feels right’, it appeals at the gut level, it resonates with the listener’s own emotional needs, it somehow ‘clicks’” (p. 107-108).

Charteris- Black (2007) takes things further by claiming that metaphors are not only important in the communication of leadership, but their importance is strategic as they contribute to the trademark of leadership because they establish the vision of leadership. He supports the argument with an in depth analysis of the discourses of famous world leaders to whom he

associated a defining metaphor. Among them there are Mahatma Ghandi (The Soul of India), Nelson Mandela (Leader of the Oppressed), and Fidel Castro (The Cuban Robin Hood). (In his more recent work, Charteris-Black (2014), delved in the linguistic intricacies of metaphors utilized by western leaders as well, especially by president Barack Obama, which I discuss in the next chapter). He admits that the success of individual metaphors depends on the cultural context and on the leadership designs, but he emphasizes that metaphors, in general are used across cultures to communicate vision- along with the non verbal channels of communication, such as symbols, appearance, dress, etc.

In this study I retain the claim that metaphors create a myth or reveal the vision of leadership, acting as “brand builders” of presidential leadership. A deeper incursion in the theoretical realm of metaphors will bring into attention details about their functionality and importance in information processing, political knowledge development, and persuasion.

Message: Metaphors

Considered for a long time pure ornamental devices in discourses, metaphors have not been traditionally treated in political communication as a fundamental variable. However, since metaphors are not as much a mode of language as a mode of thought, as the Linguistic Society of America posits (Freeman & the Linguistic Society of America, 2012), they can be seen as frames, the basic structures of cognition. Therefore, the rich literature of framing coming from social and cognitive psychology, communications, and media studies is relevant in this research. Specifically, frames were first studied in psychology as representing the matrix of understanding, the “frames of reference”, describing the fact that all perceptions and all judgments take place within certain structures (Goffman, 1974). In other words, people perceive the reality and make

sense of the world by using certain modules that facilitate understanding, rather than by absorbing the new information amorously. Framing received an unexpected theoretical power due to the Nobel prize winners Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman who showed that choices are made based on the definition of the outcome as gain or loss (Tversky, Kahneman & Choice, 1981), which makes the interpretation of information a function of individual's interpretative schema (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Building on the initial findings, Kahneman (2003) claims that "*all* perception is reference dependent" (p.18), meaning that people perceive new information by referring to old and familiar aspects; this view empowers frames with universal abilities in the realm of communication.

Seen as "devices that build the associations between concepts" (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009, p.19), frames became subject to theoretical elaboration in sociology, as well. Elites and media use packages to characterize an issue (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987), where each frame represents the core of a package. The mechanics of the framing process shows that if an issue is new, then the information becomes the basis for a future frame; if the audience already has a frame available on the issue, the information relies on it to build an association and, possibly an effect.

The intimacies of this process are important in understanding communication, especially in politics, thus in the last three decades, framing, as a theoretical concept, has reached significant attention in media studies and in political communication. One definition of framing in these disciplines is the process of "highlighting some aspects of an event or issue and ignoring others, thus influencing how people think about that event or issue" (Iyengar, 2011, p.253). Nevertheless, the empirical study of framing remains relatively new in the realm of social

sciences, framing effects (the impact that frames have on audiences) being regarded as “one of the most stunning social sciences discoveries of the last quarter century” (Druckman, 2003, p.1).

Framing Politics and Policy Frames

As an inherent element of human communication, the practice of framing in American politics surfaced two hundred years ago with the first debate over democracy: the “Federalist” and the “Antifederalist” frames (Callaghan, 2005); the former category described a strong federal government and the latter emphasized the role of the states. Although not always acknowledged as such in political science, language in itself has always been fundamental in political transformation. Rochefort and Cobb (1994) argue in this direction, “If policy making is a struggle over alternative realities, than language is the medium that reflects advances and interprets these alternatives” (p.9).

For this study, a relevant finding across the research of framing in politics is that political frames, in particular, expressed in language (as opposed to non linguistic expressions such as symbols) improve the understanding of politics among the public (Kinder & Nelson, 2005). In this view, the public – widely perceived by scholars as having low interest in policy issues – lacks frames, not the capability to evaluate public affairs. Therefore, as Kinder and Nelson (2005) explain, the public needs a democratic debate that is possible only within a conceptual framework. Further, perspectives underlining the role of frames as “common denominator of mass communication” (Callaghan, 2005, p.186), point in the same direction as Robert Dahl’s (1982) “enlightened understanding” or Jurgen Habermas’ s (1982) proposition for “ideal speech” do. All these views suggest that democracy depends on language and, implicitly, on its structural framework.

Of particular importance in this light is presidential framing, the organization of a complex policy proposal around a specific idea, with the hope that the public will be influenced to assess the proposition based on that idea. Edwards and Wayne (2014) explain in this regard, ” by defining and simplifying a complex issue through framing, the president hopes to activate and make more salient particular considerations that citizens will use for formulating their political preferences” (p.130). Some frames are successful in persuading the public about certain policies, others in defining aspects of the administration of a president; from the long list of frames, one example is PEACE WITH HONOR utilized by Richard Nixon to cease the involvement of the U.S. troops in Vietnam (Edwards & Wayne, 2014). In addition, presidents use frames in order to portray themselves in specific ways or to attack their adversaries, thus entertaining competing frames, a characteristic of partisan politics.

An important theory that addresses presidential frames via political psychology is the policy frames model (Schlesinger & Lau, 2000; Lau & Schlesinger, 2005). This model posits that public policies are accessible to the less knowledgeable or uninterested public in politics via metaphors that frame the respective policies, as Lau and Schlesinger (2005) explain:

In a nutshell, our model takes the following form. Every society has a set of commonly understood ways of arranging social institutions and judging the effectiveness of their performance. By “social institutions” we refer to a set of social norms and practices that represent commonly understood ways of allocating responsibility and distributing scarce collective resources—such as “rights,” “markets,” “communities,” or “families.” Each person’s understanding of these institutions is based on a combination of personal experience (with one’s own family, say) and culturally transmitted “stories” or images or

frames . . . Each of these arrangements is a sort of “archetype,” an ideal from which people infer the consequences of actual policies or project the expected outcomes of proposed policy reforms. It is the process of cross-domain inference which makes these archetypes function as *metaphors*. Thus when new social problems arise, our model holds, extant institutional arrangements provide “templates” for understanding and judging different proposed solutions. By relying on shared *social* institutions as the basis for comparative judgments, policy metaphors become accessible to a public that has little knowledge of or interest in the political process. (p.79)

Lau & Schlesinger (2005) tested five frames in health care that were utilized during the Clinton administration, expecting a correlation between the ability to understand and embrace policies and the preference for policy frames or archetypal metaphors. In their study, the independent variables are five dominant cognitive frames (policy metaphors) conceptualized by synthesizing classic American work on health care. They describe different ways in which health care is seen in US: as a societal right, community obligation, employer responsibility, marketable community, or as a professional service. The survey conducted through telephone interviews in July 1995 among a sample of 1522 English speaking adults from the U.S. tested the “extent to which both understanding of and preference for particular policy frames predicts the nature and strength of policy choices by a representative sample of the American public” (Lau & Schlesinger, 2005, p.77.)

This work concludes that cognitive frames or metaphors provide a major advantage to understanding social problems and attracting the masses. If policy frames include metaphors (thus associating new information with familiar information), then they have a better chance to

be processed even by a politically unsophisticated public. As the authors argue, “Cognitive frames [policy metaphors] that are most relevant to particular domains powerfully shape public support” (Lau & Schlesinger, 2005, p.105). Consequently, politicians can take into consideration this finding when they frame their messages about public policies. Their audiences could understand better their proposals which may lead to an increase of the public’s political knowledge. This could mean that in an apparent disconnected relationship, elites can still speak to the public through metaphors. The policy frames model, which equates frames with metaphors, as I do in this study, ensures the transition toward a more detailed discussion of metaphors in the next sections.

Understanding Metaphors

By definition, metaphors have the capacity to transfer information: *meta* means “over” and *pherein* means, “to carry” in Greek. Gentner (1983) explains that when we say that “A is B” (the metaphor’s equation) the attributes of B, the base, are transferred to A, the target. Metaphors have been widely utilized in all areas of communication, since Aristotle, an advocate of metaphors along the three venues of rhetoric: logos (counting for argument), ethos (indicating the source’s credibility), and pathos (referring to emotion). However, it was not until the 1980s that metaphors comprehension received empirical attention. Because of these studies, now metaphor is credited with the power to originate new knowledge, to create emotion, and to influence attitudes (Sopory & Dillard, 2002).

Four major theories of understanding metaphors stand out among the studies of linguistic constructs. The first is the literal- primacy view (Beardsley, 1962, 1976; MacCormac, 1985; Searle, 1979), which posits that metaphors are anomalies that require three steps of

understanding: find the literal meaning, test the literal meaning in order to see whether it violates semantic rules, and look for an alternative meaning. This view is generally rejected by modern theories that found superior roles of metaphors in knowledge acquisition, discussed later in this section. Second, the salience- imbalance theory (Ortony, 1979; Ortony, Vondruska, Foss & Jones, 1985) states that metaphors are processed by selecting the attributes with high salience for the base and those attributes with low salience for the target. The most salient attributes of the base are then selected because they come first to mind and applied to the target. The third is the structure mapping theory (Gentner, 1983, 1989), relevant to this study due to its derivation, superior organization theory (Read, Cesa, Jones & Collins, 1990; Mio, 1996) that connects metaphors and persuasion, as later discussed in this chapter. The structure-mapping model draws on the similarities between the base and the target, explaining that people look for the maximum match between the target and the base for a relational mapping. In this view, which defines metaphor as “an assertion that a relational structure that normally applies in one domain can be applied in another domain” (Gentner, 1983, p.156), metaphor induces connected knowledge, not independent elements. This theory gained more attention in recent studies, thus replacing the approach of metaphors as linguistic exceptions or disposable ornaments that dominated the field before the 1980s.

Aside from grounding the superior organization model, the structure mapping theory is important for this study as it connects (by underscoring the similarity idea and the new knowledge induced by metaphors) with another theory, the experientialist perspective of metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003). According to this influential theory, knowledge is organized as a widely spread system of metaphorical correlations, or mappings between different experiences. Consequently, the process of acquiring knowledge is essentially, not only

marginally, metaphorical. This view is summarized by the authors: “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but also in thought and action; our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.3).

The authors advance a more nuanced definition of metaphor that captures the rationale of this model: “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.5). For example, the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR serves at understanding argument in terms of war, the latter being more familiar than the former since people understand more easily physical conflict than the more abstract notion of “argument.” People employ this formula in gaining any type of knowledge, thus transferring attributes of the familiar concepts to the unfamiliar ones. By claiming that we use prototypes — models that resemble enough the new concepts to which we are exposed—Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980, 2003) perspective converges with Kahneman’s (2003) view, mentioned earlier, that cognition rests on reference. Reference and prototypes seem to have similar roles in processing new information.

The “evolutionary” process in communication starts, in Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980, 2003) view with basic spatial concepts like UP-DOWN, BACK-FRONT, and CENTER-PERIPHERY that are not metaphors, in the classic understanding, as they have become familiar and fundamental for our orientation in the environment. However, beyond this basic level our social and emotional experiences —equally important as the spatial ones —need metaphors in order to refer to, categorize, and organize new information, which leads to the creation of more complex metaphors. Therefore, a more sophisticated category is the structural metaphors, such

as RATIONAL ARGUMENT IS WAR, which allows more elaboration on the basic concept's details (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003).

Further, this model posits that understanding emerges from the “constant negotiation with the environment and other people” (Lakoff& Johnson, 2003, p.230). Thus, when transferring attributes from a familiar concept to an unfamiliar concept, we refer to experience and that is fundamental to the process of understanding. Therefore the authors conclude, “We understand experience metaphorically when we use a gestalt from one domain of experience to structure experience in another domain” (Lakoff& Johnson, 2003, p.230).

Of particular importance for this study is the observation that metaphors not only help us in understanding new concepts, which is a necessity in people's experience, but they also, mold our behavior. For example, metaphors like LABOR IS A RESOURCE or TIME IS MONEY determine the centrality of this value in the American culture but also channel a certain perspective on labor and time, viewed as commodities. This justifies actions such as intensifying them (labor) or not squandering them (time). A general conclusion for metaphor's role in our lives is that “not only are they grounded in our physical and cultural experience; they also influence our experience and our actions” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.68).

The experientialist perspective applies to this study via the following rationale: when policies and ideologies are framed in metaphorical terms they gain the ability to influence the thought and action of large masses; consequently, the High Definition Metaphors from this study are designed to relate to the experience of Millennials who “live by” digital media (the relevance to the audience dimension from the conceptualization of HD Metaphors). I argue, based on the experientialist perspective of Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003), that by experiencing daily the world of social media, most Millennials are more sensitive to metaphors constructed with terms

originating on these platforms than to they would be to other metaphors. (Evidently, this view is simplified for testing purposes). Furthermore, this study tests metaphors' contributions to a better understanding of the political message and, ultimately, to more political knowledge, which fits the Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, 2003) theory.

Metaphors in Politics

Metaphors have been always used in the world of politics albeit their role was neither fully understood, nor empirically tested for a long time. Their benefits have been mostly intuitive and associated with emotion, leading to uplifting the audiences. In this regard, Safire (2008) observes in the prolegomenon of his *Political Dictionary*, "the choice of a word or a metaphor can reveal sensitivity and genius, inspire and uplift a people, and crystallize a mood that gives purpose and direction to a movement"(p.XI). Although metaphors have always furnished the political discourse, the empirical research on political elite metaphors received momentum only a little over a decade ago, especially in European academic literature (Bougher, 2012).

In American politics, presidents are often remembered in terms of the metaphors coined during their eras. Generated by presidents or promoted by media, famous metaphorical phrases became trademarks of each presidency. Safire (2008) analyzes famous examples, some coined, others popularized by presidents. These are JUST AND LASTING PEACE, MALICE TOWARD NONE (from Abraham Lincoln era), ENTANGLING ALLIANCES and PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS (Thomas Jefferson), BULLY PULPIT, from Theodore Roosevelt's era, NEW DEAL and GOOD NEIGHBOUR POLICY dating from Franklin Roosevelt's era, FAIR DEAL (Harry Truman), NEW FRONTIER (John F. Kennedy), GREAT SOCIETY and WAR ON POVERTY (from Lyndon Johnson's era), NEW FEDERALISM (Richard Nixon), BORN

AGAIN and ZERO BASE BUDGETING (Jimmy Carter), STAR WARS and MORNING IN AMERICA (Ronald Reagan), NEW WORLD ORDER (George Bush), ERA OF BIG GOVERNMENT IS OVER and NEW COVENANT (Bill Clinton), WAR ON TERROR (George W. Bush). Safire's inventory ends before president Barack Obama's era, defined by the most famous phrase, OBAMACARE.

These examples indicate that metaphors are not new vehicles of presidential communication. Many have been successfully used in the past and imprinted the public's political consciousness (Safire, 2008; Charteris-Black, 2005, 2014). However, not every policy proposition of the president is defined by a metaphor powerful enough to encapsulate the policy. Moreover the one-size-fits-all metaphors used to launch major policy projects are not always relevant to specific audiences. This study advances the idea that, considering the digital media's opportunities for direct reach and the need for color and concision of the political message in an overwhelming informational climate, a category of metaphors with specific characteristics (HD Metaphors) might help the message to become more visible to the target audiences, easier to comprehend and , perhaps, more persuasive.

The last element, persuasion, elicited the interest of many researchers of metaphors in the last decades of the last century since attitude change and influence are fundamental targets in communication. Political communication is in some ways a competition of frames (metaphors) in order to convince various audiences. In this light, Perloff (2014a) observes, "the battle for public opinion and policy change can be seen as a jousting among different political frameworks, a struggle to see which will command the most popular and elite support (p.156)". Therefore, it follows naturally to apply in this study the findings regarding the correlation between metaphors and persuasion, which I discuss next.

Persuasion via Metaphor

A meta-analysis of the studies concerned with metaphors' role in attitude change and persuasion, conducted until 2000, revealed that metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts (Sopory & Dillard, 2002). Six perspectives attempt to explain this conclusion, as the authors note. First is the dyad pleasure- relief, claiming that the recognition of metaphors, viewed as semantic anomalies, leads to negative tension, which, once dissipated determines pleasure or relief, thus increasing the chances for persuasion (Bowers & Osborn, 1966; Reinsch, 1973). The second view, communicator credibility, claims that people, who use metaphors, are considered more credible, thus they are better persuaders (McCroskey & Combs, 1969; Bowers & Osborn, 1966). The third approach, reduced counterarguments, posits that the processing of metaphors involves more resources than their literal counterparts do and, because of that, counterarguments are discouraged, which leads to more persuasion (Guthrie, 1972). The resource matching perspective claims that, since metaphors entail cognitive elaboration (Ortony, 1979) or more thinking, they lead to a better integration of the message than their literal versions do and, implicitly, to more persuasion (Jaffe, 1988). The fifth approach, the stimulated elaboration (Whaley, 1991) posits that the high number of semantic connections induced by metaphors produces a richer elaboration of the message which leads to more agreeing thoughts, thus, more persuasion.

The sixth perspective, the superior organization, is of particular interest in this research because it explains not only persuasion but also knowledge increase through the highlighting attribute of metaphors (Read, Cesa, Jones & Collins, 1990; Mio, 1996). Derived from the structure- mapping theory (Gentner 1983, 1989), this view posits that metaphors structure the

arguments better than their literal counterparts do. Sopory and Dillard (2002) summarize the process:

A metaphor evokes a greater number of semantic associations. When these associations are consistent with the metaphor, the different arguments are connected more coherently via the many available semantic pathways. Additionally, the links to the metaphor “highlight” the arguments, making them more salient. Consequently, interpreters are apt to find it easier to relate the arguments to each other, and because they are highlighted, are more likely to process them. (p.387)

By contrast, the literal language does not provide this linkage between the highlighted semantic associations, which leads to less comprehension and less persuasion. In this light, the superior organization theory is particularly important in this study for two reasons: it explains persuasion and it underlines the metaphor’s role in salience and in understanding the argument. Because the young public, exposed to an abundance of information, runs on political news only by chance while surfing the Internet for other purposes, as data indicate (Mitchell, 2014), it is interesting to identify ways of getting its attention on line for political messaging. In this context, I expect High Definition Metaphors to act as highlighters of presidential messages and as facilitators of comprehension and persuasion, in consonance with the structure mapping and superior organizations theories.

The meta analysis conducted by Sopory and Dillard (2002) on 29 studies that collected data from a total of 3945 participants confirmed that metaphors are more persuasive than the literal language. This quantitative study involved coding of the available articles focused on the

relationship metaphors- persuasion, which advanced altogether six different explanations for the suatory effect of metaphors, previously enumerated. Sopory and Dillard analyzed data using model fitting (similarly to stepwise regressions), which revealed that from all the models the superior organization theory explained best the persuasiveness of metaphors.

A numeric consequence of the suatory effect of metaphors was that they produced 6 percent more persuasiveness than the literal message. Although this number seems small, it was interpreted by Sopory and Dillard (2002) as particularly relevant to politics, considering the differences in popular vote in the U.S. presidential elections (e.g. 0.5 percent in 2000, 8.5 percent in 1996, 5.6 percent in 1992, and 7.8 percent in 1988). More than a decade later, this observation is still relevant, considering the difference of 3.86 percent in the popular vote in the U.S. elections of 2012 between the presidential candidates: 51.2 percent for Barack Obama and 47.2 percent for Mitt Romney (Peters & Woolley, The American Presidency Project, 2016).

In conclusion, all these findings explain the functionality of metaphors and their contribution to persuasion. However, persuasion seems to be achieved in two different ways, based on the audience's involvement in the argument. Dual process models explain how this process occurs and, although these theories did not focus on metaphors, they bring in the picture a moderator of persuasion that I use in this design, namely involvement. The next section discusses the role of involvement and the two routes of persuasion.

Involvement and Persuasion: Dual Process Models

In testing the contribution of metaphors to reach the audiences, this study uses an adaptation of two influential theoretical models of attitude change: the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a, 1986b; Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981) and the heuristic systematic model (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; see also Todorov, Chaiken & Henderson, 2002).

Essentially, these dual process theories posit that a person processes information on two avenues, responding to different stimuli, based on the involvement in the topic.

The most utilized model in the study of attitude change, the Elaboration Likelihood Model –ELM (Petty& Cacioppo, 1986a, 1986b; Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981) posits that information is processed on two routes - central and peripheral - each coming into play based on the audience's level of involvement and need for cognition (the necessity to understand the world). While highly involved receivers and with high need for cognition process messages centrally, the other camp (with low involvement and low need for cognition) tends to approach it peripherally. The former involves careful analysis, whereas the latter engages minimum effort based on cues (elements that are not directly related to the rationale of the argument, such as source's credibility).

The choice for one route or another depends on the level of involvement (interest) in the topic, as the authors explain, “the personal relevance of an issue is one determinant of the route to persuasion that will be followed” (Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981, p.847). This was revealed in an experiment where the stimulus was a broadcasted message in favor of introducing a comprehensive exam for college students in their last year as a requirement for graduation (Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981). The subjects, undergraduates at the University of Missouri, were told that the purpose of the experiment was the evaluation of broadcast quality. There were two types of arguments: one version contained strong arguments (improving scores in universities), another contained a weak argument (a friend who took the comprehensive exam subsequently secured a prestigious academic position). In addition, the message was attributed to a high credible source (the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education) in one version, and to a low credible source (a local high school report) in the other version. The most important variable

in this research was involvement, designed in relation to the imminence of the exam: implementing the exam the following year (for high involvement) or in 10 years (for low involvement).

The measurements of attitude toward the exam in each circumstance revealed that involvement was crucial in the cognitive effort and in the route used in processing the message: high involvement triggered careful analysis (central route) and low involvement engaged less profound processing, by using cues, such as source credibility (peripheral route). The finding is especially important in this study as I test the suasy effects of HD Metaphors on audiences at different levels of involvement in the topic. Specifically, I am interested on whether metaphors produce more agreement with the message among those highly involved or among those less involved in the topic. However, I do not focus on the distinction between the routes of persuasion (central or peripheral) or on how the agreement with the message occurs in each case. Therefore, from the complex model of elaboration likelihood, I retain only two aspects, involvement and the agreement with the message (persuasion), which I apply in the study of presidential metaphors.

As part of the dual- process approaches in social psychology, the elaboration likelihood model and the heuristic systematic model (HSM) complement each other, providing strong explanations for attitude change. Similarly to ELM, HSM discusses two processes of persuasion. Nevertheless, HSM claims that these processes take place simultaneously (Chaiken, 1980, 1987), which is the main difference between the two models. Called *systematic*, instead of central, and *heuristic* instead of peripheral, these avenues “are not mutually exclusive,” as Perloff (2014b, p.217) observes: one can process an argument profoundly while also taking into account the heuristics.

Two principles explain the HSM theory: the least effort principle and the sufficiency principle. The least effort principle posits, in Eagly and Chaiken's (1993) summary, that "people prefer less effortful to more effortful modes of information processing" (p.330). The sufficiency principle claims that "people will exert whatever effort is required to attain a 'sufficient' degree of confidence that they have satisfactorily accomplished their processing goals" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p.330). These principles show that people do not engage many cognitive resources when exposed to new information (by choosing the simplest path) and that they tend to process the information only for a limited time.

Political information is no exception, thus the expectation for fully informed citizenry of factual data and for extensive attentiveness of the people in matters of public affairs seems unrealistic. In this light, searching for ways to increase presidential messages' visibility is motivated not only by the influx of information with which these messages compete in the digital era, but also by the psychological tendency of individuals to engage only minimally with the new information. High Definition Metaphors are relevant in this attempt, as I expect them to trigger attention to the messages due to their capacity to reveal the essence of a presidential legislative proposition in a new form and to relate to the audiences. (The methodology chapter explains in detail the features of the HD Metaphors).

In summary, I analyzed metaphors, the second element from the axis of persuasion, from various perspectives that intersect in several points. Metaphors are essentially frames, structures that we utilize when processing new information. Thus the study of metaphors owes a great deal to the vast and arduous efforts in enlightening the functionality and effects of framing across many disciplines. Since politics is a battle of frames, the utilization of metaphors in politics is not new, however it was insufficiently researched. Specifically, presidents, have always used

metaphors, some of which imprinted their leadership. However, beside their brand building role, metaphors have other merits as underlined by several perspectives from linguistics, and social and cognitive psychology discussed in this section. For example, the experientialist perspective claims that metaphors are fundamental in the process of thought and comprehension and the superior organization theory posits that they play a major role in highlighting and organizing the argument, which leads not only to better understanding but to more persuasiveness, as well. Persuasion, in general, occurs on specific routes, based on the involvement of the receivers, as dual process theories (the elaboration likelihood model and the heuristic systematic model) posit. Because the youths' involvement in politics, or its lack thereof, is concerning in general, the present study retains the emphasis on involvement from the elaboration likelihood model when testing the effect of metaphors on young audience. This audience is at the center of the next section that analyzes some of its characteristics, but mostly their (limited) attention to political messages and their media habits in the digital era.

Receivers: Millennials

Who are Millennials?

Two influential researchers of generational cycles in America, Howe and Strauss (1992) coined the term “Millennials” in their book *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, describing this cohort as the “Millennial Generation, the first of whom will indeed come of age around the year 2000” (Howe & Strauss, 1992, p.31). Since then, various studies referred to Millennials, also known as Generation Y (Why), as persons with birth years between 1982 and 2004, with two-three years adjustments on the margins. A decade later, Howe and Strauss (2000) made optimistic predictions about this cohort, considering it “a powerhouse

generation, full of technology planners, community shapers, institution builders, and world leaders perhaps destined to dominate the 21st century” (Howe & Strauss, 2000. p.5). Later, they added new dimensions to this generation: the archetype *hero* — which describes features such as “community, affluence, and technology” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p.7) —and the iconic figure of Mark Zuckerberg, the creator of Facebook.

Aside from these traits observed almost a decade ago, suggesting relative openness, networking, and the theoretical possibility of engagement, I discuss next recently measured characteristics of the Millennium generation that are relevant in this study: size, education, diversity, political knowledge and awareness of politics, digitalism, and ideological independence. First, are the size of this generation and its electoral rights. Based on the 2010 census, there were 74.8 million Millennials in the United States representing about a quarter of the total population (Fry, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). This generation has become the largest in the country. In 2015 the Millennial Generation reached 88 million (people with birth years between 1981- 2000), most of whom have the right to vote, thus constituting a third of the electorate (Kesler, 2015).

Another characteristic of Millennials is their high level of education. Specifically, data indicate that the level of educational attainment of some college or more among Millennials (ages 25 -34) is the highest (65 percent) - higher than among any other generation and than the average of the general public (58.9 percent) as well (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). Millennials lead (90.5 percent) in another area of education attainment as well: high school graduate or more (Ryan & Bauman, 2016).

Aside from being the highest educated generation, Millennials are the most diverse, as well. A study of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (2016) indicates a high racial

distribution , with a record low of whites: only 60 percent of non Hispanic whites among the age group of 18-29 year old and 19 percent Hispanic, 14 percent black, 4 percent Asian and 3 percent mixed race or other . Additionally, 11 percent of Millennials have at least one immigrant parent (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2016).

Knowledge of politics and media habits. The biggest problem regarding Millennials is that, although they are educated, they show low interest in politics and reduced political knowledge. Specifically, a little over a quarter (26 percent) report politics and government among their three top interests (less than any other generation) and have heard of only 18 out of 36 sources of political news (Mitchell, Gotfried & Matsa, 2015).

A survey on public's knowledge (Pew Research Center, 2015g) shows that less than half (47 percent) Millennials know the partisan composition of the Senate; only 39 percent of the younger Millennials (ages 18-24) and 53 percent of the older Millennials (ages 25- 34) are able to choose correctly between four charts on party balance in the Senate. Even less Millennials (45 percent) are able to recognize senator Elizabeth Warren from four photos; older Millennials prove more knowledgeable (51 percent) than younger Millennials (38 percent) in this regard, as well, according to the same report.

The low levels of political knowledge often translate in low political engagement. A record low in Millennials' turnout was reached in the 2014 elections according to an analysis of CIRCLE -The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2016), which shows that only 19.9 percent of Millennials voted in the 2014 elections. Even if this refers to midterms (when turnout is usually less than in presidential elections) the fact that only a fifth casted their ballots is of concern. This is because Millennials represent already 30 percent of the age –eligible electorate (Kesler, 2015) and this share is projected to increase to more than a third

(35 percent) by 2020 (Kesler, 2015, with data from U.S. Census Bureau, Bloomberg View). The decrease in turnout among the young voters to 41.2 percent in the 2012 elections from 48.5 percent in 2008 (Pew Research Center, 2013) completes the more recent picture of low political participation of Millennials and their disconnection from politics. How this picture is obtained and the importance of political knowledge, engagement and general awareness of politics are discussed next.

As the above data show, I combined here the available information regarding attentiveness to politics, actual knowledge of current politics, and political engagement to build a richer picture of the political knowledge and awareness of politics among Millennials. That is because political knowledge, per se, is not easy to conceptualize or measure, especially as it is often associated with political engagement in surveys. The different views in the literature of public opinion discussed in a previous chapter reflect this difficulty. In this research, I support two views. The first is the *monitorial citizen* perspective (Schudson, 1998), according to which it is unrealistic to expect fully informed citizenry, therefore modern citizens should be informed enough to identify danger or issues that are relevant to them. The second view is the *civic IQ* (Graber, 2001, 2012), which regards political knowledge as understanding the meaning of the political world and the capacity to evaluate the significance of the events.

The second aspect is the importance of political knowledge and political engagement. As mentioned before, the Jeffersonian model of participation is important in this study because of its claim that people's involvement in public affairs is essential for democracy as it increases governmental accountability. This requires information and knowledge of politics. Geer et al. (2016) explain in this regard that "an informed citizenry that actively participates in politics will ensure that government is both accountable and responsive" (p.351). The Jeffersonian model

opposes the Hamiltonian approach that considers politics the business of elites, away from the masses' passion or lack of knowledge, thus it underlines the role of public participation.

Because Millennials represent an important category of the population, this study works toward energizing this generation and resuscitating their interest in public affairs in the classical Jeffersonian way.

Consequently, it is important to engage this generation in public affairs on any available avenues. One of these avenues is presidential communication, specifically, through messages launched on digital media when advancing the legislative agenda - which is what this study analyzes. In order to build messages apt to travel this distance, it is necessary to understand a few other essential characteristics of Millennials.

Digital natives and politically independent. From the comprehensive list of the characteristics captured by the Pew Research Center's study (2014) portraying Millennials in adulthood, two more are relevant in the present research: Millennials are digital natives and politically independent. The first feature is digital nativity, deriving from the fact that Millennials dominate "the new platforms of the digital era—the Internet, mobile technology, and social media—to construct personalized networks of friends, colleagues and affinity groups" (Pew Research Center, 2014). This study reports that a vast majority, 81 percent, are on Facebook, with a median of 250 friends. Similar numbers appear in the Harvard Institute of Politics Poll (2015), indicating the high usage of social media: 83 percent of Millennials have Facebook accounts, 44 percent Instagram, and 39 percent of them are on Twitter. Their massive presence is reported, too, in Facebook's statistics for 2015 reporting 91 percent of Millennials on this site (DMR/Facebook Statistics, 2016). In relation to the Millennials' feature of digitalism are also the important elements discussed previously in this chapter regarding the attention to news and

public affairs in the digital era. In summary, data show two aspects regarding their media consumption habits: the “bumping into” (Mitchell, 2014) political news while searching for something else and the relative attention to political news during these encounters.

Another study analyzing Americans’ tendency to follow politicians on social media shows that the number of registered voters who follow political figures on social media has doubled in the last five years (Pew Research Center, 2015h). From all the age groups, Millennials have the highest rate, almost a quarter (24 percent) following politicians on social media. Although this study does not capture all Millennials— as it refers only to registered voters— it reveals the increasing tendency of the non- independent Millennials (the other half of this generation according to the previous report) to get information about political figures on social networks. The same report explains the reasons for these media habits. First “35% of registered voters who use social media to follow a political candidate say a major reason is that it makes them feel more personally connected to politician or group “ (Anderson, 2015; Pew Research Center , 2015h). Second, “26% say that the information they get via a politician’s social networking site is more reliable than what they get from traditional news organizations” (Anderson, 2015).

Furthermore, the state of the media report published by Pew Research Center in 2015 shows an ascending trend of mobile news: “39 of the top 50 digital news websites have more traffic to their sites and associated applications coming from mobile devices than from desktop computers” (Mitchell, Gotfried & Matsa, 2015). The mobile traffic is higher than the desk traffic on 10 news outlets, with CNN in the lead, suggesting more chances for political messaging to reach the young cohorts, as users of mobile devices, especially as a vast majority of them get their news on social media (e.g. 88 percent of Millennials get their news on Facebook according

to the American Press Institute, 2015). In conclusion, these figures plus the popularity of social media among Millennials suggest the possibilities for direct, unmediated communication with this generation as long as it takes place on these platforms.

The second feature of this generation that I note in this study is their political independence. Although Millennials tend to vote Democratic (60 percent voted for Barack Obama in 2012, according to the Pew Research Center's report of 2014), 50 percent consider themselves politically independent. This feature is important because it indicates that Millennials are not ideologically committed, thus they could still be persuaded. Although this is not an easy task, as Millennials might feel strongly about their ideological independence, it brings hope to political communicators who are trying to win them over because non-affiliation suggests, in general, less crystallized opinions. More about their ideological preferences can be inferred from analyzing their sentiment toward the president.

Millennials and the President

The analysis of the relationship president-Millennials, necessary to determine presidential influence among this generation, is limited to one case: Barack Obama. Many Millennials had the right to vote only in two, maximum three presidential elections (some in 2004, but most of them in 2008 or 2012). Therefore the only presidency that they witnessed was Barack Obama's. In this regard, data show that in 2009, the support for Obama among Millennials was as high as 71 percent (Pew Research Center, 2010) but it then plummeted: only approximately half of the Millennials (50 percent younger Millennials and 47 percent older Millennials) approved Obama's job between 2010 and 2014 (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Although these numbers and data from the previous section show a decrease of presidential influence among Millennials and a low interest or knowledge of politics, the overall picture shows that this generation is not completely absent from public affairs. This means that there is still a chance for presidential messaging to get the attention of the young cohorts and even to persuade them. I am interested to see whether these goals could be achieved by presidents when using High Definition Metaphors, similarly to the strategy of “brand intelligence” utilized in political marketing through social media (Bolotaeva & Teuta, 2010). This strategy refers to the information that can be collected from social media about the customers (constituents, in the presidential branding case) from various demographics to habits and interests. Such information can be used in various marketing strategies and in constructing the message (a policy from the legislative agenda announced by the president, as far as this research is concerned).

Ultimately, once reached, Millennials seem to be trusted with transformational powers in society. In this regard, Winograd and Hais (2008) predict that this generation will conduct a makeover of American politics. The authors posit that the “technology tsunami” will allow the conduct of politics in non- traditional ways. In this picture, the trend toward the digital channels of political communication is clear, particularly in mobile forms (Pew Research Center, 2015c). With mobility, instant access to information, and linked through social networks, Millennials, reaching adulthood, could build a new civic infrastructure in the U.S. (Winograd & Hais, 2008). Whether this enterprise is probable, not only possible, the next decade will show. Meanwhile, political leaders and presidential candidates in particular, can test the “digital reach”, of direct, unmediated communication that has started already to transform the traditional landscape of political communication (via instant updates, live feedback from receivers, message

compression, etc.). These developing habits challenge the traditional models of political communication and the views of media's role in politics. Millennials are witnessing these transformations and are fully embracing the new age of digitalism. However, because this research takes place at the intersection between two eras in mass communication – the traditional media era and the digital media era- I discuss first the classic theoretical models of this discipline to emphasize the contrast with the current reality of digital communication that Millennials experience.

Looking Back - Models of Political Communication

The literature of political communication focuses on the channels through which political message is delivered to the public and on the media effects throughout this process. However, the technological revolution of the last decades has changed dramatically the communicational climate, not only in the U.S. but globally as well. These transformations raise questions about the currency of the traditional concepts and of the definition of political communication itself. Richard Perloff (2014a) defines political communication as “the process by which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media, or citizens, exerts intended or unintended effects on the political cognitions, attitudes, or behavior of individuals or on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state, or community” (p. 30) . When discussing his new definition, Perloff includes blogging, texting, and soft media in the conceptual portfolio, thus adapting the classic view to the new realities. However, he does not advance a theoretical model that can explain how political communication is conducted within the new coordinates. Instead, Perloff seems to move closer to the traditional view of mediated political communication when he discusses media's active intervention in this process, “media are technologies that intercede between the

communicator and message recipient, *filtering* [emphasis added] the message through the selection of words, images, and formats” (Perloff, 2014a, p.41).

As the Internet is a platform and not a medium (Perloff, 2014a), digital media is a different kind of channel, a pseudo- media in some regards, because it often involves direct, unmediated communication. In this new paradigm, the classic models of political communication are in many ways obsolete. This section will discuss some of the important models that helped us navigate through the traditional media of an era from which we are quickly departing and will explain why only a few aspects are retained in the present research.

Political communication was not of scholarly interest in the U.S. until World War I, when governmental strategies to gather public support for entering the war triggered criticism in regard to the methods and the manipulation of mass media in the process. It was the time when mass media’s presence in society was increasing and so were the concerns for how that might change society. Walter Lippmann was one of the first who signaled that the public was experiencing the world mostly through media, which was filtering the reality. This added to the psychological biases of the human nature, summarized in the famous phrase “we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see” (Lippmann, 1922, p.63). However, Lippmann did not see media as an autonomous actor but rather as an instrument of manipulation by the government, which is why he advocated for a larger responsibility of media to convey the political truth. His theoretical perspective is in some regards antagonistic to this study since I focus on the direct communication between the president and its audience, without appealing to a “middleman”. Lippmann was calling for more responsible mediation (responsibility of media), whereas this study is looking for solutions that do not need media’s intervention, at least not in the classic way.

Another analysis of mass media is Harold Lasswell's (1927) evaluation of the power that media had over the public, an era when the term "propaganda" gained traction as a result of his analyses of Nazis' mechanisms of persuasion for securing support for Hitler (among which was the use of mass communication). Lasswell's remarkable contributions to the study of influence and of the role of communication are illustrated by the development of a five-questions model of communication: Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) What Channel (with) What Effect (Lasswell, 1948). This model, that includes the axis of persuasion utilized in this study (who- presidents; what-metaphors; to whom-Millennials) underlines the effects of communication. As an interdisciplinary scholar, with pronounced interests in persuasion, Lasswell was naturally interested in the results of communication and its suasive effects on people's attitudes and behavior. In this study I am interested in the effects of communication more on attitude change and less on mobilization. One measurement from this study that goes beyond attitude (communicative action or the willingness to further disseminate the presidential message in social media) is introduced more to gauge the attractiveness of the message and less to establish its capability to mobilize.

As opposed to his predecessors, another classic communication scholar, Paul Lazarsfeld did not believe that media had such major effect on influencing the public and on modeling its political behavior. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) argued after their famous study of Erie County, Ohio (during which 2,400 citizens were interviewed) that media had limited influence in political attitudes and that opinion leaders were influencing voters. Known as the two-step flow model, this emphasizes the role of the influential leaders while only "tolerating" the role of media. Subsequently, Lazarsfeld and Katz (1955) extrapolated on this avenue by

positing that context mattered in changing attitudes and that media played only a secondary role in the process of influencing the public.

Although the two-step flow model downplays the role of media in the process of social influence, I do not retain it in the rationale of this study. The first reason is that media is still regarded as a factor (the first step) in Lazarsfeld et al.'s (1944) view, which does not coalesce with the interest for unmediated messaging from this research. The second reason is the emphasis on opinion leaders, the discovery of the two-step flow model, which brings another "middleman" in the picture by underlining the mediated influence. Therefore, although Katz & Lazarsfeld's (1955) findings can be interpreted as precursors of the role of social networks in today's climate dominated by Facebook (Perloff, 2014), they are not applied in this study.

Another classic model evaluating the role of media in shaping the public's political attitudes is Joseph Klapper's (1960), which posits that, mass media has minimal influence. This is known as the limited effects model and it differs from the other perspectives discussed here by underlining the power of the previous beliefs that the public brings at the encounter with mass media. This view elevates the role of receivers, whose attitudes are pre shaped by other factors from their environments. I retain partially this aspect when controlling for participants' ideology and partisanship because these commitments are established before exposure to the message. However, I do not focus in this study on the mechanisms of ideological biases along the lines drawn by Klapper.

This constellation of classic models was followed by many attempts until today to determine the importance of political media, which fluctuated with the technological changes of communication. In fact, with each new technology that enters the stage the game resets. In the late 1960s television boosted media's role in politics and in society. At the beginning of the 21st

century the Internet has changed the paradigm of communication, thus challenging the classic views of political communication. Among the more recent attempts at evaluating media's influence are Bennet and Iyengar's (2008) claim that media is falling again out of power and, on the other side of the spectrum, Holbert, Garrett and Gleason's (2010) argument in favor of media's enduring influence over the public.

This fluctuation of claims regarding media's leading or supportive role in shaping political attitudes will likely continue. However, as mentioned before, the scholarly conversations surrounding the advent of digital media sound rather like an intermezzo toward a new paradigm in political communication that will have to redefine the old concepts and establish new models. Considering this transitioning of the discipline, I focus on unmediated communication, therefore I do not test or fully embrace in this study any of the classic models. Specifically, I analyze the effects of political messages that could circulate on digital media platforms for a direct, unmediated, interaction between political elites (represented here by the president) and the public (specifically Millennials).

Therefore, the classic concern for media's active role as a distinct entity with powers in the process is not under analysis. The Internet and digital media are regarded in this study as technological platforms (Perloff, 2014a) and not as actors, with specific or autonomous influence, like the models of the last century viewed traditional media. However, a discussion of the classic models of mediated communication was necessary in order to understand the differences between the two eras and the transitioning toward the theoretical frames of digitalism. The next section will explain in more detail digital media and the conceptualization employed by this study.

Looking Ahead- Digital Media Characteristics

Although this research does not study digital media in detail the methodological design and the conceptualization take into consideration the digital media surge in political communication and its implications for Millennials. As noted in the previous section, most data regarding Millennials' communication engage automatically a discussion of the digital media. A recent digital media typology includes on line news sites, political candidates web sites, social media sites, traditional blogs, micro blogs, and Social Network Sites such as Facebook (Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck & Nord, 2011; Dimitrova, 2015). Cell phone texting could be added to the list as well, as it has been successfully used in presidential campaigns (Trent et al., 2011). While it is still unclear how digital media will be further captured in scholarly concepts, the Internet was already established as a non medium, being rather "a series of interlocking digital networks" (Perloff, 2014a, p.41). These networks are changing the paradigm of mass communication by representing the "new middlemen" Perloff (2014a, p.41) or, in other view, by determining *disintermediation* (Pariser, 2011), the direct access between people and political leaders.

In this context, the present study takes into account several characteristics of the digital media. One is the appeal to Millennials, as reflected in the statistics discussed before. Another is interactivity (Foot & Schneider, 2006), including the two-way communication between the source and the audience plus the receivers' possibilities to disseminate the message in their own networks. The third characteristic is the contribution of the digital media and social networks to political engagement in virtual forms (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011) and to the elevation of political knowledge (Hanson et al., 2010; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008). In connection to it, is the digital media's role in increasing the political knowledge and political appetite of the users, still

debatable in the literature. The question is whether new media can produce a revitalization of politics or not (Gibson, 2009). Skeptics blame electronic media for its frivolous approach, which, they claim, generates political cynicism (e.g. Patterson, 1993; Putnam, 2000). Along the same lines, Baumgartner & Morris (2010) state that there is no correlation between sharing political information on Social Networks Sites (SNS) — such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Pinterest— and high levels of political knowledge.

The optimists, however, see the Web 2.0's capabilities of enhancing the power of masses (e.g. Surowiecki, 2005; Leadbeater, 2007). Numerous studies notice a positive association between the use of SNSs and political knowledge (e.g. Hanson et al., 2010; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008) – also reflected by the frequent usage of social networks in sharing political news (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). The on line Obama's campaign of 2008 provides data showing the political engagement via digital media: 3 million individuals donated an average of \$ 80 believed to be a result of on line reach (Trent et al., 2011). Another aspect from real life politics acknowledging the digital media's increasing role, is that campaigns designate now specific budgets for it. For example, in 2008, when digital media was only on the rise, campaigns spent already between 5 percent and 10 percent from their budgets on new media by hiring staff specialized in new technologies. A result of these changes is the opportunity to reach and possibly influence voters via their social networks . Trent et al. (2011) observe in this regard, "the new social networking software will allow micro-targeting of undecided voters by finding and connecting them with like-minded supporters", (p.376) with possible implications for political participation. Specifically, messages can now be customized for targeted audiences and the audiences themselves can participate to the creation of new messaging by providing feedback. This explains the occurrence of the User Generated Content (UGC), where receivers

participate in the production of the content, as a new (media) phenomenon, made possible by the augmentation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Ultimately, all these suggest that a second wave of digital democracy (Loader & Mercea, 2012), where people can be vastly reached and engaged with the help of technology, could be on the horizon.

For these reasons, this study embraces the optimistic view that digital media could be the platform where the interest in politics and the political knowledge of the users can be augmented when messages are strategically designed. This belief is the reason for which I test the presidential messages' effects to see whether the High Definition Metaphors can increase the attentiveness, comprehension, and the agreement with the messages of the most avid users of digital media. The characteristics of digital media outlined in this section are taken into account when crafting the presidential messages in this design and their frames, as I will outline further and then extrapolate in the next chapter.

E-framing in the Digital Democracy

The surge of digital media in political communication also raises the question of framing. How is political messaging going to be packaged in the new environment? The coexistence of the traditional and digital media mechanics puzzles political communication strategists. Is negativity — one of the modern trends dominating as much as 70 percent of the ads in the presidential campaign of 2012 (e.g. Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project, 2012; Fowler & Ridout, 2013) — still going to be the driving force in political campaigns? If presidential advertising took negative forms because of traditional media's appetite for negativity (Geer, 2012), which will be the new "requirements" of the digital media for political messaging? What frames will emerge if political messages will cease to be mediated

predominantly by traditional channels, as they reach now the audience directly? How is the user generated content going to impact the political discourse on the web since “others are at liberty to remix content in much the same way as music fans are able to reorder and reconstruct beats, melodies, and lyrics” (Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler, 2011, p.51)? And, getting closer to the scope of this study, what will be needed to make political messages conspicuous enough in the social media landscape so they get the attention of a public whose encounters with politics is only casual?

The occurrence of television in the second half of the last century populated irreversibly the political communication with catchphrases and sound bites, short formulas or expressions colorful enough to capture in seconds the attention of an audience tempted by other forms of entertainment. In many ways, the High Definition Metaphors at focus in this study resemble the catch phrases in the sense that they are short and colorful, thus hinting to the requirements for language vividness (as it will be discussed in the next chapter). Concision, color, vividness are features necessary for information to travel through digital media. From this perspective, digital media patterns of communication continue the trend ushered by television: the preference for a compact political discourse. However, HD Metaphors in this study are designed to be more than attractive sound bites. They define and encapsulate a policy proposal, via the policy thrust feature and are familiar to the audience. In other words, these metaphors are supposed to provide not only entertainment but also quintessential knowledge regarding the policy proposition that they accompany.

Conclusion

In this study I used an interdisciplinary approach to address the research question of whether presidents can reach more effectively the Millennials by using High Definition Metaphors when communicating plans and measures meant to advance their legislative agenda. I began by discussing theories of leadership, from which I retained the agile leader model, in order to emphasize the presidents' need to understand and adapt their strategic messaging to the followers. Then I engaged theories of presidential influence, with the tensions of the American government as backdrop. From these theories, the going public model was considered axiomatic and beneficial for democracy as it explains why modern presidents cannot exercise their powers without trying to influence the public. Further, a historical inventory of the presidential audience, via media, revealed a decreasing trend, especially in the digital era. However, data showed, next, that Millennials (the cohort of interest in this study since it represents a quarter of the American population and the motor of the society, now reaching adulthood) are not completely insensitive to political information once they casually encounter it on digital media. These explain why presidents can and should be interested in reaching Millennials when communicating public policies. In their effort to win the public, presidents use strategic communication- a new concept from the business management literature that I discussed next. Part of the strategic communication is using metaphors, which contribute to the trademark of leadership, according to the design of leadership style model. This theory explained further the emphasis on metaphors in the study and their inclusion in the research question. To conclude, the first section dedicated to presidents delineated their need to influence the public- thus underlining the first part of the problem.

In the second part I focused on metaphors by using the literature of framing in explaining their role in processing the new information. The policy frames model confirmed the power of metaphors in public policies. A powerful theory, the experientialist perspective on metaphors provided more insight into the pervasiveness of metaphors in everyday life due to their associations with past experiences, thus making them relevant to the audiences. Since reaching the Millennials means also persuading them, I further discussed the persuasive power of metaphors; the superior organization theory explained how metaphors highlight the arguments, making them more visible and easier to process. Persuasion, in general, is explained best by dual process theories, from which I retained the role of receiver's involvement in the topic because of the reduced interest of Millennials in public affairs. This second part explained why metaphors can be a solution to the problems of presidential communication.

In the last section I analyzed Millennials' features and media habits in relation to politics, with the conclusions that they have modest interest in politics and knowledge of politics. Half are not ideologically committed, but are the largest and the most diverse generation in the United States, highly educated and present on digital media, representing a third of the electorate. Because of Millennials' presence on the digital platforms, I then discussed, for contrast, the classic models of political communication, then the features of digital media that transform political messaging. This explains the particular crafting of High Definition Metaphors for the presidential messages in this study, which could travel on these networks. To summarize, this third part of the chapter analyzed Millennials, by underlining their potential and also their modest interest and awareness of politics- which is the second part of the problem in this research.

In conclusion, I engaged in this chapter concepts and perspectives from various disciplines by building in a tripartite structure a polychromatic literature review, with each “patch” contributing to the theoretical framing of this study. In solving the problem, which is what interdisciplinary research often does, I advance a possible solution, by designing a novel category of metaphors. High Definition Metaphors are expected not only to contribute to branding presidential leadership and help with the advancement of the legislative agenda, but to reach Millennials and possibly resuscitate their interest in public affairs, as well. As HD Metaphors have never been studied before, this is the most important “gap” in the literature.

Consequently, the issues and connections across disciplines depicted above determined the three hypotheses of this study, laid out next in the logical sequence of assimilating arguments: first seeing the argument, then understanding it, and finally agreeing with it. These are: (H1) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more salient than their literal counterparts; (H2) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors produce more political knowledge; (H3) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts. The next chapter explains the operationalization of the concepts of interest and the methodology of this research.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research question of this study is: can presidents reach more effectively Millennials by using High Definition Metaphors when publicly communicating plans and measures meant to advance their legislative agenda? In order to address this question I use an experimental design to test three hypotheses: (H1) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more salient than their literal counterparts; (H2) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors produce more political knowledge; (H3) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts.

This chapter begins by explaining why this methodological choice suits best the research question. Researchers opt for experiments when they test precise concepts, have limited scopes, and when they advance propositions for the future instead of observing facts or phenomena that already occurred — all of which fit this study. Most importantly, experiments are powerful methodological tools for explaining causality. Additionally, experiments represent an ascending trend in political science in the U.S. While welcoming the occurrence of this new methodological preference, American Political Science Association has issued precise guidelines for reporting experiments, similar to the CONSORT standards utilized in medical research, which I follow in this study (Gerber et al., 2014). Next, I discuss the sensitivities of the particular type of experiment that I use, a between groups test only design, where the treatment is applied only

once, at the same point in time for all the participants. Randomization is particularly important in this type of experiment, which I discuss in conjunction with the concerns for the generalizability power of inferences from experiments conducted with student samples; since I analyzes Millennials, these concerns are limited.

Then, as part of the operationalization section, I describe the experiment and the four groups resulted from the four different treatments: (1) message containing metaphors for the topic of high involvement, (2) messages with metaphors for the topic of low involvement, (3) message without metaphors for the topic of high involvement, and (4) message without metaphors for the topic of low involvement. The next section covers the conceptualization and detailed measurement strategies for the variables of interest: High Definition metaphor as independent variable, involvement as the main control variable, and the three dependent variables message salience (visibility), political knowledge (message comprehension), and persuasion (agreement with the message). I then describe the instrumentation: the sequence of questions in the questionnaire and the treatments (messages with and without metaphors). Aspects regarding the content of the messages such as realism, recency and ideological accents, end this section. The report of the topic involvement study, conducted prior to the actual experiment to determine which topics are of high and low involvement and the CONSORT flow diagram make the transition to the next chapter, in which I report the results.

Why Experiment?

The purpose of this study is to test presidential messages' appealability to young audiences by using verbal imagery, particularly High Definition Metaphors. The specificity of the concepts analyzed here and the precise goal of this explanatory study justify the choice for an

experimental design – which is well suited to “relatively limited and well-defined concepts and propositions” (Babbie, 2011, p.246-247). Additionally, analyzing possibilities instead of facts already accomplished calls for experimentation, a method that addresses what “will be” instead of “what it is” (Rossman, 2002, p.98).

Experiments are powerful methods because of their strength in testing the causal relationship between the variables involved. In other words, since any research question involves a proposed cause and an expected (or already observed) outcome, researchers try to detect the relationship between these two “sides,” specifically to establish whether there is correlation or even causality. Causality is the golden prize in empirical research. In classic terms, three factors were first considered to define causality: (1) cause and effect are close in time, (2) cause occurs prior to the effect, and (3) the effect does not take place when the cause is not present (Hume, as summarized in Field and Hole, 2003). However, these rules define correlation, a certain relationship between cause and effect, but not causality, because not even high degrees of correlation support logically the conclusion that the proposed cause determines the proposed outcome. In order to address this issue, John Stuart Mill (as cited in Field and Hole, 2003) added another criterion to the effort of qualifying a relationship as causal: *no other* phenomenon or cause can explain the effect. In other words, if one cannot eliminate other possible causes, then one cannot safely infer that the proposed explanation is the correct one.

One of the best ways to ensure the ruling out of other possible explanations is, as Field & Hole (2003) observe, by comparing two situations, one containing the proposed cause and the other not containing it – the essence of experimental designs. Consequently, this study uses an experiment by comparing two instances, one containing metaphorical messages and one containing non metaphorical messages, with the purpose to establish whether there is causality

between metaphor and a series of effects (salience, political knowledge, and agreement with the message).

The Increasing Trend of Experiments

Although being fashionable does not justify per se the preference for a specific design, the methodological choice of this study is part of a new trend of experimental options in political science, analyzed by Druckman, Green, Kuklinski, and Lupia (2006). The authors observe that until two decades ago political science seemed self-constrained methodologically by Lowell's (1910) remark that "politics is an observational, not an experimental science" (p.7). They confirm the limited use of experiments in this discipline in a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) analysis of the articles published by the *American Political Science Review* since 1906. Druckman et al.'s (2006) study shows that experiments were not used steadily in political science research – at least not with their contemporary meaning, as precisely defined methodological options – until 1992. Specifically, over 50 percent of the articles fitting this definition appeared only after that year, thus indicating the relative newness of the experimental trend in political science. Although motivated fundamentally by the research question in its methodological choice, the present study contributes as well to this increasingly popular trend of experimentation that opens now political science to the whole array of methodological options in empirical research.

Purposes of Experiments Applied to this Design

Roth (1995) identified three purposes of experiments: "searching for facts", "speaking to theorists", and "whispering in the ears of princes" (p.22). One of the most famous studies fitting

the first category of purposes is Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder's (1982) experimental research in agenda setting, as noted by Druckman et. al (2006). The television news' effects on the public could not have been scientifically assessed with other methodology than an experiment, which permitted the isolation of the cause and the identification of the effects in public's agenda, thus responding to the "search for facts" goal. Similarly, I test the existence of a causal relationship between metaphorical communication on the one side and salience, political knowledge, and persuasion, on the other side. While doing that, I search for parameters that could influence attention to political news, knowledge of politics, and policy preferences, in the only methodological fashion appropriate.

The second category of Roth's purposes, underscores that experiments "speak to theorists". A study that represents this category—according to the same analysis of the *American Political Science Review*—is the classic experiment of Quattrone and Tversky (1988) that measured people's sensitivity to losses versus gains when examining political propositions. Their findings contradict the rational choice theory, according to which people's preferences toward a program do not depend on the way it is presented. Instead, the authors revealed, with the help of an experimental design, that framing matters, thus challenging a major theoretical model in psychology. This study tries to "speak to theorists", too, by applying elements of powerful theoretical frames such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a, 1986b; Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981) to specific categories and on certain communicational avenues. Additionally, I engage a polychromatic, interdisciplinary framework in this experimental design by mixing various approaches from political science, linguistics, leadership, cognitive and social psychology, political communication, marketing, and media studies.

The last purpose from the Roth's list ("whispering in the ears of princes") is illustrated in Druckman et al.'s (2006) study by the Gerber and Green's (2000) experimental research of campaign mobilization. Using administrative records, the authors concluded that face-to-face mobilization is more effective than phone calls or direct mail. This analysis was conducted through a field experiment. Understandably, studies like these capture the attention of campaigns and decision makers, or of the "princes" of politics, in Roth's lingo. They are especially valued during campaigns, when political communication becomes extremely innovative. Sometimes these innovations are driven by research – there is a "secret science of winning campaigns" (Issenberg, 2012, p.1) – and other times they are the reflections of political consultants' expertise, virtuosity, or simply intuition. In this experiment I try to go along these efforts by adding to the scientific, quantitative perspective and by proposing a benefit beyond the campaign season. This work tries to speak to the princes by proposing strategic message designs beneficial to presidents and their communication consultants.

In summary, all these advantages and reasons played an obvious role in the methodological selection of the experimental design, considered the most suited choice for addressing the tri layered research question of whether presidents can reach more effectively the Millennials by using High Definition Metaphors when communicating plans and measures meant to advance their legislative agenda. Reaching the Millennials is assessed by measuring the metaphors' effects on increasing the message's salience (visibility), the political knowledge of the receivers as comprehension of the message) and the message's persuasive power (agreement with the message) when communicated to young audiences. To test these claims I compare the effects from the experimental condition to with those from the control condition.

The operationalization of this design, presented in detail later in this study, follows a necessary discussion of taxonomy, randomization, and sampling.

Taxonomy

This research utilizes a 2x2 between groups post test only experiment in a design that falls at the intersection of lab experiments and survey experiments, according to the recent definitions proposed in political science (Gerber et al., 2014). The taxonomy for this particular type of experiment is discussed here from two perspectives: first in regard with the defining guidelines from the discipline for the non- field experiments and second, by explaining the specificity of between groups post test only experiments.

Mixed category. Invested with the mission of setting rules for reporting experiments in political science research, The Standards Committee of the Experimental Research Section of the American Political Science Association (APSA) has advanced new definitions and distinctions between lab experiments and survey experiments (Gerber et al., 2014). According to these standards, lab experiments are limited to “studies conducted in a laboratory environment that involved viewing video, any interaction of subjects with other participants, multiple waves . . . and/or a cognitive distracter task that could not have been completed through an alternative surveying method” (Gerber et. al, 2014, p.83). The Standards Committee indicates that, on the other side, survey experiments “include not only those administered via a traditional survey mode but also any experiment carried out in a laboratory that could have been conducted in an identical fashion through one of the common survey formats” (Gerber et al, 2014, p.83).

The experiment for this study takes place in a classroom setting, which could be approximated to the conditions of a laboratory. It involves a cognitive distracter, as participants

are asked to read the presidential message for a limited period of time (exposure to the treatment). These would qualify it as a lab experiment. However, this experiment is administered in its entirety via a paper survey, designed in a traditional format, which corresponds to the definition of survey experiments. Consequently, as it reunites elements from both definitions, this experiment falls at the intersection between lab experiments and survey experiments categories instead of fitting into one category or the other. This confirms the difficulty of establishing a precise taxonomy for non-field experiments in political science invoked by the members of the Standards Committee of Experimental Sections of the APSA.

Between groups post test only experiment. This research's design is a between groups post test only experiment. This means that for each of the conditions are used separate groups of subjects and participants' behaviors are measured only once, after the administration of the treatment. This is the opposite of the within subjects models, where participants are tested multiple times, based on the number of conditions in the experiment.

The use of between groups experiments has obvious advantages, as highlighted by Field and Hole (2003). The first one is simplicity, the only concern being randomization (on which I will expand later). Second, there is less risk for experimental fatigue, as participants do not attend different waves and multiple measurements; exposure to the treatment is a one step action in this case. Third, the between groups model is the only experimental choice when participation in one condition modifies the subject in a way that makes impossible his/her involvement in another condition, which leads to clear distribution of groups. This is the case of the present study: once a participant is exposed to the HD Metaphors from the message he/she cannot unlearn those terms in order to be later exposed to the no metaphorical form of the same message.

On the other hand, between groups experiments have some disadvantages. Among these are the need for large participation and less sensitivity to the experimental manipulation, since it is administered to different individuals. From these two downfalls, the latter is the most critical as it carries the risk of generating too much “noise” (unsystematic variance) because of the differences between the individuals composing the experimental group and the individuals composing the control group (Field & Hole, 2003). Since people are not identical, it is hard to keep everything else the same when the treatment is varied. The solution to alleviate this concern is randomization.

The specific subcategory of between groups design, the post test only, utilized in this research, and has a greater risk to generate unsystematic variance. If randomization fails it is hard to know whether this failure occurred or not. As opposed to the pre test/post test subcategory, where participants are tested prior to entering the conditions of the experiment — which provides some insurance that the groups are equivalent — in the post test only design participants from all the groups are only measured once, after the treatment. Consequently, one can never know with perfect certainty whether randomization produced equivalent groups in a post test only model, as Field & Hole (2003) explain. The following subsection expands on randomization, its overall importance in experimental design, and its ability to minimize the aforementioned risks.

Randomization

Every discussion about experiments underlines the importance of randomization. However, randomization is absolutely essential in between groups models because of their specificity. The essence of this experiment is to compare the outcomes of the proposed cause

between all the groups involved, which means that the groups' equivalence is crucial. This can be acquired by random allocation of the subjects to the experimental conditions (Field & Hole, 2003). In strict methodological terms, one needs to isolate the outcome of the independent variable to rely on the fact that the true scores are the results of this variable as opposed to of others – or, in statistical lingo, that we have more *systematic* variance than *unsystematic* variance.

Another way of explaining in statistical terms the logic of the between groups model is the necessity to “detect the signal, despite the noise” (Field & Hole, 2003, p.91) or to have a ratio between the signal and the noise that is in favor of the former. In this metaphor, *signal* is the true score that I am trying to measure and *noise* is comprised of: “a score for ‘other things’ that we are measuring inadvertently, systematic bias, and random error” (Field & Hole, 2003, p.91). The stronger the signal, the more the unwanted noise will be obscured or, in other words, the more the other differences between groups than the manipulation will be reduced. As suggested, randomization of the allocation of participants in groups is the only way to blur the noise in the between groups model.

This element is taken into account when designing and conducting the experiment for this study. The four sets of questionnaires, including four different treatments, are systematically randomized prior to the experiment (in the 1,2,3,4 sequence) and then randomly distributed in classrooms to the participants, at the time of the experiment (See more details in the section about reporting the experiment).

Sample and Population

The subjects of this experiment are undergraduate students from a major public university in the southeast of the United States. A particular discussion is in order here in regard to sampling and population, on which inferences are made from experimental designs, in general, and from this experiment in particular. The increasing preference for experiments in political science that led to frequent student involvement as subjects spurred a debate within the discipline regarding the soundness of the inferences about the national population when interpreting the results of such experiments (Krupnikov & Levine, 2014). Indeed, whereas experiments are strong in terms of internal validity, their external validity is in general problematic because one cannot always draw pertinent conclusions applicable outside of the experimental circumscriptions (McDermott, 2011).

Nevertheless, a recent study, also experimental, found that student samples and diverse, national adult national samples “behave consistently and in line with theoretical predictions” when factoring in the right moderators (Krupnikov & Levine, 2014, p.59). This study compared the characteristics and behaviors of three samples: students at a university from Midwest, an adult convenience sample recruited from Amazon via Mechanical Turk, and a diverse national sample recruited via YouGov. Specifically, the concerns were that student samples are too narrow to support generalizability because of their cognition and savvy; thus, adult samples are more appropriate in this regard. Surprisingly, Krupnikov and Levine’s (2014) findings did not support these concerns, instead suggesting that the convenience adult samples do not produce replicable results, either. Additionally, the demographics comparison indicated that the adult convenience sample from M Turk is in fact younger and better educated than the national adult sample and it was comprised of undergraduate students in a large proportion (20 percent). This

suggests that adult samples do not necessarily “perform” better than student samples, which means that they should not be regarded as having more generalizability power.

Consequently, inferences for the national population when students participate in experiments are not necessarily inferior to those resulted from adults’ recruitment. Although this study does not make inferences regarding the whole adult population (only about the young adults), any possible suspicions regarding the external validity based on sample issues are significantly alleviated by Krupnikov and Levine’s (2014) conclusions. A reasonable concern remains, of course, how representative this experiment's sample is for the whole generation of Millennials (see more details in Howe & Strauss, 2000; Howe & Strauss, 2007). This concern is somewhat addressed by the diversity of the student population at this public university and the high numbers of the self reported politically independents, which are distinctive feature of this generation.

Operationalization

According to the classic view of Karl Popper (1959), the only logically sound avenue that a researcher can take when advancing scientific theoretical proposition is to eliminate the opposed view, instead of trying to confirm the proposition. He argued that no matter how many times a theory is corroborated there is still not enough evidence to assert its absolute truth since each theory is waiting to be falsified. Consequently, Popper claims that a theory becomes better corroborated with each failed attempt to falsify it. Along these lines, empirical studies test hypotheses by aiming to reject the corresponding null hypotheses. In this research three hypotheses are tested : (H1) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more salient than their literal counterparts, (H2) Presidential messages containing High

Definition Metaphors determine more political knowledge, and (H3) Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts. The null hypotheses are the negations of these claims.

Design and Groups

In order to test the hypotheses I design a 2x2 between groups post test only experiment. Because the subjects' interests in the topic of public affairs could play an important role in the variation of the dependent variables, I construct two messages in reference to two different topics – one of high interest (high involvement) and another of low interest (low involvement). The levels of involvement in the topic are determined based on previous class questionnaires and on additional measurements in each questionnaire of the experiment. Each of these two messages has a version that includes HD Metaphors and a version without HD Metaphors, resulting in four types of messages, and implicitly in four groups :Group 1 (metaphor x high involvement topic), Group 2 (metaphor x low involvement topic), Group 3(literal message x high involvement topic), and Group 4 (literal message x low involvement topic). From the four groups, the two receiving messages containing metaphors constitute the experimental condition and the other two receiving messages that do not contain metaphors constitute the control condition. This basic description of the research design is necessary to understand the next two sections discussing measurements and instrumentation.

Measurements

This section covers the measurements for the variables of interest in the experimental design. High Definition Metaphors represent the main independent variable. As this study is

concerned with measuring their effects at different levels of interest in the topic of the message that they accompany, I discuss involvement, another variable of interest. From the control variables, I particularly discuss political sophistication. Then I explain the measurement strategies for the three dependent variables, salience, political knowledge, and persuasion.

Independent variable: High Definition Metaphors. One of the novelties of this study is the proposition of a special category of metaphors, labeled High Definition (HD) metaphors, which represents the treatment in this experiment and the independent variable. Three elements characterize this type of metaphors in the conceptualization of this study: (1) policy- thrust, (2) novelty, and (3) relevance to the audience.

Policy- thrust. The policy-thrust feature is an adaptation of the policy- metaphors model of public opinion (Schlesinger & Lau, 2001; Lau & Schlesinger, 2005). This model is concerned with the societal archetypes and their role in processing policy proposals, as discussed in the previous chapter. I apply elements from this view when referring to metaphors that encapsulate a policy proposal, a political measure or a plan – all meant to advance the presidential legislative agenda. The policy thrust feature distinguishes between policy programs (of interest in this study) and trivial presidential communication, such as characterizations of transient events that do not concern the president’s legislative agenda or remarks regarding other political actors, which are unrelated to this scope.

The presidential messages are designed here as written, relatively short and direct statements, which HD Metaphors are expected to spice up. These are some of the requirements of digital communication (widely utilized by Millennials) and, although the messages are not customized for a specific site or platform, this research aims to bridge the two relatively disconnected ends of the communication continuum: presidents and Millennials. In simpler

words, this study tries to bring “hard” politics of the presidential legislative agenda into the “soft” channels of digital communication, with the hope to engage the interest of the young public.

Examples of metaphors that meet the policy- thrust criteria, which were either coined by presidents themselves or by mainstream media during each presidency are the NEW DEAL (Franklin Roosevelt), STAR WARS (Ronald Reagan era), and OBAMACARE (Barack Obama era). However, other metaphors, such as RISING TIDE OF PROSPERITY or HAVE STRANGLED OUR POLITICS from the president Obama’s first inaugural speech —analyzed by Charteris- Black (2014, p.184) — do not have the policy-thrust feature, as conceptualized here because they do not summarize a policy proposal, a measure, or a platform meant to advance the presidential legislative agenda.

Another way of explaining the policy thrust feature is via political communication research, by looking at it as a category of a special narrative, where narrative is defined as a structured story that contains a problem and offers a solution (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). Narratives are the substance of political communication and can be persuasive when they contain clear, memorable messages transported by political metaphors (Westen, 2007). Policy thrust, as defined in this study, goes in the same direction, since it involves a problem and a solution, which are at the core of any policy. In this light, it is evident that the metaphors RISING TIDE OF PROSPERITY and HAVE STRANGLED OUR POLITICS do not have the stature of powerful narratives, since they do not discuss problems and actionable solutions; they are only (inspired) political characterizations.

In this experiment, I use two main HD Metaphors, corresponding to the two topics of involvement. First, SOLAR POWER GONE VIRAL encapsulates the fictitious presidential

proposition of stimulating the usage of the solar power in all the households across the U.S., as part of the actions to address the climate change (the topic of high). The second HD metaphor, SHARE FARE announces a fictitious retirement facilities reform (a topic of low interest); this plan involves sharing of the costs of living in a retirement facility between the government and the citizens when opening Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA), as a solution to the problem of dwindling resources for the social security system. Therefore, each of these HD Metaphors contains the essence of a concrete political proposition. They are accompanied by additional information, since one metaphor cannot exhaust by itself all the aspects of a policy. Therefore, with the limited help of a couple of explanations, destined to make the message fully comprehensible, HD Metaphors that meet the first criterion of policy thrust can illustrate satisfactorily the presidential measure from the legislative agenda.

Novelty. The second attribute of HD Metaphors is novelty. Novelty refers to a new metaphor or the application of an old metaphor to a new and unexpected context. Sopory and Dillard (2002) summarize novelty in their meta- analysis of 29 studies about metaphors and persuasion, as “expressions that create new information about the target” (p.390). They explain that conventionalized metaphors such as THE LEG OF THE TABLE do not qualify as novel although they are technically metaphors. The novelty attribute was tested in Sopory and Dillard’s (2002) meta- analysis, which found that novel metaphors are more persuasive than old metaphors; this finding explains the attention to the novelty in this study.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003) distinguish, too, between old metaphors and new metaphors. They observe that old, or conventional metaphors, have been already assimilated in the language, constituting the “ordinary conceptual system of our culture” (1980, 2003, p. 139). One example of a metaphor that has become a cliché is TIME IS MONEY. On the other hand,

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) note that new metaphors “can give new meaning to our past, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe” (p. 139) because they are creative and imaginative, as LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART illustrates.

In conclusion, I use aspects from both, otherwise similar, perspectives in defining novelty as an attribute of newly created metaphorical expressions or of the application of old metaphors to new and unexpected contexts. Examples of presidential novel metaphors are the two metaphors, RISING TIDE OF PROSPERITY and HAVE STRANGLED OUR POLITICS, from Charteris- Black’s (2014, p.184) selection. However, as already mentioned, these two cases do not have the policy-thrust feature because they do not encapsulate a policy proposal, a measure, or a plan meant to advance the president’s legislative agenda. A good illustration of the type of metaphors that meet both criteria would be STARTUP AMERICA (a White House initiative to promote entrepreneurship across the country), OBAMACARE (the title used in mainstream media for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, that reformed healthcare in the U.S.) ,from Obama’s presidency, or NEW FRONTIER, the metaphor used by John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s to announce a governmental program and to set the stage of a new style of governing and its challenges. All these metaphors are novel because they either apply a classic image to a new context or they simply create a new image.

The two main HD Metaphors utilized in this study, SOLAR POWER GONE VIRAL and SHARE FARE, are novel as they have been designed for the purpose of this experiment to reflect the fictitious plans announced by an (also) fictitious president. I created them by applying common terms used in digital media such as “viral” and “share” to newly fabricated contexts, which are the presidential initiatives. From this perspective both metaphors meet the novelty requirement.

Relevance to the audience. The third feature of the HD Metaphors, relevance to the audience, refers to the utilization of specific metaphors to which the audience can relate. This is particularly important because the modern techniques of micro and nano casting facilitate the “personalization and customization of campaign messaging” (West, 2013, p.7) and because social media and new technologies allow candidates to reach groups or even individuals (e.g. Barker et al, 2012; West, 2013; Issenberg, 2012). In this context, communicators strive to address aspects that matter to their targeted audience as opposed to the generic approaches. One step on these avenue is the use of familiar words, among which, I suggest, are the metaphors with relevance to the audience.

In the actual political communication during campaigns many creative metaphors have been designed in order to reach various targets. As indicated previously, micromarketing practices presuppose now careful analyses of the audience or personas of groups and subgroups, containing more details than the broader categories of “NASCAR dads” (2004), “Hockey moms” (2008), or “Joe the Plumber” (2008), obtained by cross listing various features. These analyses yield granular reports that provide fine clues for the types of message (and the metaphors) than could be constructed in order to resonate with specific audiences. From this perspective, this study’s approach is not entirely new, as marketing analysts and social marketing strategists have been trying in the last decade in various ways to adapt each message to the specifics of the audiences. Nevertheless, what is new in the digital environment of the last years is the possibility to identify very small (nano) groups even individuals from the targeted audience – called the “optimal targeted audience” (Barker et al., 2012, p.48) – and to resonate with them by using intelligent, customized packages. This nano- approach (although not with the designated purpose of creating metaphors) was successfully utilized in Obama’s campaigns (Issenberg,

2012). In this study, I welcome these techniques' applications in presidential communication, aside from political campaigns. However, as I do not engage a team of marketing researchers in this study, I do not go down to a very fine level in collecting information about individual participating in the experiment in order to construct metaphors that meet in detail the relevance to the audience requirement. Instead, the metaphors used in this study are constructed by using digital terms in the hope to relate to the main characteristic of Millennials, digitalism (Pew Research Center, 2014).

This feature is based on the finding of the Pew Research Center's survey on Millennials in adulthood that characterizes Millennials as "digital natives" (Pew Research Center, 2014, para.7), as a result of their familiarity with digital media and social media networks. One of the elements supporting this label is that Millennials use in their overwhelming majority (81 percent) Facebook, the largest digital network in the world. Similarly, a poll conducted by the Harvard Institute of Politics in 2015 indicates high usage of social media among Millennials: 83 percent have Facebook accounts, 44 percent are on Instagram, and 39 percent of them are on Twitter. Most recent numbers confirmed the overwhelming presence of Millennials (91 percent) on Facebook (DMR/Facebook Statistics, 2016). These are only a few examples of Millennials' digitalism, the feature that I use in this study in building metaphors for presidential messages. Although the vocabulary and the interests of Millennials are, obviously, not exclusively digital, for the purpose of this study HD Metaphors are constructed with digital terms in order to fulfill the requirement of the third feature.

A further question was which terms from the digital vocabulary to use in constructing the message. The sources for Millennials' slang are colorful and various, revealing several trends but not an established vernacular, universally embraced. For example, MTV Insights, part of the

MTV research on the young generation, lists preferences for *N.A.R.P* (not a real person), *#Boom* (an extra exclamation), *Wifed- Up* (guy friend hangs out with his lady too much), *Getting Swole* (short for swollen), *White Girl Wasted* (someone who had a little too much to drink), aside from the famous *chillax* (calm down, relax) and *YOLO* (you live only once – whose meaning evolved into “reckless or stupid decision” after oversaturated use) (Curran, 2012). Additional aspects regarding the slang surfacing from a MTV study “What Millennials Are Just Sayin” refers to the influence of gaming, texting, the tabloid culture, and of the reality TV and its expressions in the digital space by abbreviations, authenticity, and lyric speak (B&C Staff, 2012). The dominant space where this slang evolves is social media, where communication has unlimited potential, while striving for concision and fun.

An additional source explored was the traditional Oxford Dictionaries that declare annually a Word of the Year, based on its usage in the common language, mostly measured on digital media. *Selfie* (a photo of oneself) was the winner in 2013 and *vape* (to “smoke” an electronic cigarette) was the word of the year in 2014. Interestingly, in 2015, Oxford Dictionaries did not choose a word, but a pictograph: 😂 *face with tears of joy*, reflecting the increasing popularity of emoji in global communication— as resulted from statistical measurements conducted in partnership with the mobile technology SwiftKey. This research revealed that the emoji *face with tears of joy* represented 17 percent of all emoji used in the US and 21percent of all emoji utilized in the UK (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015).

Other sources list *F4F- Follow for Follow* (follow me and I will follow you), *L4L – Like for Like* (like my photo and I’ll like yours), according to Popular Instagram Hashtags (2015) or *bae* (before anything else), *basic* (unsophisticated), *boo* (beau) , *Daddy-O* (a term from the 1950s that means to be the best man possible), *fleek* (perfection, a combination of the words “fly” and

“sleek”), *fuddy-duddy* (crabby and no-fun individual), *ratchet* (insult directed at a person considered lowbrow and undesirable), *swag* (stylish, interesting, cool), *tubular* (a term from the 1980s that means “awesome” or “cool”), *twerk* (a suggestive dance move that involves moving hips and rear (Bronson, 2015).

A fundamental observation is that the numerous lists of words compounding the Millennials’ slang overlap only partially. Moreover, even the awarded “words of the year” are utilized with different meanings and more or less frequently in communication across social networks, based on the geographical locations of the users and on other criteria that go beyond the limits of this study. This variegated landscape of the digital vocabulary explains the selection of very basic terms utilized across the digital media in constructing the High Definition Metaphors contained in the experimental messages. The use of basic terms seems a better alternative to going with the more fashionable choices listed above, since it was critical for these formulas to be fully understood and relevant enough to the audience. For example, I use *viral*, which means popular, widely spread and *share*, meaning to distribute on digital media, a basic option on Facebook that allows the sharing of information, pictures, links or posts within one’s network. In real life and with more marketing potential and workforce, data mining can reveal with much more accuracy the specific slang utilized by the target audience.

Therefore, in this experiment, the High Definition Metaphors, SOLAR POWER GONE VIRAL and SHARE FARE are considered relevant to the audience due to the utilization of the basic terms “viral” and “share” with the meanings assigned in social media. I use the term viral to indicate the intention of the presidential initiative to spread the usage of the solar power across the U.S. for the global warming topic and I use the term share to illustrate the distribution of costs between government and seniors for the social security topic. I also include several

auxiliary digital metaphors to support the information carried by the “main” metaphors, thus enhancing the digital flavor of the treatment, as detailed in the section dedicated to the treatment of this study. The literal counterparts of the messages, administered to the control groups, do not contain any of these metaphors, neither the main, nor the auxiliary ones, as it is essential to differentiate the metaphorical messages from the non metaphorical ones. (More details on this aspect in the section dedicated to instrumentation). In conclusion, the High Definition Metaphors are the metaphors that meet the features of policy thrust, novelty, and relevance to the audience. They represent the stimulus and the independent variable in this experiment.

Control variables. The control variables in this study are involvement (of special interest) and a series of demographics, expected to measure other than general characteristics, opinion and beliefs, as well as media habits.

Involvement .The concept of involvement has an important role in this study’s design as I also explore the metaphors’ effects (if present) at different levels of involvement in the topic that they accompany. Therefore a discussion of the various meanings that researchers from the literature of persuasion, public relations, and psychology assigned to it is necessary. Although involvement was used in many studies, it was difficult to conceptualize it in a form to reach consensus across disciplines; sometimes it was labeled as a “vague metaconcept” (Salmon, 1986, p.244). However the scholarly efforts aiming to analyze the role of involvement in persuasion identified three perspectives in the literature on defining the concept. This taxonomy includes value- relevant involvement, impression- relevant and outcome-relevant involvement (Johnson & Eagly, 1989) and it was followed by attempts to develop and validate measurement scales for each type (e.g. Cho & Boster, 2005).

The value -relevant involvement is “the psychological state that is created by the activation of attitudes that are linked to important values” (Johnson & Eagly, 1989, p.290). The impression- relevant involvement is defined as “the individual’s concern with the consequences of his response or with the instrumental meaning of his opinion” (Zimbardo, 1960, p. 87). The third category, the outcome relevant, considers involvement as “the extent to which the attitudinal issue under consideration is of personal importance “(Petty & Cacioppo, 1979, p.1915).

From the three perspectives on involvement I select the third category for this study: the outcome- relevant involvement. Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman (1981) used this view in their research regarding the role of involvement in argument based persuasion, as part of the work building the elaboration likelihood model, already invoked across this paper. I consider this outcome- based view in conceptualizing involvement as relevant because the purpose is to assess how attractive and engaging the presidential messages containing metaphors can be for audiences who consider certain topics as having or not having personal importance to themselves. In this light, it is important for this study to identify which topics are considered as having important outcomes for the audience and which ones are not.

Across the literature that examines the public behavior topics are selected in various ways with more or less details included in analyses. For example the Policy Agenda Project lists 20 major topics and 220 subtopics in their Codebook of 2014, built originally by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant numbers SBR 9320922 and 0111611 and distributed through the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin (Policy Agenda Project, 2013, 2014). For the purpose of this study (which was not to assess complex public topics and subtopics) I constructed for pre-test a

list of only seven topics. I did this by selecting from the most and the lowest priorities regarding public policies reported by a Pew Research study of the public's priorities (2015i).

The Pew report listed 16 topics, enumerated here in descending order, as they were prioritized by the age 18-29 group (corresponding close enough to Millennials): educational system, nations' economy, improving job situation, terrorism, reducing crime, reducing health care costs, Medicare system, reducing budget deficit, environment, social security system, scientific research, poor and needy, moral breakdown, race relations, strengthening military, energy, role of money in politics, immigration, global warming, tax reform, global trade, roads, bridges and transit, and influence of lobbyists. From the topics considered most important by Millennials, I selected three from the top tier: educational system (rated by 74 percent of respondents as a should-be priority for Obama and Congress), reducing crime (61 percent) and social security system (57 percent). From the low priority topics, I selected energy (46 percent), global warming (42 percent), and global trade (32 percent) from the lower tier. I also added a seventh topic regarding the public universities' engagement as it was relevant for the university in which this research was conducted.

I used a ten 7-point scale for each topic with 1 indicating "strong disagreement" and 7 indicating "strong agreement". The topics from this list were rated by students from the same university during class discussions several months prior to the experiment. This was necessary in order to identify the high and low involvement topics for designing the messages in the experiment. The analysis of these ratings identified global warming as the high involvement topic and social security as the low involvement topic. (See later in this chapter a detailed report of the results for the topic involvement study and the topic involvement scales in Appendix 1).

In the actual experiment I measure the variable involvement in the topic addressed by the presidential message on a standard four 7-point scale with one point for “strongly disagree” and seven points for “strongly agree”. The most reliable four items are selected from the pre -test measurements of the interest in topic. The statements are, for the global warming/climate change topic: “ I think about global WARMING/CLIMATE CHANGE a great deal”;”I am concerned about the GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE”;”GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE is an issue that is personally relevant to me”; “GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE is not important to me.” The fourth statement is designed in reverse logic by using the negation “not” in order to minimize the risk for response bias. Similarly, I select the four most reliable items for the SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM topic: “I have strong opinions about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/Retirement facilities reform”, “I think about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/Retirement facilities reform a great deal”, “SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/Retirement facilities reform is an issue that is personally relevant to me”, and “I actively seek information about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/Retirement facilities reform”. In order to determine the level of involvement for each topic, I create a composite measure from these four scales.

Demographics. The demographics in this study are grouped in three categories: general (age, race, gender, education, income, employment, citizenship, policy relevance), psychographics (ideology, partisanship, political sophistication, attention to politics), and media habits (source for political news, digital media use, social media use for politics, familiarity with the digital slang).

Aside from the standard demographics, I introduce a measure to check the family relevance or personal connection to the policy advanced in the presidential message, labeled policy relevance. For the policy regarding the installation of solar power equipment in households I ask participants whether they or their family own a property. For the policy announcing incentives for retirement facilities I ask whether somebody in their family was planning to retire or was already living in a retirement facility. (See also Appendix 2 for the exact wording). I also ask about citizenship status to check for the basic knowledge of English.

In respect with psychographics (demographics that measure opinion, beliefs, and attitudes), I measure ideology based on the three classic categories in the U.S.: conservative, liberal, and independent). Partisanship is measured on a Likert scale with values ranging from one to seven where the categories are Strong Democrat, Weak Democrat, Independent leaning Democrat, Independent, and Independent leaning Republican, Weak Republican, and Strong Republican.

I also measure the political sophistication of the participants by combining the classic factual knowledge methodology utilized in the National Elections Studies and in a whole series of landmark studies of public opinion (e.g. Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996) with questions meant to assess fundamental aspects of the American government design. Specifically, I include a mix of three questions regarding the basics of the American government and two questions referring to current public figures in the U.S. The general questions refer to the three branches of the American government, the major political parties in the US, and the legislative source for the freedom of the press and are inspired by a test bank provided by Cengage Learning as ancillary product for *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government* (Geer et al., 2016). The questions measuring minimal knowledge of current politics ask for the names of the

Chief Justice and the Secretary of State. The sum of the correct answers to the general and current questions, ranging from none to five, is the index for political sophistication. (See Appendix 2 as well, for the wording of these questions).

For exploratory purposes I gather data regarding the media consumption habits, with details about preferences and frequencies. The media habits measurements are adapted from the Pew Research Center's methodology to determine participants' access and interest to news about government and politics (See Appendix 2 for the questions' wording regarding the demographics).

Dependent variables. The three dependent variables in this study are message salience (visibility), political knowledge (message comprehension), and persuasion (agreement with the message), discussed here in the order mentioned in the hypotheses.

Message salience (visibility). The first hypothesis predicts that presidential messages containing HD Metaphors are more salient than those not containing HD Metaphors. In other words, I expect that a message containing this type of metaphors to be more noticeable to the audience than its literal counterpart. More specifically, message salience tests the metaphors' ability to "catch the eye" of an audience with limited interest in public affairs, as Millennials appear to be. With this in mind, salience is conceptualized here as visibility, indicating the capacity of the metaphor to get the attention of the audience for that particular message.

A discussion of the concept of salience in political psychology and in political communication (especially in the research on agenda setting) will provide a deeper understanding. I analyze salience on two avenues, one coming from political psychology, as vividness, and another from agenda setting studies that use topic salience.

First, in order to understand salience on the venues of political psychology, we need to review the two classic models that still coexist on the stage of voting behavior: the psychological model of Angus, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) and the rational choice model of Downs (1957). Each model focuses on distinct aspects. The former draws on the subjective psychological attachments to a particular party, which motivates the action, such as casting the vote for that party, whereas the latter claims that people vote for one party or another based on pure rational decisions that are logically congruent with their individual calculations. The cognitive approaches in political psychology brought in this picture a third dimension by emphasizing the influence that personal knowledge has on attitude formation and behavior, as Houghton (2014) observes.

The research in this area has reached agreement today in one aspect that leads to the need for salience in communication of all sorts. This aspect draws on the general psychological limitation of people that makes them to process new information with reduced capacity, as opposed to inventorying all the options that would be necessary to make a rational decision. This “imperfection” is what characterizes the reality of decision making, which means that “we often process information by means of what are generally called cognitive ‘short cuts’ or heuristics “ (Houghton, 2014, p.32-33), already discussed in the context of the elaboration likelihood and heuristic systematic models. This view adds to the concept of *satisficing behavior*, already developed by Simon (1957), which explains that we choose the first available option that seems to satisfy our need, as opposed to analyzing exhaustively the whole list of choices, before making a selection.

This observation casts a special light on the concept of salience by emphasizing what “stands out” in order to bring into attention the first available option. Metaphors in general, and

HD Metaphors in particular, could be the heuristics or the cues that help with increasing the salience of the message that they accompany (However, I do not test here how but only whether they increase the salience). This view coalesces with the memory based theory of voting behavior, which claims that the new political information is deposited in long term memory based on its salience and that “the opinion is a reflection of the information that can be retrieved from memory” (McGraw, 2000, p.813). Approaches like these trigger discussions in cognitive psychology about the relationships between salience, short term memory, and long term memory. Nevertheless, the mechanisms of these relationships are beyond the purpose of this study, as well, and impossible to achieve in a post test only design. Here, I include the variable of salience with the limited purpose of determining whether HD Metaphors (possibly acting as short cuts in information processing) can “spice up” the presidential message, thus making it more visible and easier to remember shortly after exposure. I do not test the effects of metaphors on long term memory or their role in the relationship between short term memory and long term memory.

As previously mentioned, this study conceptualizes salience as visibility which is close to the concept of accessibility of information in the mind, triggered by two functions: vividness, recency, or by both— as the influential work of Tversky and Kahneman (1974) reveals. Particularly, salience, in the understanding of the present study is similar to vividness as the vividness of a message indicates how easily the information from the message can be recalled. This approach has been utilized in studies of the news’ impact as well which posit that once people have access to some issues and these enter their minds, they consider these issues salient because they are easy to recall (Houghton, 2014; Iyengar &Kinder, 1987). It also underlines the

overall importance of salience in studies of political communication and mass media, but especially in the research of agenda setting, the second avenue for explaining salience.

Agenda setting and salience are logically and methodologically interconnected in political communication research. Defined as “a process through which the mass media communicate the relative importance of various issues and events to the public “(Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p 555), agenda setting indicates that the press tells the readers “what to think about” as Cohen (1963, p.13) famously said. Or, in Weaver ‘s (1984), words “concentration by the media over time on relatively few issues leads to the public perceiving these issues as more salient”(p. 682) . Numerous studies of agenda setting place a central role on the salience of the issue, where salience is viewed as issue visibility against other issues or as the ability of an issue to stand out. In this regard, the classic Chapel Hill study of agenda setting conducted by Mc Combs and Shaw (1972) revealed a high correlation between the ranking of issues presented in the media and the ranking of the issues reported by citizens exposed to that media.

These views “attach” salience to the issue, because the scope is to determine whether issues treated as salient in mass media become salient to their audiences as well. Therefore, the focus of these studies is on the topic’s salience and not on a specific message’s salience. Along these lines, issue salience is defined as “the relative importance and significance that an actor ascribes to a given issue on the political agenda” (Oppermann, 2010, p.3; see also Wlezien, 2005). Or, salient issues are those issues thought and discussed often with others, in related domains and in close regard to people’s core values and interests (Lavine, Sullivan, Borgida & Thomsen, 1996).

Nevertheless, as specified at the beginning, this study tests the HD Metaphors’ power of increasing the *message* salience, and not *the topic* salience. Underscoring the distinction

between message salience and topic salience is necessary because salience is measured traditionally in political communication in reference to a specific topic and by contrast with non-salient topics, as explained earlier. This study is interested only in testing whether the particular message (not the general topic) becomes more visible to the receiver. For example, for the topic of global warming, where the message contains the measure regarding the governmental support for the use of solar power across the country, the interest is to determine whether audiences pay more attention to what is communicated in the solar power plan, not in general, to the topic of global warming. This is assessed by comparing the values of salience between the experimental and the control groups, while expecting that participants exposed to the metaphorical messages would retain more information about the messages than those who received the non metaphorical versions. Although it is true that message visibility could favor topic visibility, this is not always the case and such testing is beyond the scope of the present research, as well. HD Metaphors are analyzed in this design with a limited scope in regard with the concept of salience: their effect on the particular message.

Considering this conceptualization, I evaluate the message's salience (message visibility) by measuring the information retention from the content of the message. The participants are asked to list as many items as they could recall from the message, with no paraphrasing necessary. I utilize an index of 10 lines for respondents to write the elements that they remember from the message. The tally of the items indicates the message salience, with values ranging from none to ten. Consequently, by summing up the elements recalled from each message to evaluate the message visibility, I use a different methodology than the standard one used in political communication studies that compares rankings of various topics, determined from content analyses of media news shows, newspapers or other sources, with rankings of self

reported interests in topics specified in surveys of citizens who were exposed to the same media channels.

A major concern when measuring salience in this manner is the unsystematic variation, which means that other factors than the presence of the HD Metaphors can influence the levels of salience, specifically how well participants recall the message. These factors could be the individual IQ, memorization capability, attentiveness, emotion, mood, etc., illustrating the problems that occur in experiments in general: researchers cannot control for all the possible variables that could intervene or for all the individual characteristics of the participants in order to reduce the unwanted “noise” and optimize the isolation of the “signal”, in statistics lingo (Field & Hole, 2003). Randomization of the participants alleviates this concern partially, as explained earlier, but it does not eliminate it. This limitation of the present study is acknowledged when interpreting the results.

Political knowledge (message comprehension). The second hypothesis in this study advances the idea that presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors produce more political knowledge or determine a better comprehension of the message than non metaphorical messages do. Therefore, the second dependent variable is political knowledge, which I define as the comprehension of the message along two avenues: (1) understanding its meaning and significance, as well as (2) interpretation of the consequences. The literature of cognitive psychology discusses in detail the information processing models (e.g., Anderson & Lebiere, 1998; Newell, 1990) but the intricacies and the evaluations of the various principles of learning are beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I use an adaptation of Graber’s (2011) view of political knowledge as a reflection of understanding the meaning and significance of politics— by contrast to the mere retention of factual information—— and of Lau and

Schlesinger's (2005) methodology in testing the role of policy frames in cognitive reasoning. These views are bridged by the overarching model of Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003) that asserts the essential and pervasive role of metaphors in processing new information due to their appeal, in the unconscious, to basic experiences. This theory of metaphors matches as well, the findings on the neural basis of language, which suggest that metaphors represent "the neural mechanism that naturally and inevitably recruits sensory-motor inference for use in abstract thought" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.256). This perspective explains the process of understanding and how the new information is acquired, as the authors summarize : "The learning of new metaphors ...involves only the establishment of new neural connections and not the creation of copies of complex inferential machinery" (p.258) and "we gain an explanation for why metaphorical thought exists and why it is normal and inescapable: the regular co-activation of two domains results in the recruitment of neural circuitry linking them" (p. 259). When these links are activated, understanding the meaning and assessing the consequences of the information are then enhanced; this provides a deeper theoretical grounding on the conceptualization of political knowledge.

The two indicators utilized in developing the political knowledge of the message are (1) understanding the meaning and significance of the message and (2) interpretation of the consequences. I construct the first one by designing a set of four true/false statements containing elements that capture the significance of the message and its essential meaning. This approach is similar to Graber's (2012) view in a study on television shows and their influence on political knowledge (which, recall, she labels civic IQ) because it has the same goal of assessing the understanding of politics' ways and means. To Graber political knowledge is "people's understanding of the political world in which they live and their ability to determine the

significance of various situations” (2012, p.9). As part of this complex study on the civic IQ a team of researchers completed and analyzed 171 interviews in the U.S., Greece, and Netherlands with viewers of five television dramas: *The West Wing*, *The Simpsons*, *The Sopranos*, *ER*, and *Friends* in trying to determine whether these shows helped them with learning and understanding politics, thus with increasing their political knowledge. Responses to the open ended and close ended questions revealed that viewers, including in the U.S., do learn about politics from TV dramas although they do not consider them viable sources of information. From the rich list of indicators of learning that Graber and her team utilized in their research I only retain for this study “assessing the types of information most likely to be learned” and “measuring respondents’ ability and inclination to form and express evaluations of situations” (Graber, 2012, p.153). Therefore, I utilize a simplified approach to assess the understanding of meaning and significance by taking into account these two elements when designing a series of four statements in a true/ false format regarding the content of the political proposition contained in the message. A count of the number of the correct answers (ranging from one to four) indicates the level of understanding of the meaning and significance of the message.

A concern for this section is that participants who are highly sophisticated could answer the questions regarding the particular message due to their prior general knowledge of the topic and not because they are exposed to the message. In order to avoid this situation, all the questions for assessing the comprehension of the message are designed in strict reference to the proposition advanced in the message. And, since the proposition is fictitious, it is safe to say that the message comprehension is due to the exposure to the message and not to prior information. For example, all four questions regarding the topic of global warming are related to the actual

presidential plan launched in the message and not to the general issues of global warming. The four true/false statements (from which the first three are false and the fourth is true) are:

- A. The new program encompasses multiple types of renewable energy solutions such as tidal, wind, and geothermal.
- B. The presidential message aims at encouraging businesses, not residential home owners to add solar power to their facilities.
- C. The program launched by the president in this message is limited to a specific category of homeowners, those who have the resources to cover up front the entire costs of the equipment and of the installation.
- D. The homeowners who take advantage of this program will not receive tax credit for their initial contribution if they stop using the solar power equipment and return to conventional sources of energy.

Examples of problematic statements are: “Power plants, the motor of industry, produce most of their energy by burning coal, thus having only limited contribution to the carbon pollution in the US” or “Excess carbon dioxide is damaging to the atmosphere and to the climate of our planet because it traps heat, causing temperatures to rise”. A politically sophisticated respondent or simply a person who has been exposed, unrelated to the experiment, to enough information about climate change could assess these two statements correctly without having to read the message, thus message comprehension (measured this way) would not be an effect of the message per se. This risk is avoided as much as possible by excluding this type of statements.

Similarly, the four true/false statements regarding the topic of social security system are constructed by avoiding the aspects that could be familiar to participants from other sources or prior to the experiment. The statements employed in the study (from which the first two are false

and the last two are true) in order to assess the understanding the meaning and significance of the message of low involvement are:

- A. The plan announced in the president's message is addressed to all workers, regardless of whether they have retirement plans through their employers or not, in order to improve their quality of life at retirement.
- B. The Government does not encourage workers to open IRA accounts on their own because these contributions will lose their value in time.
- C. The sharing of costs between the Government and the workers - as presented in the message - involves people's contribution over the years to IRA accounts, with amounts that will be relevant in qualifying for subsidies of housing expenses in retirement community of different qualities.
- D. The presidential proposal encourages people to plan for the future – which is to make financial decisions today that will be beneficial during the retirement age, instead of depending on the federal aid at that time.

The second indicator of political knowledge measures how participants interpret the potential consequences of the proposed program, in a close adaptation of the Lau and Schlesinger's (2005) model. This influential model considers the interpretation of consequences as a primary function of cognitive frames, aside from the preference formation function; these two functions define cognitive reasoning. I retain in this study only one dimension (interpretation of consequences), which, combined with the indicator of understanding of meaning and significance, give a new connotation to the concept of political knowledge (message comprehension).

Consequently, participants exposed to the message regarding global warming are asked to respond to four questions about possible consequences at different levels: (1) for themselves, (2) for the US population (3) for the US industry and (4) for the whole planet. Those who receive the message on the social security topic are invited to interpret consequences of the proposed program (1) for themselves, (2) for Americans with low income, (3) for Americans with high income, and (4) for the whole country. The capacity to interpret the consequences is measured by counting the number of answers to these questions. Although not perfect, this indicator is especially relevant for the inability to answer the questions, thus suggesting a low comprehension of the message, as Lau and Schlesinger (2005) explain: “Although ability (or willingness) to answer a series of questions captures only some aspects of interpretation, *inability* to answer some of those questions is a very basic measure of *incapacity* to make sense of the cognitive frames “(p.86).

A distinction needs to be made here between the dependent variable political knowledge (message comprehension) and the control variable political sophistication. I do not assess the outcome political knowledge in this experiment in its broad, traditional meaning, as general knowledge of politics, since the scope is to determine whether the comprehension of a *particular* message is enhanced by the presence of metaphors. On the other hand, political sophistication, for which this experiment only controls, determines how much subjects know about politics in general. Therefore, the questions meant to assess the political sophistication of the participants do not pertain to the treatments in this experiment, but to general information about the foundations of the U.S. political system and current public figures. Indeed, there is a logical connection between the comprehension of public policies advanced by *particular* messages and the *general* political knowledge of a system because understanding more and more political

messages leads eventually to an increase of political knowledge, at large. However, I do not test this relationship in this research. In summary, although the literature uses interchangeably the terms political sophistication and political knowledge, in this study these two variables have discrete meanings. Political sophistication, as a control variable, measures how much participants know about politics in general, independently of the message utilized in the experiment, whereas political knowledge of the message, as dependent variable, measures the understanding of the particular presidential proposition. The reason for this distinction is to compare the effects of the metaphors in understanding the message at different levels of political sophistication.

Persuasion (agreement with the message). The third hypothesis of this study tests whether presidential messages containing HD Metaphors are more persuasive than their non metaphorical counterparts. Therefore, the third dependent variable is persuasion, conceptualized as agreement with the message. I measure this variable in a close adaptation of the instrumentation utilized in the study of involvement and the argument based persuasion (Petty et al., 1981), described in the previous chapter. Specifically, respondents are asked to rate the message on a four 9-point semantic differential scale (bad idea/ good idea, beneficial/harmful, unfavorable/favorable, negative/ positive/). One indicates disagreement (bad idea, harmful, unfavorable, and negative) and nine indicates agreement (good idea, beneficial, favorable, and positive). Similarly with the previous scales, I reverse one statement by placing the agreement (beneficial) at the low end and the disagreement (harmful) at the high end. Since the president's propositions are fictitious, no measurement of the attitude toward the message prior to treatment is necessary. For caution, in case the multi item scale of agreement with the message does not prove reliable, I introduce a supplementary measure, a one item 11 points scale that measures the

overall favorability with the message, anchored by “I do not agree at all” at the lower end and by “I agree completely” at the higher end - also used by Petty et al. (1981).

Persuasion is assessed in this traditional way, inspired by the work leading to the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) because of the recognition that this theory has received over the years. Indeed, Booth- Butterfield and Welbourne (2002) show that ELM proved “instrumental in integrating the literature on source, message, receiver, and context effects in persuasion” (p.155), being considered such a powerful frame that can even make possible the establishing of constants, like natural sciences do.

A clarification is in order at this point: although I use the measurement of persuasion from studies leading to the elaboration likelihood model, the present research is only a decoupage of its methodology. ELM is a complex theory that includes other important variables while establishing the two ways of processing and attitude formation, central processing and peripheral processing, based on the level of involvement. For example, variables tested in the ELM, such as argument quality, source credibility, and need for cognition (people’s predisposition to learn new things about the world) are not used here since this study does not test the ELM model. Nor is this study concerned with distinguishing between the central and the peripheral routes of persuasion or their mutual exclusion, especially as the complementary theory to ELM, the heuristic systematic model (Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Todorov et al., 2002) claims that the two routes are employed simultaneously in attitude formation. The only variables relevant for the present research that are extracted from the ELM theory are the personal involvement of the receivers and the agreement with the message, when assessing the persuasiveness of the argument, as dependent variable.

Another important disclaimer is that I do not aim to develop a special measure or a scale of persuasion in this research. This is a complex endeavor, that has preoccupied scholars from many disciplines considering the “immense social consequence” that the practice of persuasion has (Dillard & Pfau, 2002, p. x) and the early interests in rhetoric, since Aristotle. The history of persuasion lists various ways of assessing social influence, attitude formation, and attitude change corresponding to different theoretical models. Because this study has a limited scope, a detailed inventory of the methods and operationalization of persuasion across literature is not included here. As explained earlier, I conceptualize and measure persuasion in a basic but solid way, as favorability to the message.

For exploratory purposes, I also introduce a measure called dissemination of the message, in order to determine whether participants exposed to HD metaphorical messages are also inclined to share on social media or discuss them with others. Specifically, they are asked how likely it is that they would comment, share, or tweet the presidential message or aspects from it if it were posted on social media. It is a one item 9 points scale anchored by “unlikely” at the lower end and “most likely” at the higher end. This measure is not central to this study, which does not focus on the complex analysis of behavior that follow persuasion. I only use it to verify the predictability of behavior from attitude, which is the main purpose of the act of persuasion (Perloff, 2014b) and to check whether HD Metaphors have an effect on the dissemination of the message. This is collateral testing, for exploratory purposes.

Instrumentation

The instrument utilized in this survey -experiment is questionnaire based. Four sets of questionnaires, systematically randomized prior to the experiment, are then randomly distributed

to the participants. The main difference between the questionnaires is the presidential message from the beginning. Each participant receives either one of the following treatments: (1) metaphorical message featuring the topic of high involvement, (2) a metaphorical message featuring the topic of low involvement, (3) literal message featuring the topic of high involvement, and (4) literal message featuring the topic of low involvement (See Appendix 3 for message strategy-conceptual and operational definitions).

Sequence of questions. The first page of each set of questionnaires contains precise instructions: participants are asked to read the message carefully, at their normal pace in the assigned time (3 minutes) and to answer the subsequent questions without revisiting the message. A blank page separates the message from the rest, dividing the two “phases” of the experiment: 1) message treatment and 2) measurement of the effects. (A detailed description of the treatment can be found in the next section). The first question, following the exposure to the treatment, assesses the topic involvement. As earlier discussed, I construct involvement as an index of four statements in two different versions corresponding to each topic, by selecting the most reliable statements based on the results of the pre test. For the questionnaires about global warming, participants are asked to rate on a seven point’s scale how much they think of the topic, how concerned they are about it, how relevant it is for them, and how important it is to them. Similarly, the questionnaires containing messages about social security contain a selection of the four most reliable statements as indicated by the pre- test analysis. These questions ask participants for ratings of the strength of their opinions in relation to the topic, for the level of their concern with the topic, for personal relevance, and for active seeking information about the topic.

A series of questions following the topic involvement measures the effects of the message. Specifically, participants are asked to write on a list containing 10 lines, as many elements as they can recall from the message; the sum of the elements is an indicator of the message salience (visibility) in the understanding of this study, ranging from no salience (when no items are listed to 10 (when 10 items are listed).

Two sets of questions follow in order to measure the second variable, political knowledge (message comprehension). The first set, comprised of four true/false statements regarding the presidential message, measures the understanding of the meaning and significance dimension of political knowledge, ranging from none to four, based on the number of correct answers. No correct answer indicates no understanding and four correct answers indicates high level of understanding. The second set of questions, containing four open-ended questions, measures the second dimension of the political knowledge: interpretation of the consequences of the presidential plan at different levels, ranging from none to four, based on the number of valid responses. No answer or incorrect assessments of the plan announced in the message indicates low understanding of the consequences and four valid answers indicate high level of understanding the consequences. A composite of these two measures, denotes the total level of comprehension. These sections are adapted for each of the two topics, as explained before.

The following two questions assess persuasion, or the attitude toward the message. The first is a four 9-point semantic differential scale (bad idea/ good idea, beneficial/harmful, unfavorable/favorable, negative/ positive) with one indicating disagreement and nine indicating agreement with the message? The second question is an overall assessment of the agreement or disagreement with the message measured on an 11-point scale, anchored by disagreement at one and agreement at 11. A supplementary question follows, asking for the likelihood of

disseminating the message in social media, on a 9 point scale, with one corresponding to “unlikely” and nine to “most likely”. Although action and mobilization (which can be consequential of persuasion) do not fall within the purpose of this study, this measure is considered more of a strengthener of the variable of persuasion and a relatively good indicator of the message’s “shareability” and its propagating power.

The following section of the questionnaires is dedicated to basic demographics, collected in the following order: age, academic level, gender, race, household income, employment, U.S. citizenship. I then include a question designed to detect whether the policy announced in the message is directly relevant to the respondents or their families. This question asks whether the respondent or his/her family owns a property in the U.S. (for the solar power plan) and whether the respondent or his/her family has somebody living or planning to live in a retirement facility for the retirement facilities reform. The negative answer receives value one and the affirmative answer receives value two.

The subsequent questions measure ideology and political sophistication. Ideology is categorical (with conservative, liberal and independent as categories) and political sophistication values, as explained in detail in this chapter, range from one to five, based on the number of correct answers. No correct answer indicates low political sophistication and five indicates high level of political sophistication. Next I collect information about media habits for political news, knowledge of basic digital terms, and total use of digital media, adapted from methodologies employed by Pew Research Center. The first question from this series, measures the general attention to government and politics ranging from one for “I never pay attention” to five for “I always pay attention”. The following question asks for sources for news about government and politics, with categorical values television, Internet, radio, and print. Then I assess the preference

for hard news sources (traditional news channels, quality newspapers' websites, public radio news programs, etc.) versus soft news sources (satirical shows, political entertainment programs, social media, etc.), also a categorical variable. Another question asks participants to indicate which (if any) social media platforms use for political news. I list Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, LinkedIn, and others. I create a measure indicating the total use of social networks, ranging from one to five and categorical measures, as well, for all the social media platforms listed. I then ask participants whether they know the meaning of the word "Selfie" (awarded as the word of the year in 2013 by Oxford Dictionaries) and of the word "digital native", a label that a Pew Study assigned to Millennials (Pew Research Center, 2014). Finally, I measure the overall use of digital media by asking the participants how often they use digital media (on all digital devices combined). These values range from one corresponding to "never" to six, corresponding to "daily" (For the wording of the questions and details of the questionnaires see Appendix 2).

Stimulus. The stimulus in this experimental design is comprised of two messages – corresponding to the high and the low involvement topics. Each of these messages contains a major metaphor plus several supporting metaphors. The main metaphors are SOLAR POWER GONE VIRAL, for the topic of global warming and SHARE FARE for the topic of social security. These metaphors represent the titles of the policies announced in the presidential message, thus they are supposed to have a leading role in understanding and assimilating the message. However, every metaphor, regardless of its suggestive power, needs additional support for a good understanding of an argument. This support could come from information in a literal form or from additional metaphors. In this study, I include several additional metaphors from the same digital vernacular in order to enhance the effect of the leading metaphor.

This particular approach contradicts the idea that the inclusion of more metaphors in a message makes the message less persuasive than when only one metaphor is present (Sopory & Dillard, 2002). The idea that the presence of more than one metaphor leads to diminished persuasion is not new as it was advanced especially in the theories of resource matching and superior organization, described in the previous chapter. The fact that many metaphors cancel each other is probably true when the competing metaphors have the same “intensity” and position, covering similarly important ideas within the message. However, the assumption of the present study is in the opposite direction: a leading metaphor, especially when defining a political proposition, is enhanced by the presence of other metaphors from the same semantic family, with the condition to not compete for the same position within the message with the leading metaphor, such as the title for the program, in this case. Additionally, in order to underscore the importance of the leading metaphor and for pure logical reasons, I mention twice the leading metaphor (the title of the presidential plan) in both versions of the metaphorical messages. For symmetry, I mention twice the non metaphorical titles of the plans in the literal versions of the message as well.

For example, in the message about global warming, the leading metaphor that represents the title of the program for encouraging the use of solar power across America, SOLAR POWER GONE VIRAL, is accompanied by auxiliary metaphors enumerated here in context : “this is the **hash tag** for the solar power plan”; “**oversharing** their toxic emissions”; “these toxic emissions are not **virtual threats** in the **cybersphere**”; “give this idea a *Like* and we will *Share* the costs”; “this plan will have a lot of **followers**, thus spreading the solar power usage across America”. Similarly, the leading metaphor for the social security topic (defining the retirement facility reform) , namely SHARE FARE, is followed by supporting metaphors such as those included in

the sentences: “IRA is a good instrument for planning for the future as it **boosts** your financial **“posts”**; “look at it as a **follow for follow** program”; “why **crash the squad** of the federal budget later when you can start getting settled on your own right away” ; “a **YOLO** decision today will not help in the future, either”; “the more money you contribute to your IRA account, the higher the chances to be **swag** in a retirement community in the future”; “this program is **lit** and **on point!**”.

Other experiments with political metaphors use multiple metaphors in the treatment, as well. For example in his quantitative work about persuasion and metaphors, Hartman (2009) designs a message about the network neutrality legislation using multiple highway metaphors, such as “setting up toll booths on the Internet”, “some companies have access to an express lane”, “the rest are stuck waiting in line” (p.75); however, he does not distinguish between leading and supporting metaphors. All these metaphors are replaced with non metaphorical terms in the other two versions of the treatment, as explained further.

Message without metaphors. The literal counterparts of the messages containing metaphors have the same content, structure and similar length with the messages that include metaphors. The fundamental difference is that metaphors are substituted by non metaphorical words. For example, the titles of the programs, *Solar Power Plan* and the *Retirement Facilities Reform* are the literal versions of *Solar Power Gone Viral* and *Share Fare*, their metaphorical alternatives from the experimental condition. Similarly, in the global warming topic “exposing all of us to their toxic emissions” replaces “oversharing their toxic emissions with all of us”. Or “So if you participate in the program, we will split the costs! I am confident that this plan will be considered attractive, thus spreading the solar power usage across America” is the literal

alternative for “So, give this idea a *Like* and we will *Share* the costs! I am confident that this plan will have a lot of followers, thus spreading the solar power usage across America”.

Examples from the low involvement topic are : “IRA is a good instrument for planning for the future as it multiplies your savings” replacing “IRA is a good instrument for planning for the future as it boosts your financial “posts”; ”If you start contributing, we will contribute, too!” instead of “ Look at it as a *follow for follow* program!”; “Why appeal to the federal budget later when you can start getting settled on your own right away? “ replacing the metaphorical form “Why crash the squad of the federal budget later when you can start getting settled on your own right away?”

Evidently, the symmetry between the metaphorical and the literal forms of the messages is not perfect, but both types of messages are designed to meet this requirement as closely as possible in order to isolate the cause. This symmetry is taken into account not only in regard with the content but also with the format. Both paired messages are relatively the same size, containing the same number of paragraphs and sentences of similar length, and have the same highlights, particularly the name of the programs were italicized in the all four forms of the presidential messages. Additionally, all the messages are administered at the beginning of the experiment, for the same number of minutes and the participants are instructed to not revisit them when answering the questions. In conclusion, the messages from all the four conditions of this experiment are almost identical regarding the format and the length. Additionally, the contents of the messages are similar, as well, in the matters of realism, recency, and ideology, as discussed further.

Content of the messages. When conducting experiments it is essential to isolate the independent variable of interest while keeping everything else the same. Because in this study I

compare four groups between each other , not only two, it is important to have stimuli with similar characteristics for all the conditions. Specifically, it is not enough to have similar messages between the metaphorical and the non metaphorical conditions (the only difference being the presence of metaphors) but also between the low involvement and the high involvement topics. This refers to the content of the message as well, all messages being inspired from real presidential plans advanced during Obama administration.

Realism and recency. As mentioned earlier in the study, the two topics on which I construct the messages resulted from assessing students' involvement at the same university at an earlier date. This revealed global warming as the high interest topic and retirement facilities reform as the topic of low interest. Although fictitious, the messages utilized in the experiment do not exist in an informational vacuum, but in connection with existing programs at the date of the experiment. Specifically, the White House's website describes in detail one of President Obama's second term signature program, *The Clean Power Plan*, that "sets achievable standards to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 32 percent from 2005 levels by 2030" (White House, 2016, *Climate change and president Obama's action plan. The Clean Power Plan*, para.1). For realism, I include some of its basic elements in the presidential messages of this experiment.

Similarly, the low topic message borrows elements from the *Strengthening Retirement* section of the White House's website dedicated to seniors and social security. This section stipulates that "The President's budget lays the foundation for all Americans to participate in retirement accounts at work, proposing simple rules and automatic enrollment—that will automatically enroll workers in IRAs who, until now, haven't had a workplace retirement plan, while allowing them to opt out if they wish". (White House, 2016, *Seniors & social security*.

Strengthening retirement, para.1). In conclusion, both messages were designed to be as real as possible in an effort to alleviate the issues with artificiality that any experiment has.

Another observation pertains to the recency of the messages from this study. Coincidentally, before the experiment two major events took place in the U.S. and in the world: the first visit of Pope Francis in the U.S. and the Paris agreement for fighting the global warming. Pope Francis's visit from September 2015 rallied huge public interest; one of the main papal messages was the concern for climate change. Later, in December 2015, 195 nations (including the U.S) signed the Paris agreement, a historical moment in global efforts for avoiding the dangers of the climate change, which established an action plan for keeping the increase in average temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre- industrial levels.

These two events from real life are potential boosters of interest for the global warming topic in the actual experiment (more the Paris agreement which is closer in time than the visit of the Pope). This kind of situations is not specific to this study only. It is a general concern with experiments that involve information testing; one can never know what other sources of information from real life could influence participants. Although this could be considered a naturally occurred pre -conditioning of the participants resulting in higher involvement for the global warming topic, it does not affect the experiment because the main target is not to compare topics but to compare metaphorical messages with non metaphorical messages designed for the same topic. Furthermore, the potential boost for global warming goes in the same direction with the results from the topic involvement test that already established the high interest for global warming.

Ideology. Another aspect regarding the content of the messages is their similar ideological bias, which in this case can be perceived as liberal, in the understanding of American

politics. This is acknowledged but considered positive, because it resembles the real life presidential communication since every political narrative, especially when it advances the legislative agenda is essentially ideological.

Further, the ideological bias of the source (the president, in this case) is part of the source credibility and, as vast research in political communication and persuasion indicates, source credibility has effects on message perception (e.g. McCroskey, 1997; McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Perloff, 2014b). In this light, the ideological bias has the advantage of resembling the real life communication, as well, but the disadvantage of interacting with the effects of metaphors; some respondents might agree with the message because of its liberal accents and not because of the HD Metaphors.

Another discussion about the ideological bias pertains to the fictionality of the source. The source of the message in this experiment, the president, is fictitious for two reasons. The first reason is for accuracy as the messages inspired from the White House programs do not reflect accurately the President Barack Obama's propositions. Second, I consider that it would be too much personal bias, beyond the ideological one, if a particular president—especially one at the end of his second term about whom opinions are fully established—is associated to the experimental message. In conclusion, I design the contents of the messages to be realistic enough, with the inherent ideological biases that these policies have, but not as precise decoupages from an actual president's communication. Ultimately messages for both topics have the same ideological flavor as opposed to one with liberal tendency and another one with conservative accents, in order to reduce the unsystematic variation coming from this avenue. I control for participants' ideology anyway, in the demographic section of the questionnaires.

In conclusion, this experiment tries to replicate conditions from real life as much as possible but in the same time it tries to isolate the variables of interest to establish causality. It is not easy to acquire both because, as it results from these discussions, they can cancel each other. This defines the main dilemma of experiments, namely the advantage of establishing causality and the disadvantage of their artificiality. However, as long as the caveats discussed throughout this chapter are taken into account, this experiment can help with the advancement of knowledge in a precise territory of concern. Before conducting it, another step was necessary: to determine the topics of interest, which I discuss in the last section of this chapter.

Topic Involvement Report

To identify the topics of high and low interest, undergraduate students at the same university in the southeast were asked at the end of the Spring 2015 semester, during class discussions, to rate their interest in topics of public affairs from a list of seven topics, as explained earlier in this chapter. I used in this design topics from a Pew Center Research's Report (2015i) to which I added more insight on the topics, considering the need for more detail in constructing the messages for the experiment. The topics were : (1)education - reducing tuition rates in public universities (2)reducing crime- violence prevention across nation, (3)social security system- retirement facilities reform (4) energy/energy solutions and alternative sources (5) global warming -climate change.(6) societal welfare - public university engagement in socially responsible companies, and (7) global trade - global trade and transnational corporations

From the participants (N=74) half (37) were males and the other half (37) were females. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 35 with the average age of 21. The ideological composition was: 28 (37.8%) independents, 25 (33.8% liberals), and 15 (20.3%) conservative ; 6 (8.1%)

participants declined to answer. More than half of the respondents, 41 (55.4%) were Caucasians, 19 (25.7%) were Hispanics, only 5 (6.8%) African- Americans, 3 (4.1%) Asians, and 6 (8.1%) were of other ethnicity. Almost half of the respondents 34 (45.9%) were juniors, 16 (21.6%) were sophomores, 13(17.6%) seniors, and 11(14.9%) were freshmen with 2.6 years of college on average.

Each topic was measured on a ten 7-point semantic differential scale (with 1 indicating “strong disagreement” and 7 indicating “strong agreement”) as shown in Appendix 1. Data were analyzed by using SPSS Statistics 20. The descriptive statistics indicated global warming as the topic of high involvement, with the highest mean ($M=5.7109$, $SD=1.442$, $N=64$) and social security the topic of low involvement, with the lowest means among the seven topics ($M=3.57$, $SD=1.128$, $N=64$), as shown in Table 1.

To assess the internal consistency of the multi- item scales measuring involvement in each of the two topics I used Cronbach’s alpha, the most utilized measure of scale reliability. A value of 0.8 for Cronbach’s alpha is acceptable, whereas lower values indicate the unreliability of the scale (Field & Hole, 2003). Both scales, for global warming and social security, proved equally reliable, with the value of Cronbach’s alpha of 0.809.

In order to determine which statements were most reliable from each scale (to further use them in the experiment) I examined the item- total statistics. This test is used to check if there is any item from a set that is not consistent with the average behavior of the others, so it can be discarded. In this case I was only interested in selecting four of the most reliable questions from the ten questions for each topic to retain them for the experiment. The highest values for corrected item- total correlations led to the selection of statements “I think about global warming/climate change a great deal” (0.780);” I am concerned about the global warming

/climate change” (0.769); “Global warming /climate change is an issue that is personally relevant to me” (0.742); “Global warming /climate change is not important to me” (0.711) – for the global warming topic. For the social security topic the most reliable statements were: “I have strong opinions about social security system/retirement facilities reform “(0.702); “I think about social security system/retirement facilities reform a great deal” (0.570); “Social security system/retirement facilities reform is an issue that is personally relevant to me” (0.632); “I actively seek information about social security system/retirement facilities reform” (0.562). These statements were included in the experiment to assess interest in the topics on which the messages were constructed.

Reporting the Experiment

In order to test the hypotheses, I used a 2x2 between groups post test only experiment. The results of the experiment are reported here based on the guidelines issued by the Standards Committee of the Experimental Research section of the American Political Science Association, which are similar to the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) standards utilized in medical research (Gerber et al., 2014).

Participants

Participants in the experiment were undergraduate students registered at a large university situated in the southern U.S. Participants were drawn from courses in mass communication, political science, and international relations. Since this research was concerned with the effects of messaging on Millennials, age was the exclusion criterion. In order to be included in the experiment, students had to be born between the years 1980 and 2000 and to be at

least 18 years old at the date of the experiment (January 2016). The age restriction resulted in the removal of four participants. A total of 251 individuals, defined as Millennials, participated in this study.

The methods and procedures followed in this experiment were approved by IRB. In recruiting participants I identified classes with large enrollment so all the groups would be exposed simultaneously to the treatments and in similar conditions. The experiment was conducted in the Spring 2016 semester, on Wednesday, January 20, during one day, in two classes, running in the first half of the day. There were no incentives offered for participating in the experiment and students could withdraw at any time without any repercussion, as indicated in the informed consent forms that were distributed prior to the experiment. The experiment was conducted in normal classroom setting, at the beginning of each class.

Allocation Method

Students received an informed consent statement that included the purpose of the experiment and the exclusion criteria. The form contained a brief description of the study and it did not include a signature line, for anonymity reasons. No supplementary information was provided and no deception was used. No pretreatment measures were collected prior to the administration of the experiment. Participants were informed that the experiment was supposed to be administered in a certain sequence; therefore they were asked not to skim through the questionnaire at the moment that they received it. Then, the four sets of questionnaires—systematically randomized prior to the experiment — were randomly distributed to the participants who were seated in the classroom. Once all the participants received the questionnaires, they were asked to read the first page, containing the instructions and not to turn

the page until they were invited to do so. A page had been left blank in order to separate the two “phases” of the experiment: (1) message (treatment) phase and (2) questionnaire (measurements of the effects) phase.

Treatments

The treatments were administered at the same time for all the participants from each of the two classes, using the pen-and-paper method. At a designated time (11.10 AM in one class and 12.35 PM in another class) participants were asked to turn the first page with instructions and start reading the message located on the third page. A timer was used to measure the 3 minutes allocated for this phase. Each participant received either one of the following messages: (1) metaphorical message featuring the topic of high involvement (2) metaphorical message featuring the topic of low involvement, (3) non metaphorical message featuring the topic of high involvement, and (4) non metaphorical message featuring the topic of low involvement. Groups 1 and 2 were the experimental groups and groups 3 and 4 were the control groups. At the end of the 3 minutes, participants were asked to turn the page containing the message and to start answering the questions that followed, without revisiting the message. The administration of the experiment lasted 20 minutes. (See Appendix 2 for complete copies of the questionnaires and Appendix 3 for a comparison of the messages).

CONSORT Participant Flow Diagram

Although the intention was to create equal groups for a balanced design, student attendance and eligibility resulted in random unbalanced distributions. 130 students participated in the experimental condition (being exposed to metaphorical messages) and 121 participated in

the control condition (being exposed to non metaphorical messages), as illustrated in the CONSORT participant flow diagram (Figure 1). The range for the frequency of distributions per condition was from 60 to 65. The frequencies for the pairs experimental – control conditions were: 65-60 for the topic of global warming and 65-61 for the topic of social security, as illustrated in Figure 1. The results of this research are reported in the next chapter.

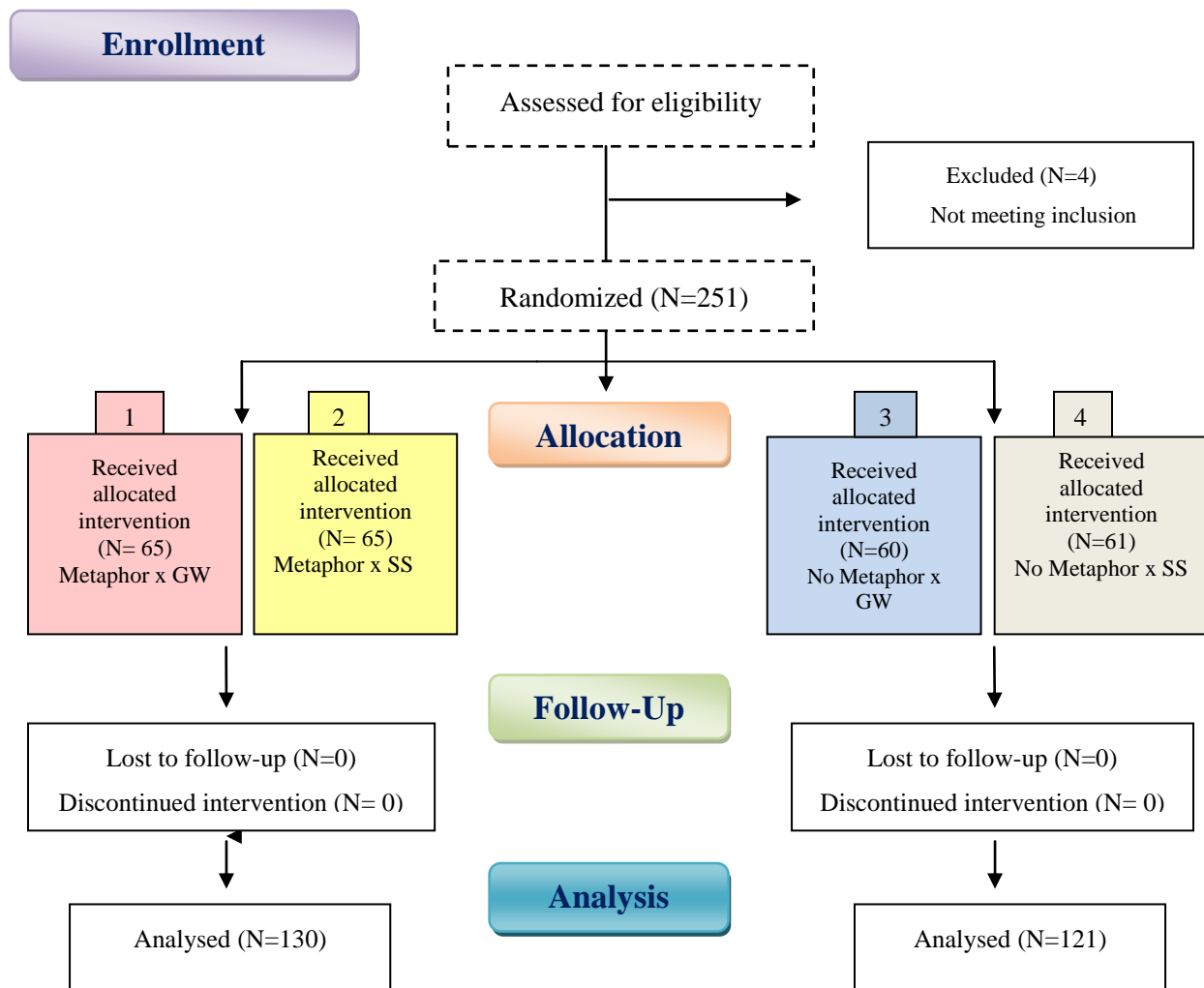


Figure 1. CONSORT participant flow diagram

GW= Global Warming (high involvement topic); SS= Social Security (low involvement

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS

The research question in this study asks whether presidents can reach more effectively Millennials by using High Definition Metaphors when communicating plans and measures meant to advance their legislative agenda. The three corresponding hypotheses addressing the question are: H1: Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more salient than their literal counterparts; H2: Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors produce more political knowledge; H3: Presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts.

Demographics

Analysis of the results began with an examination of the demographic make- up of participants, organized here in three sections: general demographics, psychographics (demographics that measure personality, values, attitudes, and opinions), and media habits.

General Demographics

Participants in the experiment (N=251) ranged in age between 18 and 36 years old, with an average age of 20. Almost half of the participants, 125 (49.8%) were under 20 years old, 122 (48.7%) were in their 20s, and 4 (1.6%) were in their 30s as shown in Table 3. With respect to

gender, there were 155 (61.8%) females and 91 (36.3%) males; 3 (1.2%) checked the transgender box and 2 (0.8%) participants preferred not to answer.

From the respondents 161 (64.1%) were white, 46 (18.3%) bi or multi-racial, 28 (11.2%) black, 15(6%) Asian, and 1 (0.4%) American Indian/Alaska Native, as indicated in Table 2.

With respect to education, 140 (55.8%) students were underclassmen, 109 (43.4%), upperclassmen, and 2 (0.4%) graduate students. Specifically, there were 81(32.3%) freshmen, 59 (23.5%) sophomores, 75 (29.9%) juniors, 34 (13.5%) seniors, and 2 (0.8%) graduates, as indicated in Table 5.

The highest frequency on the yearly household income was 98, as 39.0% of the participants reported incomes in the \$50-100,000 range. 64 (25.6%) reported incomes between \$15,000 and \$50,000, 38 (15.1%) under \$14,999, and 40 (15.9%) over \$100,000. 11 (4.4%) of the participants did not know or did not want to report income information as illustrated in Table 6.

Almost half of the participants (49.8%, N=125) were working part time, 107 (42.6%) were unemployed, 19 (7.6%) were employed full time. The vast majority 230 (91.6%) were U.S. citizens, 20 (8.0%) were not U.S. citizens, and 1 (0.4%) did not answer. In regard with the policy relevance, participants (N=249) were split almost in half: 126 (50.6%) reported no relevance and 123 (49.4%) answered yes to the question.

Psychographics

Descriptive statistics of ideology showed that, of all the participants, 83 (33.1%) were independent, 67 (26.7%) were liberal, and 46 (18.3%) conservative; 49 (19.5%) responded

“other” and 6 (2.4%) did not report any ideology. For partisanship, 97 (38.7%) reported themselves as democrat (strong, weak, and independent leaning democrat) and 65 (25.9%) republican, in the categories of strong, weak and independent leaning republican. Additionally, there were 33 (13.1) independents, 54 (21.5%) who did not know, and 2 (0.8%) who did not answer. Percentages in each category for ideology and partisanship are shown in Tables 7 and 8, respectively.

Political sophistication (knowledge of the political system and of current events) was measured with three questions about the political system and two about current public figures (see Appendix 2 for wording of the questions). Measurements of general knowledge of the political system showed that 140 (56%) correctly answered all three questions, 100 (40%) correctly answered two questions, and only 10 (4%) correctly answered only one question. The knowledge of current politics had a completely different distribution, with 213 (84.9%) unable to provide the correct answer to either of the two questions, 27 (10.8%) correctly answering one questions, and only 10 (4%) providing the correct answer for both. The additive index of this measure—the sum of the correct answers to all five questions— indicated the level of political sophistication among the participants (N=250, M=2.71, SD=0.789), with only 6 participants (2.4%) correctly responding to all the five questions.

Attention to politics (measured by the question “How often do you pay attention to what is going on in government and politics?”). From the participants who answered the question (N=249), 97 (38.6%) reported that they pay attention to politics some of the time, 70 (27.9%) about half of the time, 42(16.7%) most of the time, 24 (9.6%) never, and 16 (6.4) declared that they always pay attention to politics, as illustrated in Table 9.

Media Habits

A series of variables measured participants' habits in regard with the use of media. The variable source for political news was measured at a nominal level, with four categories: television, Internet, radio, and print. Another category, labeled "more sources", was created post factum for those who checked more than one box, although the requirement was to check only one box. Almost two thirds of the respondents indicated Internet, 61% (N= 152), 31.7% (N=31.5) indicated television, 2% (N=5) indicated radio, 4.4% (N=11) indicated more sources, only 0.8% (2) indicated print, and the same percentage, 0.8% (N=2), did not check any boxes, as shown in Table 10.

In regard with the choice between hard news and soft news, more participants, 126 (50.2%) declared that they use soft news such as satirical shows, political entertainment programs, social media etc as source for politics. 113 (45%) respondents indicated that they use mostly hard news sources such as traditional news channels, quality newspapers' websites, public radio news programs etc. for politics, 10 (4%) respondents use equally both sources, and 2 (0.8) declined to answer.

The use of digital devices combined was measured as well, results indicating that the overwhelming majority of the participants 236 (94%) use digital media daily. Only 5 (2%) persons use digital media twice a week, 4 (1.6%) once a week, 3(1.2%) monthly, and 1(0.4) indicated no usage of digital media devices, as illustrated in Table 11.

Among the social media platforms utilized for political news by the participants, Facebook and Twitter were the most popular. Facebook was the most frequently used platform with 161(64%) of the respondents indicating it as a source, followed by Twitter reported by 107 (42%) respondents. Other platforms used for news about government and politics are

Google/Google Plus, checked by 19 (7.6%) of the participants, Instagram by 10 (4%), YouTube and Tumblr, indicated by the same number of respondents, 6 (2.4%), and Reddit used by 5 (2%). 14 (5.6%) respondents reported that they use other social media platforms to gather news about politics, Table 12 shows.

From the participants who reported the use of social media for political news (N=227), 129 (51.4%) indicated accessing at least one platform in this regard, 83(33.1%) at least two social media sites, 14 (5.6%) three, and only one respondent (0.4%) indicated the use of four social media platforms; 24 (9.6%) participants did not check any box. Another additive index was created for this measure, indicating the total number of social media platforms used by participants for political news. Descriptive statistics for this measure (ranging from 1 to 4) were: $M=1.50$, $SD=0.630$, $N=227$.

Familiarity with the digital slang was measured using an additive index of recognition of the word selfie and recognition of the Millennials label “digital native”. Almost all of the participants recognized the word “selfie”, 97.6% ($N=243$), only a few did not recognize it, 2.4% ($N=6$), and 0.8% ($N=2$) did not answer the question. More than half of the participants recognized the expression “digital native”, 59% ($N=147$), while 41% ($N=102$) did not recognize it, and 0.8% ($N=2$) did not answer. The additive index for the familiarity with the digital slang (the sum of the two items) had a range from 0 to 2, with $M=1.38$, $SD=0.545$, $N=227$.

Variables of Interest

The variables of interest for this model were first examined using descriptive statistics. The independent variable is message type, the treatment in this experiment. Message type had four values (corresponding to each group): message type 1 (metaphor and high involvement

topic): 25.9% (N=65); message type 2 (metaphor and low involvement topic): 25.9% (N=65); message type 3 (no metaphor and high involvement topic): 23.9% (N=60); message type 4 (no metaphor and low involvement topic): 24.3% (N=61).

Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables in this study were examined as well; means, standard deviations, and the alpha coefficient for scale reliability (where applicable) are shown in Table 13. The three dependent variables are salience (visibility) of the message, corresponding to the first hypothesis (H1), political knowledge (message comprehension), corresponding to H2, and persuasion (agreement with the message) for H3. As explained previously, I also included a supplementary variable, designed to measure the dissemination capability of the message as a consequence to the agreement with the message. This variable is not central to this study therefore it is analyzed more as a strengthener of persuasion.

Scale Reliability

Two variables of interest in this study that are measured as multi item scales are involvement, which measured the interest in the topic and persuasion (agreement with the message), which measured favorability toward the message. In order to measure the internal consistency (reliability) of the scales utilized in this experiment I used the coefficient Cronbach's alpha, similarly with the topic involvement analyses from the previous chapter. Reliability means that a measure produces the same scores each time when analyzed under the same circumstances. Cronbach's alpha is the average of the values computed from the correlation coefficients for each split after splitting the data in half in every possible way (Field & Hole, 2003). By doing that, one can check for the reliability of the measures in a way that overcomes the problems with the split-half method, which splits randomly in half the items from a questionnaire and calculates

the scores for each participant from each group based on half of the scale. A participant's score should be the same in one half and in the other if a scale is reliable. However, since the split is random, the scores can be equal to the way data was split, not due to the reliability of the scale, as Field and Hole (2003) explain. Cronbach's alpha overcomes this problem by averaging the coefficients resulted from all the half splits possible within the data. A value of 0.8 is considered acceptable for alpha to attest the reliability of the scale (Field & Hole, 2003) although values as low as 0.7 are also used in experimental designs.

For involvement the scale proved reliable, as Cronbach's alpha was 0.825 ($M = 16.9$, $SD=6.2$, $N=4$). From the four items composing this scale the second item was the most reliable (measuring the concern about the topic) with the highest value for the corrected item – total correlation coefficient (0.762). The values for the other three items were: 0.694 for the third statement, 0.681 for the fourth statement, and 0.514 for the first statement. All items were retained in the analysis as their correlation values with the totals score were above 0.3. Because this scale demonstrated reliability it was then collapsed for hypothesis testing by computing in SPSS the mean of the four items. The descriptive statistics of the composite for involvement- (ranging from 1 to 7) were: $M= 4.22$, $SD= 1.547$, $N=251$.

Another multi-item scale in this study measured the agreement with the message, the dependent variable of persuasion. The Cronbach's alpha for this four item scale was 0.915, which indicated strong reliability ($M=24$, $SD=7.12$, $N=4$). From the four questions asking for the level of agreement with the message, the "bad idea/good idea" was the most reliable, with a corrected item total correlation value of 0.847. The other items' values were: 0.823 for the "unfavorable/ favorable" item, 0.822 for "negative/positive", and 0.724 for "harmful/beneficial." All the items were retained for analysis (having values above 0.3) and this scale was also

collapsed in order to be used in hypothesis testing by computing in SPSS the mean of the four items. The descriptive statistics of the composite of persuasion (agreement with the message), ranging from 1 to 9, were: $M=5.94$, $SD=1.779$, $N=249$. (Because this scale proved highly reliable the supplementary measure of overall agreement on one item with 11-points was not necessary so it was not used in the analyses).

Hypotheses Testing

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS Statistics 22. Shapiro-Wilk test for normality was statistically significant ($p<0.001$), indicating that data was non parametric (not normally distributed). However, a minimum sample of 30 is a condition widely accepted in experiments in order to obtain good performance from parametric tests when data is not normally distributed (Fields, 2013). This is explained by the central limit theory, which indicates that as the sample increases, the distribution becomes normal; therefore there are situations when it is safe to assume normality regardless of how data from the sample are shaped. In this experiment the sample of 251 justified the use of parametric tests, which have statistical power and greater ability to detect significance than non parametric tests do. A level of 0.05 was required for significance in all tests. To facilitate the replication of this study, variables were referred to in different ways when reporting the results, based on the various labels used by SPSS in each test: independent variables are also referred as predictors or grouping variables and the dependent variables are also referred as, criterion, outcome, or test variable.

A series of dummy variables (variables with only two values, usually coded 1 for the value of interest and 0 for all the other values) was created from the categorical variables utilized in this study for further use in regression analyses. First, I created a dummy variable called

metaphorical messages, from message type, where values 1 and 2 received code 1 (metaphor) and values 3 and 4 received code 0 (no metaphor). Other dummy variables created for the same purpose were gender(female) —that had code 1 for female and 0 for male and transgender— and race (white) with code 1 for white and 0 for non- white. Employed (partial or full time) had the value 1 for part time and full time and 0 for not employed. For dummy income (household- \$50, 000 or more) code1 indicated a household income of \$ 50,000 or more and code 0 indicated a family income less than \$ 50, 000. Education (two or more years of college) had the code 1 for two or more years of college and 0 for less than two years of college.

For ideology I created three dummy variables: the variable liberal received code 1 for liberal and 0 for conservative, independent and other; conservative received code 1 for conservative and code 0 for liberal, independent, and other; independent-ideology had code 1 for independent and code 0 for liberal, conservative, and other. Similarly, I created three dummies for partnership: Democrat (code 1 for reporting any level of commitment to the Democratic party and code 0 for reporting any level of commitment to the Republican party, independent, or did not know); Republican (code 1 for those reporting any level of commitment to the Republican party, and code 0 for those indicating any level of commitment to the Democratic party, independent, or did not know); Independent- partisanship (code 1 for those who marked the Independent box, and 0 for any level of commitment to the Republican party, the Democratic party, or did not know).

Other dummy variables were attention to politics (half of the time or more) with code 1 for paying attention to politics half of the time or more and code 0 for paying attention to politics less than half of the time. From the variable source for political news I created a dummy, labeled Internet as main source for political news, with code 1 for Internet and code 0 for other sources

than Internet. Similarly, I created the dummy digital media use (daily) from digital media use, with code 1 for daily use and code 0 for less frequent than daily.

Manipulation Check

Prior to the actual hypotheses testing, I verified that the two topics were indeed of high and low interest and that they varied significantly based on the message type, which is referred to as manipulation check. This was necessary more for exploratory reasons, specifically to see whether metaphors' effects (if any) are different at the two extreme levels of interest in the topic. A series of analyses (mean comparisons, independent t-tests, and ANOVA) confirmed global warming as the high involvement topic and social security as the low involvement topic for the participants in the experiment. Mean comparison analysis with involvement as dependent variable and message type as independent variable showed higher values for involvement among those exposed to the messages on global warming in both experimental (N=65, M=5.30, SD=1.156) and control group (N=60, M=5.00, SD=1.380) than those who received messages on social security on experimental (N= 65, M=3.41, SD=1.307) and control group (N=61, M=3.13, SD=1.035), as shown in Table 14.

Additionally, independent samples t- tests ran for each pairs of groups based on topic showed statistical significance in each case. An independent sample- t test is used to compare the means of a dependent variable for two different groups and when different participants are used for each group. In this design there were four groups and the grouping variable message type was not continuous (which it would have allowed using cut points), therefore I ran two independent t- tests by grouping the independent variable in two ways.

First, I used involvement as test variable (dependent) and message type as grouping variable (independent) for the metaphorical versions (groups 1 and 2). Results showed in this

case a higher mean of involvement for the global warming topic ($N=65$, $M=5.30$, $SD=1.156$) than for the social security topic ($N=65$, $M=3.41$, $SD=1.307$). At 90% confidence interval, the p value for Levene's test was not significant ($F= 2.773$, $p=0.098$) so the assumption of equality of variance was not violated. When conducting several independent t-tests, the error of detecting an effect that is not real (Type 1 error) increases with each comparison. The most common way to solve this problem is applying the Bonferroni correction, a conservative test in which the 0.05 threshold for significance for each of the t –tests is lowered by dividing it by the number of t-tests conducted. Specifically, Field & Hole (2003) show that “if we have done 2 tests, then we accept a result as significant *not* if it is less than .05 but only if it is less than .025” (p.174). The t-test results indicated statistical significance between involvement and the type of message in these groups with Bonferroni correction for the threshold for significance of 0.025 applied ($p < 0.001$, Mean Diff. =1.888, $df= 128$).

Second, when using involvement as test variable (dependent) and message type as grouping variable (independent) for the non- metaphorical versions (groups 3 and 4), results showed, as well, a higher mean for involvement among the groups exposed to the messages on global warming topic ($N=60$, $M=5.00$, $SD=1.379$) than among the groups exposed to the messages on social security topic ($N=61$, $M=3.13$, $SD=1.379$). At the same confidence interval, Levene's test was significant ($p=0.015$) so the coefficients for the equal variances not assumed were used, indicating statistical significance between involvement in these groups as well ($p < 0.001$, Mean Diff. =1.87, $df=109$).

Because independent t- tests allow comparisons of means only between two groups and with each test the error increases, as mentioned earlier, I also ran one way independent ANOVA, with involvement as dependent variable and message type as factor (independent

variable). Since Levene's coefficient was not significant ($p=0.32$), the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated, thus the results of ANOVA were valid. Differences in involvement between all four groups were statistically significant with a high ratio of systematic variance to unsystematic variance $F(3, 247) = 50.318, p < 0.001$. In conclusion, results indicated that differences in involvement were significant between groups and that global warming was the high involvement and social security was the low involvement topic in the experiment.

H1

The approach on hypotheses testing was to conduct, with a great deal of caution, various tests with different abilities to detect experimental effects; in most cases I started with means comparisons, then I conducted independent t- tests, ANOVA, and, ultimately regressions.

H1 posited that High Definition Metaphors influenced the salience (visibility) of the message. Testing was performed in two stages: first using the entire dataset for all the groups, then by splitting data based on the topic criterion: groups 1(experimental) and 3(control) for the high involvement topic and groups 2(experimental) and 4(control) for the low involvement topic.

In full data mode, the means comparisons analysis indicated higher means of salience among the groups that received metaphorical messages ($M=5.58, SD=2.404$) than among the groups that were not exposed to metaphors ($M=4.74, SD=2.255$). When running independent samples t-tests for each topic, results showed statistical significance in the relationship between message type and salience (visibility) for the low involvement topic and no significance in the same relationship for the high involvement topic, indicating that metaphors were contributors of variance in salience for the low involvement topic but were not significant contributors to the variation of salience for the high involvement topic. Specifically, when I used salience as test

variable (dependent) and message type as grouping variable (independent) for the social security (low involvement) topic, the independent samples t- test showed significance at 0.05 and at 0.025 levels, $p=0.013$, $t(113) = 2.518$ (recall the need to divide by 2 the 0.05 threshold for significance when running two tests). The effect size was calculated by using Rosenthal's formula (Rosenthal, 1999, p.19), which yielded $r=0.23$ ($r^2=0.05$). Cohen (1988, 1992; see also Field & Hole, 2003) explains what represents a small, medium, and a large experimental effect: $r=0.10$ indicates a small effect and explains 1% of the total variance, $r=0.30$ indicates a medium effect and explains 9% of the total variance, and $r=0.50$ a large effect and explains 25% of the total variance. In this case the effect is closer to medium, since over 5% of the variance in salience of the message was due to metaphors for the topic of low interest.

The independent t- test with salience as test variable (dependent) and message type as grouping variable (independent) for the global warming (high involvement) topic indicated no significance at the 0.025 level, $t(115) = 1.440$, $p=0.153$. Therefore, results of the two t-test comparisons indicated statistical significance for the relationship between metaphors and salience for the low involvement topic and non significance for the relationship between metaphors and salience for the high involvement topic.

One way independent ANOVA with salience as dependent variable (criterion) and message type as factor (predictor) confirmed the homogeneity of variance across all groups—since Levene's test was not significant ($p=0.222$)—and indicated significant differences in salience (message visibility) between the four groups $F(3,228)=4.349$, $p=0.005$. Because ANOVA was significant and the hypothesis was directional, I made comparisons between the two pairs of groups (experimental and control) for each topic, by conducting planned contrasts. For the global warming topic the difference in salience between the metaphor group and the non

metaphor group approached statistical significant but was slightly over the 0.05 threshold, $t(228) = 1.576, p=0.058$ (1-tailed). Results showed statistical significance for the variation of salience when comparing the group that was exposed to metaphorical message on the topic of social security with the group that received the non metaphorical version of the same message, $t(228)=2.249, p=0.012$ (1-tailed). This result confirmed the t-test results and provided additional support for H1. When treating data as non parametric, the Mann-Whitney test, which is the equivalent of the independent t-tests for parametric data, confirmed the statistical significance of the relationship between metaphors and salience for the low involvement topic, as well, $U=1238.5, s(0.009)$.

A series of regressions analyses were conducted to fully test causality and strength of the relationship between metaphors and message salience (visibility) and detect the power of the model. Regression analyses are powerful statistical tests that provide information about causality by testing the null hypothesis that the relationship occurred by chance and by revealing the nature and the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Pollock, 2012).

Linear bivariate regression with salience as dependent variable and metaphorical messages (dummy) as independent variables produced statistical significance in results across all groups. Metaphorical messages alone accounted for nearly 3% of the variance in salience regardless of the topic ($B=0.833, F(1)=7.410, p=0.007, R^2=0.031, \text{Adj. } R^2=0.027$), which indicates a positive effect, between small and medium, according to Cohen's guidelines.

Multiple regressions conducted in forced entry mode with metaphorical message and all the variables of interest for this hypothesis as predictors indicated a positive significant contribution of metaphors to the variation of salience ($B=1.285, p<0.001$). The model explained

17% of the total variance, $R^2=0.263$, Adj. $R^2=0.166$, $F(22, 276)=2.706$, which indicates an experimental effect between medium (9%) and large (25%), according to Cohen's guidelines. Four more predictors had a positive significant contribution to the variations of salience: political sophistication ($B=0.618$, $p=0.010$), familiarity with the digital slang ($B=0.652$, $p=0.043$), liberal-ideology ($B=1.594$, $p=0.006$), and Internet as main source for political news ($B=1.137$, $p=0.002$). Democrat- partisanship was significant but negative ($B=-1.063$, $p=0.020$). Use of social media for political news was negative but borderline significant ($B=-0.545$, $p=0.050$), as shown in Table 15.

Multiple regressions conducted for each pair of groups, by splitting data based on the topic criterion (high and low) provided more in depth results for H1. This was necessary because, on one side, the independent t-test indicated no significant contribution of metaphors to the variation of salience for the topic of high involvement and, on the other side, regression analyses showed statistical significance in the same relationship when all four groups were examined together. Therefore, I used the select cases feature in SPSS to create two data sets: one comprising data for groups 1 and 3, corresponding to the high involvement topic and one containing data for groups 2 and 4, corresponding to the topic of low involvement. I also created for each group a dummy variable from message type (with code 1 for metaphor and code 0 for no metaphor). This allowed further exploration of metaphors' effects within each pair of groups.

Bivariate regression with split data for the groups of high involvement (global warming) showed that the relationship between salience and metaphors was not statistically significant ($p=0.153$). However, multiple regressions in entry mode with metaphorical message and all the variables of interest for the hypothesis indicated that metaphors had a significant and positive

contribution to the variation of salience for the high involvement topic ($B=1.307, p=0.037$), as shown in Table 16. The model explained 14 % of the variation in salience, $R^2=0.348$; Adj. $R^2=0.143, F(22, 70)=1.698$), indicating an experimental effect between medium and large. Political sophistication had a positive contribution ($B=1.047, p=0.016$) while partisanship (democrat) contributed negatively to the variation of salience ($B=-1.996, p=0.017$).

Bivariate regression conducted with split data including only the groups of low involvement (social security) showed that the relationship between salience and metaphors was statistically significant and positive ($B=0.971, F(1, 113)=6.341, p=0.013$) thus confirming the previous results. Metaphors alone explained 4.5% of the total variance of salience ($R^2=0.053$, Adj. $R^2=0.045$), which is an effect between small (1%) and medium (9%) according to the widely accepted guidelines of Cohen (1988, 1992), confirming the previous tests, as well. Multiple regressions for the low involvement groups, conducted with all the variables of interest for the hypothesis, showed a statistically significant and positive relationship between metaphors and message visibility (salience) ($B=1.525, p=0.001$). The model explained almost 16% of the total variance in salience $R^2=0.350$, Adj. $R^2=0.157, F(22, 74)=1.812$). Additionally, familiarity with the digital slang ($B=0.985, p=0.026$) and Internet as main source for political news ($B=1.234, p=0.012$) had a significant and positive contribution to the variance of salience, as illustrated in Table 17.

In conclusion, regressions results corroborated the other findings in testing H1 also capturing the previously undetected effect of metaphors among the high involvement groups; therefore, the argument that metaphors increase the message salience (visibility) can be made with confidence. These results provide support for H1.

H2

H2 stated that messages containing HD Metaphors produce more political knowledge (message comprehension) than their literal counterparts do. The mean comparison analysis across all groups showed slightly higher values of political knowledge among the groups exposed to metaphors ($M=6.51$, $SD=1.19$) than among the groups exposed to the literal counterparts of the messages ($M=6.31$, $SD= 1.264$). A paired mean comparison between the experimental and control groups showed higher values for political knowledge in the experimental condition for each topic. For the global warming topic the mean of the political knowledge in the group exposed to metaphors was greater ($M=6.68$, $N=59$) than the mean of political knowledge for those receiving the literal version of the presidential message ($M=6.37$, $N=56$). Similarly, for the social security topic, the mean value of message comprehension was greater among the experimental group ($M=6.34$, $N=53$) than in the control group ($M=6.25$, $N=55$).

However, two independent samples t- tests conducted with message type as grouping variable indicated no statistical relationship between metaphorical messages and political knowledge for the global warming groups, $t(113)= 1.382$, $p=0.170$ and for the social security groups, $t(106)=0.345$, $p=0.731$ (with Bonferroni correction applied for the 0.025 significance threshold). When all the groups were analyzed together, Levene's test confirmed the homogeneity of variance ($p=0.298$), thus the assumption necessary for ANOVA was not violated. However, ANOVA, ran with political knowledge index as dependent variable and message type as factor (independent variable), showed no statistical significance, $F(3,219)=1.301$, $p=0.275$) in this relationship.

When the four groups were analyzed together, linear bivariate regression showed no significant contribution of metaphorical messages to the variation of political knowledge ($p=0.220$). Results of linear regressions conducted separately with each of the components of political knowledge of the message — understanding of meaning and interpretation of consequences — showed no statistical significance in both cases ($p=0.374$ and $p=0.088$, respectively). Finally, multiple regressions conducted in enter mode with metaphorical messages and all the variables of interest as predictors confirmed that metaphors had no significant contribution to the variation of political knowledge in this particular model ($p=0.770$) but indicated that 8% of the variance ($R^2=0.195$, $\text{Adj. } R^2=0.082$, $F(22, 157)=1.730$) was due to the linear combination of political sophistication ($B=0.290$, $p=0.021$) and the daily use of digital media ($B=0.780$, $p=0.048$), as shown in Table 18. In conclusion, the combined results of all these tests showed that H2 was not supported.

H3

H3 posited that messages containing HD Metaphors produce more persuasion (agreement with the message) than their literal versions do. Mean comparison analysis across all groups showed slightly higher values of agreement among the experimental groups ($M=5.97$, $SD=1.734$) than among the control groups ($M=5.90$, $SD=1.832$). Two independent t-tests, with Bonferroni correction, showed no statistically significant variations in agreement with the message due to metaphors in each pair: for the groups exposed to the high involvement topic, $t(122)=-0.242$, $p=0.404$ (1-tailed) and for the groups of low involvement topic, $t(123)=-0.510$, $p=0.305$ (1-tailed). However, with Levene's coefficient indicating homogeneity of variance among all four groups ($p=0.995$), ANOVA showed overall significant differences in agreement

due to message strategy type, $F(3,245) = 17.865, p < 0.001$). The effect was nearly 18%, ($r^2 = 0.179, r = 0.42$), which is close to large, according to Cohen's guidelines.

Because H3 is directional, too, I conducted planned contrasts between the experimental and the control groups for each topic to check for effects of metaphor on agreement with the message. Results showed no statistical significance for the global warming topic, $t(245) = -0.231, p = 0.409$ (1-tailed), neither for the social security topic, $t(245) = 0.534, p = 0.297$ (1-tailed).

Bivariate regression showed no significant contribution of metaphorical messages to the variation of agreement with the message when the four groups were analyzed together ($p = 0.782$). Multiple regression conducted in entry mode with metaphorical messages and all the variables of interests as predictors confirmed that metaphors did not contribute significantly to the model ($p = 0.803$). From all the variables, involvement had a positive and significant contribution ($B = 0.324, p < 0.001$), being the main predictor, and both partisanship labels, democrat ($B = -0.692, p = 0.031$) and republican ($B = -0.745, p = 0.042$) had significant but negative contributions to the variation of agreement, as shown in Table 19; the model explained 14.4% of the variation in persuasion (agreement), an effect between medium and large.

When splitting data in pairs of groups based on the topic, multiple regressions with all the variables of interest for the hypothesis indicated no significant contribution of metaphorical messages for the global warming topic ($p = 0.785$); partisanship (democrat) was the only variable that contributed significantly but negatively to the variation of agreement with the message ($p = 0.019$). For the social security topic, metaphorical messages did not contribute significantly either ($p = 0.822$); results also indicated no statistical significance between any other variable and agreement.

To further understand the metaphors' effects and because dissemination of the message is logically subsequent to agreement to the message, I examined the relationship between metaphors and dissemination of the message. A preliminary step was, though, to verify the statistical significance between agreement with the message and dissemination, as expression of the transition from attitude to behavior – the basic concern in persuasion (Perloff, 2014b). Regression analysis with agreement as predictor and dissemination as outcome, confirmed that agreement was a significant and positive contributor to the variation of dissemination, responsible for as much as 16.7% of the experimental effect ($B=0.603$, $F(1,247)=50.753$, $p<0.001$, $R^2=0.170$, Adj. $R^2=0.167$).

Multiple regressions with dissemination as outcome and metaphorical message and all the other variables from the model as predictors (using the entire dataset) showed, as expected based on previous results regarding H3, that metaphors did not have a significant contribution to the dissemination of the message ($p=0.361$) but involvement contributed significantly and positively to the model ($B=0.608$, $F(22, 179)=2.092$, $p<0.001$) being the main predictor, responsible for nearly 11% of the variation in dissemination of the message ($R^2=0.205$, Adj. $R^2=0.107$). Bivariate regression with involvement as predictor and agreement as outcome, showed statistical significance in the relationship ($p<0.001$) and a positive contribution of involvement with an effect between medium and large of 13% ($B=0.421$, $F(1, 247)=38.463$, $R^2=0.135$, Adj. $R^2=0.131$).

These results combined, indicate that although ANOVA showed statistical significance between message type and agreement, with a nearly large effect, this was mainly due to the involvement in the topic and not to metaphors. In this light, H3 does not receive full support, thus the null hypothesis must be accepted.

A brief summary of this chapter shows that H1, which predicted that presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more salient than their literal counterparts was supported since metaphorical messages had a significant and positive contribution to the variation of salience. Further, H2 stated that presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors produce more political knowledge (comprehension of the message). H2 was not fully supported as a series of analyses showed that there was no statistical significance in this relationship. H3 stated that presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts. This hypothesis was not supported either, as the relationship between metaphors and persuasion (agreement with the message) did not have statistical significance across several tests. The next chapter contains a more detailed discussion and interpretation of the various results revealed by statistical analyses.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to the research in political communication by proposing a new design of strategic messaging for American presidents' communication with the young generation (Millennials). Specifically, I examined the effects that a particular category of metaphors derived from the digital media slang, labeled here High Definition Metaphors, had on Millennials when they were included in the presidential messages that promoted the legislative agenda. I tested whether these metaphors could increase the message's salience (visibility), produced more political knowledge (message comprehension), and whether they increased its persuasive power (agreement with the message). The design was an experiment between groups with one wave/post test only. To check the effects of metaphors at different levels of involvement in the message's topic, I used two pairs of groups: one pair was exposed to messages constructed on a topic of high interest (global warming) for participants and a pair received messages constructed on a topic of low interest (social security). In each pair there was an experimental group, which was exposed to a metaphorical message and a control group, which was exposed to the non metaphorical counterpart of the message. In discussing the results, I start with the demographic portrait of the Millennials who participated in this experiment and then I analyze each of the three hypotheses, while also acknowledging the limitations of this study and suggesting avenues for future research. The last section of this

chapter concludes the whole study by providing a broad summary of the research and the key findings.

Sampling Millennials

The sample used in this experiment had many of the general characteristics of Millennials reported throughout this paper as indicated in various national studies, in the U.S. census of 2014, and in the most recent reports of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Specifically, less than two thirds of the participants in this study were white and graduates of high school; more than half were ideologically independent or had no ideology; in terms of partisanship, there were more democrats (four in ten) than republicans (one in four) and a third had no party commitment. Based on the average age of 20, this sample qualifies for the category of younger Millennials (ages between 18 and 24, as used in most measurements).

Of particular interest are the participants' political awareness and knowledge of public affairs, which also matched many of the findings of national studies cited in this paper. Specifically, a vast majority (85%) failed to answer both questions regarding current politics and only a little over half (55.8%) provided correct responses to all three basic questions about the political system. Overall, very few (12.8%) responded to four or more questions (out of five), which indicated a reduced political sophistication based on the measurements of this study, also in consonance with national polls. In addition, Millennials in this experiment, reported limited interest to politics: only 6.4% declared that they always pay attention to politics and less than a quarter (23%) pays attention to politics half of the time or more. The preference for on line news is evident: almost two thirds (64%) get their news on the Internet. Social media is a favorite source for news, nearly two thirds (64%) using Facebook and 42% Twitter; half of them use one

social media platform for news, the other half two or more sites. Finally, participants in this experiment confirmed the dominant characteristic of their generation, digitalism, as almost all of them (94%) reported daily use of digital media.

Despite these characteristics, any generalization of this study's findings to the whole population of Millennials in the U.S. is made with great deal of caution, because of the specificity of other features in this sample. Particularly, participants were students at a large public university in the south of the U.S, enrolled in courses of mass communication, political science, and international relations, thus courses in social sciences. These features could mean that Millennials examined here were more educated than the general population in this age group, more inclined to pay attention to news, and in general, had better communication skills. In addition, since the experiment took place in a swing state, participants can be suspected of higher exposure to political messaging than the rest of their generation. (This feature was probably counterbalanced by the age skew, as national studies indicate less political involvement among younger Millennials than older Millennials). In conclusion, the sample used in this experiment fits reasonably well many of the Millennium generation's features in the U.S., especially of the younger Millennials, but with a few notable amendments that need to be acknowledged.

H1: Salience (Visibility)

H1 predicted that presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more salient (visible) than their literal counterparts. This hypothesis was supported since metaphorical messages had a significant and positive contribution to the variation of salience on various tests. After inventorying the results of these tests, I will discuss specifically the findings of metaphors'

effects among those with low involvement in the topic and among those with high involvement in the topic and I end with a discussion of all findings in testing the first hypothesis.

Comparison of means between the experimental and control groups indicated higher values of salience among the participants who were exposed to HD Metaphors than among the participants who received the non metaphorical versions of the messages. ANOVA indicated that the relationship between metaphors and salience was significant. Moreover, regression analysis conducted with data from all groups indicated that the relationship between metaphors and salience was statistically significant and positive. 3% of the variance in salience was due to metaphors alone, indicating an experimental effect between small (1%) and medium (9%), according to the widely accepted guidelines advanced by Cohen (1988, 1992).

Multivariate regression confirmed the statistical significance and the positive relationship between salience and metaphors political sophistication, familiarity with the digital slang, liberalism, and the use of Internet as main source for politics—when all four groups were analyzed together. The identification with the Democratic Party had a statistically significant but negative contribution to the variation of salience. The experimental models explained 17% of the variance in message visibility (salience), an effect between medium (9%) and large (25%).

Additionally, metaphors were significant and positive contributors to the message visibility for smaller samples, as well —when data was split based on the topic criterion (high involvement and low involvement). This is particularly important because it is harder to capture experimental effects in smaller samples than it is in larger samples. Specifically, multiple regressions with all the variables in the model conducted for each topic separately showed that HD Metaphors highlighted the argument for participants and that the models explained 16% of

the variance in salience for each topic, close to the power of the model found when aggregated data was used.

Bivariate regression in split data mode showed that the contribution of metaphors alone to the variation of salience among the participants with low interest in the topic was significant and positive, with an effect between small and medium (4.5%). This confirmed the results of the independent t- tests conducted for the groups of low involvement topic, which indicated that 5% of the variance in salience was due to metaphors alone. In summary, results show an effect of the model (including HD Metaphors) between medium and large and a positive contribution of HD Metaphors alone to the variation of salience between small and medium.

Importance of Effects for Less Involved Participants

How relevant is this effect among the participants with low interest in topic? Since this experiment used a novel design of message strategy by creating a new category of metaphors with precise features, instead of analyzing linguistic formulas that have already undergone testing, even a small statistical confirmation represents a significant progress. This is because many times experiments are on “unsafe grounds” as the likelihood to produce no effect at all is considerably high. In addition, one variable rarely explains large portions of the total variance of the outcome in experimental testing. For example, many variables used in psychology such as IQ, memorization capacity, attention, or mood, that might have contributed to the message visibility were intentionally left out. This can be considered a limitation of this study as it did not build a comprehensive explanatory model for message visibility. The decision to jettison the aforementioned variables was justified by feasibility and by the emphasis on testing only

metaphors' effects on salience. In addition, no study can include all the possible variables; therefore, as I concentrated on one specific predictor, it was not realistic to expect a large effect.

In this light, the significant contribution of HD Metaphors to the message visibility and the size of this effect revealed by statistical analyses in this study are important as results show unequivocally that HD Metaphors capture the attention of the public less interested in the political messages, as Millennials are. They also confirm the perspectives on accessibility of information in the mind triggered by vividness (Kahneman & Tversky, 1974) and on salience inducement based on recollection of information (Houghton, 2014; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) discussed in this paper.

Effects for Highly Involved Participants

A special observation is necessary in regard with the high involvement topic. As showed, several results indicated that metaphors increased the visibility of the message but not all the tests corroborated the statistical significance of this relationship. Specifically, the independent samples t -test and the planned contrast in ANOVA ran for the high involvement groups showed that the relationship between metaphors and salience was not statistically significant. Bivariate regression in split data mode yielded similar results. However, in split data mode (with a smaller sample, produced by selecting only the two groups exposed to the topic of high involvement) multivariate regressions showed that the relationship between metaphors and message salience was significant.

These mixed results suggest that, although metaphors seem to contribute significantly to the message visibility – this effect is too weak to be captured when the other variables are excluded from the analysis or when the sample becomes too small and the experimental

condition is the only predictor in regression. In this regard, Cohen (1992) and Field & Hole (2003) show that 783 participants are necessary to detect a small effect in experiments, whereas only 85 participants are needed to detect a medium effect and 28 to detect a large effect. Therefore, to confirm with consistency that HD Metaphors also highlight messages for audiences with high involvement in the topic, a larger sample than 125 participants (which was used here in split mode) might be necessary.

Importance of the Findings

Combined, these results show that although metaphors do not necessarily increase the attention to the message for audiences that are already interested in the topic, they do “capture the curiosity” (Ripberger, 2011), of audiences that are not interested in the topic. This is a key finding because it indicates that messages containing HD Metaphors could be more attractive to Millennials, who, in general do not actively search for political information.

Further, studies cited throughout this paper indicate that when social media users, especially Facebook users, encounter news stories they interact with them by commenting or sharing the message (Mitchell, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014). This observation applies to Millennials as well, as they get news on this site at the highest rate (Mitchell, 2014). In this light, if metaphors increase the visibility of the messages, then communicators have a better chance not only to engage in public debates an audience who otherwise might ignore this information but also to reach more receivers via their networks. From the president’s perspective, capturing the attention of the public for messages about his/her policies is the first condition of influence because a message must be first heard in order to be understood and, then, embraced. In this regard Fishbein & Ajzen argue (1981) that “the general neglect of the information contained in a

message . . . is probably the most serious problem in communication and persuasion research” (p. 359).

Additionally, recent studies show that social media users found the information worthy of trust when it comes directly from the source. In this regard a report on social media users, ages 18-49, indicates that a significant number of users (41%) report that they trust the information that comes directly from the presidential candidate, ranking second after the trust of information sent by a respected friend, reported by 57% of users (Soltis -Anderson, Echelon Insights, Hart Research Associates & MSNBC, 2016). Although these numbers do not refer specifically to Millennials — and much less to younger Millennials from which this study’s population is drawn —they offer insights of the habits of social media, which is a preferred platform of this generation and of the new phenomenon of unmediated communication between political elites and the public. Therefore, securing trust on social media is another reason for which presidents might find beneficial to craft messages with high salience, suited for these platforms.

Although I did not design the presidential messages in this experiment specifically for a social media site (as the purpose was to test in general, the effects of the unmediated, written communication on digital media) many of these messages’ features are amenable to social media platforms, such as concision, orality, and color (for the metaphorical versions). In future research these messages can be refined and customized based on each social media characteristics. For example, a carefully designed HD metaphor that summarizes the message and accompanies a short sentence might be enough to catch the eye of the users or provide the hashtag on Twitter, while also informing , without the need for additional content. Future studies can focus on testing metaphors specifically crafted for each site based on the length and format requirements for messaging.

H2: Political Knowledge (Message Comprehension)

H2 stated that presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors ensure superior political knowledge (better comprehension of the message). Specifically, I was interested to see whether the presence of HD Metaphors in the message helps with understanding the messages, which leads to more knowledge of politics. This hypothesis was not fully supported as a series of analyses showed that there was no statistical significance in the relationship metaphorical messages- political knowledge (message comprehension).

Recall that the dependent variable political knowledge (message comprehension) was measured in this experiment as an index of two items: (1) understanding the meaning and significance of the policy contained in the message and (2) evaluation of its consequences. Means comparison analyses indicated slightly higher values for political knowledge (message comprehension) among the groups exposed to metaphorical messages than among the control groups. Nevertheless, a series of other tests did not show statistical significance in this relationship. Specifically, neither independent t-tests and ANOVA, nor bivariate and multivariate regressions indicated HD Metaphors as significant contributors to the variance of political knowledge (message comprehension). Instead, as expected, there was a significant relationship between political sophistication (general knowledge of basic and current politics) and the comprehension of the particular messages administered in this experiment. This confirmed the intuitive observation that people with general knowledge of politics have a higher ability to understand specific policies —such as those comprised in the presidential messages— than less politically sophisticated have. However, metaphors did not produce more understanding of the message in this design, showing that they do not help with the increase of political knowledge of participants.

With more variables in the model that can assess individual characteristics, future research can refine the measurement of the dependent variable message comprehension (political knowledge). In this study, descriptive statistics of political knowledge (comprehension) of the message) indicates high levels of understanding (ranging from 1 to 8) across all groups: a high mean ($M=6.41$ $SD=1.230$, $N=223$); 90% of the participants answered half of more of the eight questions correctly; 80% provided valid answers to six or more questions. Both components of this measure have the same characteristic. Specifically, understanding of meaning (ranging from 1 to 4) has a high mean ($M=3.07$, $SD=0.686$, $N=251$), with a high percentage of participants (83.3%) providing valid responses to at least half of the questions. Similarly, interpretation of consequences has a very high mean ($M= 3.305$, $SD=1.007$, $N=223$) for the same range, with a high percentage of respondents (70.5%) addressing at least two of the four questions. These scores suggest the possibility that the true/false statements were too easy and/or the standards for evaluating the interpretation of consequences were not high enough to capture the effect of HD Metaphors on understanding the message. This confirms that measuring comprehension is a difficult task that requires the virtues of professionals in the field of cognitive psychology and calls for refinement of this variable in the future research of HD Metaphors. However, it is a goal worth pursuing because if presidents can reach Millennials by helping them to understand public policies, not only the political knowledge of this public will expand but another step toward securing their support will be taken and presidential influence among the public will increase.

To conclude the discussion of testing the second hypothesis, the High Definition Metaphors used in this study did not produce more political knowledge or a better comprehension of the messages they that accompanied among the Millennials that participated in the experiment. This was a main concern in this study because of the general image of modest

political knowledge and awareness of public affairs among the young generation in the U.S. However, since this is the finding of one experiment only—since HD Metaphors are original concepts that have not been researched before—more refined experimental designs, conducted with larger samples might detect a significant effect. Specifically, future research with more complex measures of comprehension tested in cognitive psychology studies might still find an effect on processing new information considering the role of metaphors in understanding posited by theories such as the experientialist view. Further studies can also expand on the exploratory efforts to detect how HD Metaphors produce more information processing (if any): by inducing emotion, rational calculation, or by appealing to the internalized experience, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003) suggest.

H3: Persuasion (Agreement with the Message)

H3 stated that presidential messages containing High Definition Metaphors are more persuasive than their literal counterparts. Specifically, I was interested to check whether these metaphors produce more agreement with the policy advanced by the president. This hypothesis was not supported once running detailed tests, although initial analysis showed statistical significance in the relationship between metaphors and agreement with the message.

A comparison of means across all the groups indicated higher values for agreement with the message among those who were exposed to metaphors than among those who received the literal counterparts of the message. In addition, ANOVA showed statistical significance in the relationship metaphors-agreement with the message. However, when comparing the experimental groups with the control ones, neither the independent samples t-tests, nor the planned contrasts confirmed the metaphors' contribution to persuasion. Results of linear

regressions (conducted with the entire data set and in split mode) were in the same direction, indicating no statistical significance of the relationship between HD Metaphors and agreement with the message.

Instead, involvement was the main (and positive) contributor to the agreement with the message, confirming the intuitive expectation that participants with more interest in the topic agree more to policies derived from that topic than those less interested do. This finding does not explain what exactly produces persuasion and on which route, as Petty et al.'s (1981) study does when analyzes the role of involvement in persuasion. According to this work, argument quality is a function of persuasion for those with high involvement in the topic (thus triggering central processing) and source credibility is a function of persuasion for those less involved (triggering peripheral processing). As explained previously, because I only checked whether metaphors had any effect on persuasion, this experiment was not designed to explore how the expected effect occurred.

Interestingly, ideology did not have a role in persuasion in this experiment despite the liberal bias of the messages. One possible explanation is the lack of ideological commitment of the participants, as more than half were independents or had no ideology. This can be explained in two ways. First, perhaps the messages were not perceived as liberal; instead they could have been read in a non-ideological key: as egalitarian, for the social security policy or as business-pragmatic for the solar power proposition. These are other characteristics of the messages that could appear as prominent to a non political audience that does not have the reflex to detect ideological nuances in a message. The second possible explanation is that many participants did not report accurately their ideological commitment because of not knowing the differences between the two dominant ideologies in the U. S; a fifth of the participants reported that they had

“other” ideology and a third declared themselves independent (which could have been also an option for not knowing much about ideologies).

Partisanship was relevant but, intriguingly, opposing labels, democrat and republican, had a significant but negative contribution to the variation of agreement with the message. This contradictory finding can be explained with a similar rationale as before: ideological confusion and unclear partisanship commitment. Another explanation could be that republicans disliked the message because of its liberal bias and democrats did not agree with it for not being liberal enough. Nevertheless, overall data suggest that participants were not knowledgeable enough of the ideological and partisanship particularities, which reflected in the way they reported their political commitments. This could have added to the limited experience in deciphering political news due to their age (average of 20) indicating that many of them had not voted yet in a presidential election. Future research can answer these questions by introducing measures of perceived ideological flavor of the message, of ideological differences and reports about past voting.

In conclusion, despite the initial findings of significant effects, the argument that High Definition Metaphors produce more persuasiveness (agreement with the message) among the Millennials who participated in this experiment cannot be made with confidence. This contradicts the results of many studies of persuasion using samples of various adult populations meta-analyzed by Sopory and Dillard (2002) that found suasive effects for metaphors. However, even Sopory and Dillard are cautious about the generalizability of these findings,” we warn against the conclusion that any metaphor can be used under any condition to create potent suasive impact. Messages contained in the meta-analysis were developed by researchers with advanced training and typically subjected to pretesting prior to data gathering “(p.409). This

experiment did not, obviously, engage this type of professional expertise, but future research can pretest HD Metaphors before introducing them in the experimental treatment, to determine whether they highly satisfy the three features policy thrust, novelty, and relevance to the audience. This is not a simple task but is worth considering in further designs to achieve a better fit of HD Metaphors to the targeted audience in order to meet the fundamental goal of communication, persuasion, and, according to this study's concern, to gain support for presidents' policies.

Dissemination

For exploratory purposes, to understand better the HD Metaphors' effects on attitudes, I also asked participants in this experiment to rate the likelihood of sharing, commenting, tweeting or discussing the message that they read or aspects from it if it were posted on social media. This variable, labeled dissemination of the message makes the transition from attitude to behavior in this research. In persuasion research, in general, this transition is quintessential, as Perloff (2014b) summarizes it, "from a practitioner's perspective attitudes are important only if they predict behavior" (p.126).

This predictability was confirmed in this experiment across all groups as persuasion (agreement with the message) had a significant and positive contribution, between medium and large (almost 17 %), to dissemination. This means that the more the audience agrees with the message the more it tends to spread it on social media and beyond. The strong relationship between persuasion and dissemination that was confirmed in this experiment, indicates that attitude does predict behavior and adds to the reason for including persuasion in this research, since persuasion "opens the door" to action. In this design, action means sharing the information

about presidential policies. This tendency, confirmed here as well, is beneficial for both, communicators (presidents) and the public (Millennials) as it increases the chances for developing more public awareness of presidential policies and for gaining the public's support.

As expected based on prior testing of H3, when I ran multiple regression using the entire dataset, results indicated that metaphors did not have a significant contribution to message dissemination; instead, involvement was the main predictor, responsible for a medium experimental effect of 11%. Combined with the previous result, it means that the more interest in topic participants had, the higher the chance to agree with the message and, also, to disseminate it. However, metaphors did not have a contribution to this process, which is understandable considering that they did not produce more agreement with the message in this particular design. Since persuasion is the key, future research can refine and pretest HD Metaphors to increase their potential suasive effect, which can trigger higher effects on dissemination of the messages that they accompany.

Additionally, further work can connect with previous research in the public relations discipline about the efficiency of strategic communication. When looking at the strategic communication of leadership (promoting the presidential agenda in this case) as a public relation enterprise, messages with HD Metaphors can be a variable to be included in models providing the "linkage between public relations message strategies and communication behavior," as the research of Werder and Schweickart (2013, p.19) does. (See also Werder, 2006; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009). For example, message dissemination connects with two items from the communicative action variable (information forwarding and information sharing) that measures public's responsiveness to PR strategies. In this light, dissemination of presidential messages can

be employed in future research to measure, within the frameworks of the PR theories, the effectiveness of HD Metaphors in communicating with Millennials.

Conclusions

This research approached, in an interdisciplinary design, the strategic communication of leadership from two perspectives: the president's interest to gain public support when advancing the legislative agenda and the need in a democracy for political knowledge and awareness among the public. Because both issues that motivated this research require the attention of the public to political messaging, I placed a special emphasis on the visibility (salience) of presidential communication, aside from the two other main concerns: increasing the political knowledge of the public and persuading it to support president's policies. Particularly, I was interested to see whether the president, as the most prominent figure in American politics, can reach Millennials (persons with birth years between 1980 and 2000), the biggest generation in the country, most educated and most diverse, representing a third of the electorate but with little interest and knowledge in public affairs.

The president acts in a context of shared powers with the other branches, which presupposes inherent tensions. In this context, one strategy, used frequently by modern presidents to achieve influence and advance their legislative agenda, is going public; by securing the public's support for their policies, presidents hope to put pressure on Congress to pass the corresponding legislation. To do that they need to maximize the approval of the public. The Millennium generation, now reaching adulthood and with growing electoral potential, is an important category of this public. Therefore, the concern of this study was how to reach Millennials when advancing the presidential legislative agenda.

The term “reach the Millennials” was deconstructed along three avenues: catching their attention, increasing the understanding of proposed policies, and gaining their support for these policies. These translated in three goals, corresponding to three dependent variables: how to increase the presidential messages’ salience (visibility), their capacity to produce more political knowledge (message comprehension), and their persuasive power (agreement with the message). I argue that one way to achieve these goals in strategic communication is to use a special category of metaphors, labeled High Definition Metaphors that have three characteristics: they concentrate the core of the policy, are novel, and are relevant to the targeted audience. History shows that good metaphors proved to be essential in branding leadership, but reaching Millennials requires customized formulas. Because Millennials are predominantly digital natives and avid users of digital media, I used metaphors inspired from the digital slang.

To test the effects of these metaphors in direct, unmediated communication (as digital media facilitates) I used an experiment with students in a public university from the southeast of the U.S. Participants to four groups were each asked to read and then report on a fictitious presidential message; two groups received messages containing HD Metaphors, and the other two groups received the non metaphorical versions of the same messages. I used two topics for constructing these messages: one of high interest and one of low interest for participants (determined in pre-test and confirmed in the experiment). Then I compared the measurements between the experimental and the control groups for each of the three expected outcomes: message salience, message comprehension and agreement with the message.

Statistical analysis indicated that HD Metaphors increased the salience of the message in general, but especially among the Millennials with little interest in the topic, which is the key finding of this study. Although the effect was between small and medium, this is important

because neither knowledge, nor persuasion can occur if messages do not catch the attention of the audience. In regard with understanding the message, HD Metaphors did not appear as having a significant contribution in this particular design, but larger samples and more refined measures of comprehension might detect an effect in future research. In reference to persuasion, the highly sought goal in communication, HD Metaphors did not appear significant to Millennials in this experiment, but further work, involving pre- testing metaphors for a better fit to the audience, might have a higher chance to find a suatory effect.

The most important finding of this study is the role of High Definition Metaphors in salience, by increasing the visibility of the presidential messages especially among the young Millennials with low interest in topic. This is relevant because, in order to increase the political knowledge of the young generation (one side of the problem that triggered this research) and to extend presidential influence by persuading it (the other side of the problem), presidents need first to capture the curiosity of the audience in regard with their policies. Therefore, to answer the research question of this study, Millennials can be reached on one of the three avenues envisioned, specifically by capturing their attention.

These findings offer an optimistic view of the opportunities that digital media provides, in contradiction with other perspectives that underline the negative effects of some of the new platforms on political messaging. For example, Carr (2015) argues that social media led to provocative messages fitting on small devices, as opposed to informative stories. A consequence is the change of the candidates' profiles and of the future political leaders. This argument could be supported by the ranking of social media followers of the presidential candidates in the primaries of 2016 that places Donald Trump, the republican contender, on top (with 6.9 million followers on Facebook), followed from afar by the democratic candidates Bernie Sanders (3. 8

million) and Hillary Clinton, with 3.1 million followers (Soltis –Anderson et al., 2016). While the correlation between Trump’s inflammatory statements and his popularity on social media remains to be tested, it is obvious that messaging in general is more dramatic in campaigns, regardless of the medium, than it is during governance. I argue that messages for social media can be designed as “catchy” and informative in the same time with the help of HD Metaphors. Therefore, informative messages that are colorful enough might still find their way in calmer political climates, with the condition to fit the new media consumption habits and the demands of the digital platforms.

This study’s key finding also goes along the most recent trends in digital media for increasing the visual capacities of messaging. The active promotion of digital applications designed for user generated video content such as Facebook’s Red Dot and Twitter’s Periscope, aside from the platforms that live through pictures such as Instagram, are illustrative in this regard. Therefore, as the basic form of interaction on social media, the written message is more and more enhanced by pictures and video streaming. However, communication of public policies still needs its own words imagery, to which HD Metaphors can contribute. Future research with similar designs can check for other predictors of attentiveness on digital media as well, such as humor or entertainment applied to political messaging.

An important disclaimer regarding the findings of this work is the ethical aspect of the metaphors’ use by political communicators. The power of these frames to catch the attention of the public can be used for good or for evil. Specifically, presidents could season their discourse with HD Metaphors with the legitimate purpose to inform and engage citizens in public affairs but they could do so in order to deceive and move the public’s attention away from less favorable aspects of their policies, as well. This is possible because, by highlighting certain

aspects of the message, metaphors can implicitly conceal others. As mentioned previously, this study uses the assumption that presidents act with the interest of the citizens at heart, but it acknowledges the possibility that political communicators can utilize language tools, including High Definition Metaphors, for less ethical purposes.

Ultimately, the importance of this study to theory and practice, as discussed at the beginning of this dissertation, is evident due to its contribution to scholarship, communication praxis, and teaching. The main contributions to scholarship are introducing a novel concept (High Definition Metaphors) and testing its effect by using an empirical approach. The string of concepts salience – comprehension- persuasion, tested in this research, adds to the efforts of developing new measures for awareness and comprehension in academia and beyond. Most importantly, this research has applicability to praxis, by providing a strategic message design that could be used in presidential communication and, with further testing, in communication sourced by any political actor who aims to get the attention of an audience. It also adds to the efforts of think -tanks and organizations concerned with the creation of an informed citizenry and engagement and with the study of impact of communication with large audiences, such as The Rita Allen Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Media Shift & Metric Shift, Center for Investigative Journalism, Media Impact Funders etc. Finally, this research makes a contribution to theory and teaching. It serves the study of presidency by providing an integrated, interdisciplinary approach of presidential influence as strategic communication of leadership in the digital age. It also adds to generational studies by bringing more insights on Millennials' behavior, especially on the younger Millennials, with the caveats regarding the generalization of results discussed throughout this paper. Not in the least, this study contributes to the understanding of theories in communication and linguistics that place emphasis on the role of

metaphors as highlighters of arguments. In conclusion, as this dissertation was designed, in a holistic approach, to serve theoretical and practical goals, it will hopefully produce a few sparks for more refined research and more sophisticated practical enterprises that could enhance the communication of politics.

TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the topics of interest

Topic	M	SD	N
Education	5.11	1.210	64
Crime	4.57	1.169	64
Social Security*	3.57	1.128	64
Energy	5.50	1.115	64
Global Warming**	5.71	1.442	64
Societal Welfare	3.91	1.237	64
Global Trade	4.75	1.433	64

*Low Involvement topic

**High Involvement topic

Table2. Cell distributions for experimental conditions

Message Type	Condition	Frequency	Percentages
1	Metaphor and High Involvement *	65	25.9
2	Metaphor and Low Involvement*	65	25.9
3	No Metaphor and High Involvement**	60	23.9
4	No Metaphor and Low Involvement**	61	24.3
*experimental condition		130	51.8
**control condition		121	48.2

N=251

Table 3. Frequencies for age

	Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18.0	66	26.3	26.3	26.3
	19.0	59	23.5	23.5	49.8
	20.0	41	16.3	16.3	66.1
	21.0	30	12.0	12.0	78.1
	22.0	24	9.6	9.6	87.6
	23.0	11	4.4	4.4	92.0
	24.0	7	2.8	2.8	94.8
	25.0	3	1.2	1.2	96.0
	26.0	3	1.2	1.2	97.2
	27.0	1	.4	.4	97.6
	28.0	1	.4	.4	98.0
	29.0	1	.4	.4	98.4
	30.0	1	.4	.4	98.8
	32.0	1	.4	.4	99.2
	35.0	1	.4	.4	99.6
	36.0	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	251	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Frequencies for race

	Race	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	161	64.1	64.1	64.1
	Black	28	11.2	11.2	75.3
	Asian	15	6.0	6.0	81.3
	American Indian/Alaska Native	1	.4	.4	81.7
	Other (bi or multi-racial)	46	18.3	18.3	100.0
	Total	251	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Frequencies for education

					Cumulative
	Academic level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Freshman	81	32.3	32.3	32.3
	Sophomore	59	23.5	23.5	55.8
	Junior	75	29.9	29.9	85.7
	Senior	34	13.5	13.5	99.2
	Graduate	2	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	251	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Frequencies for household income

					Cumulative
	Household Income	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Under \$15,000	38	15.1	15.8	15.8
	\$15,000-\$24,999	17	6.8	7.1	22.9
	\$25,000-\$34,999	23	9.2	9.6	32.5
	\$35,000-\$49,999	24	9.6	10.0	42.5
	\$50,000-\$74,999	47	18.7	19.6	62.1
	\$75,000-\$100,000	51	20.3	21.3	83.3
	\$100,000+	40	15.9	16.7	100.0
	Total	240	95.6	100.0	
Missing		11	4.4		
Total		251	100.0		

Table 7. Frequencies for ideology

					Cumulative
	Ideology	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Conservative	46	18.3	18.8	18.8
	Liberal	67	26.7	27.3	46.1
	Independent	83	33.1	33.9	80.0
	Other	49	19.5	20.0	100.0
	Total	245	97.6	100.0	
Missing		6	2.4		
Total		251	100.0		

Table 8. Frequencies for partisanship

					Cumulative
	Partisanship	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	Strong Democrat	23	9.2	9.2	9.2
	Weak Democrat	22	8.8	8.8	18.1
	Independent leaning Democrat	52	20.7	20.9	39.0
	Independent	33	13.1	13.3	52.2
	Independent leaning Republican	36	14.3	14.5	66.7
	Weak Republican	16	6.4	6.4	73.1
	Strong Republican	13	5.2	5.2	78.3
	I do not know	54	21.5	21.7	100.0
	Total	249	99.2	100.0	
	Missing	2	.8		
Total	251	100.0			

Table 9. Frequencies for attention to politics

	Pay attention to politics	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	24	9.6	9.6	9.6
	Some of the time	97	38.6	39.0	48.6
	About half of the time	70	27.9	28.1	76.7
	Most of the time	42	16.7	16.9	93.6
	Always	16	6.4	6.4	100.0
	Total	249	99.2	100.0	
Missing		2	.8		
Total		251	100.0		

Table 10. Frequencies for source for getting news about politics

	Preferred source	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Television	79	31.5	31.7	31.7
	Internet	152	60.6	61.0	92.8
	Radio	5	2.0	2.0	94.8
	Print	2	.8	.8	95.6
	More than one source	11	4.4	4.4	100.0
	Total	249	99.2	100.0	
Missing		2	.8		
Total		251	100.0		

Table 11. Frequencies for digital media use

	Digital media use	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	1	.4	.4	.4
	Monthly	3	1.2	1.2	1.6
	Once a week	4	1.6	1.6	3.2
	Twice a week	5	2.0	2.0	5.2
	Daily	236	94.0	94.8	100.0
	Total	249	99.2	100.0	
Missing		2	.8		
Total		251	100.0		

Table 12. Frequencies for social media use for political news

	Social media use for politics	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Facebook	161	64.1
	Twitter	107	42.6
	Google/Google Plus	19	7.6
	Instagram	10	4.0
	YouTube	6	2.4
	Tumblr	6	2.4
	Reddit	5	2.0
	Other	14	5.6
Missing		2	.8
Total		251	

Percentages exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one site

Table 13.Means and standard deviations for dependent variables

Variable	N	M	SD	α
H1: Salience (message visibility) Items recalled (range from 1 to 10)	232	5.17	2.363	
H2: Political knowledge (message comprehension)-index- range from 1 to 8	223	6.42	1.230	
Understanding of meaning and significance (range from 1 to 4)	251	3.08	0.685	
Interpretation of consequences (range from 1 to 4)	223	3.30	1.007	
H3: Persuasion (agreement with the message) -composite- range from 1 to 9	249	5.94	1.779	0.91
Bad idea/ Good idea	249	5.84	2.050	
Harmful/Beneficial	249	6.12	2.028	
Unfavorable/ Favorable	249	5.71	1.991	
Negative/ Positive	249	6.08	1.904	
Dissemination of the message in social media- range from 1 to 9	250	3.99	2.613	
How likely is it that you would disseminate (comment, share, tweet, etc) this presidential message or aspects from it if it were posted on social media?				

Table 14.Means comparisons for involvement in topic

Message Type	Involvement(composite)		
	M	N	SD
1. Metaphor x High Involvement	5.30	65	1.156
2. Metaphor x Low Involvement	3.41	65	1.307
3. No metaphor x High Involvement	5.00	60	1.379
4. No metaphor x Low Involvement	3.13	61	1.035
Total	4.21	251	1.547

Table 15. Multiple regression analysis for salience (H1)-across all groups

Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Metaphorical messages	1.285	0.339	0.272	3.790	0.000*
Age	0.075	0.085	0.075	0.891	0.374
U.S. citizenship	0.150	0.623	0.017	0.241	0.810
Policy relevance	-0.093	0.377	-0.020	-0.246	0.806
Political sophistication	0.618	0.236	0.207	2.616	0.010*
Use of social media for political news	-0.545	0.276	-0.141	-1.973	0.050
Involvement	0.221	0.119	0.144	1.852	0.066
Familiarity with the digital slang	0.652	0.321	0.149	2.034	0.043*
Liberal	1.594	0.574	0.306	2.777	0.006*
Conservative	0.469	0.604	0.078	0.777	0.439
Independent -ideology	0.578	0.527	0.114	1.096	0.274
Democrat	-1.063	0.454	-0.222	-2.340	0.020*
Republican	-0.091	0.515	-0.017	-0.177	0.860
Independent-partisanship	-0.050	0.407	-0.011	-0.123	0.902
Attention to politics (half of the time or more)	-0.546	0.370	-0.116	-1.474	0.142
Internet as main source for political news	1.137	0.368	0.228	3.085	0.002*
Digital media use (daily)	0.870	0.785	0.078	1.108	0.269
Education (two or more years of college)	-0.059	0.377	-0.012	-0.156	0.876
Gender (female)	0.609	0.362	0.126	1.682	0.095
Race (white)	-0.640	0.352	-0.131	-1.818	0.071
Income (household-\$ 50, 000 or more)	0.146	0.363	0.030	0.404	0.687
Employed (partial or full time)	0.000	0.341	0.000	0.001	0.999

*statistical significance ($p < 0.05$); $R^2 = 0.263$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.166$.

The tolerance levels were above 0.2, indicating no collinearity within data (there were no predictors highly correlated with each other).

Parentheses indicate code 1 for each dummy variable.

Table 16. Multiple regression analysis for salience (H1)-high involvement groups

Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Metaphorical message	1.307	0.615	0.253	2.124	0.037*
Age	-0.103	0.131	-0.102	-0.786	0.434
U.S. citizenship	-0.816	1.336	-0.078	-0.611	0.543
Policy relevance	0.199	0.817	0.028	0.244	0.808
Political sophistication	1.047	0.423	0.315	2.476	0.016*
Use of social media for political news	-0.831	0.501	-0.193	-1.659	0.102
Involvement	0.207	0.243	0.099	0.854	0.396
Familiarity with the digital slang index	0.643	0.563	0.135	1.142	0.257
Liberal	1.945	1.003	0.338	1.938	0.057
Conservative	0.182	1.043	0.029	0.174	0.862
Independent- ideology	0.843	0.887	0.151	0.950	0.345
Democrat	-1.996	0.819	-0.383	-2.436	0.017*
Republican	-0.014	0.890	-0.002	-0.016	0.987
Independent – partisanship	-0.101	0.664	-0.019	-0.152	0.880
Attention to politics (half of the time or more)	-0.891	0.623	-0.172	-1.432	0.157
Internet as main source for political news	1.169	0.634	0.217	1.845	0.069
Digital media use (daily)	0.335	1.202	0.032	0.279	0.781
Education (two or more years of college)	0.883	0.645	0.171	1.369	0.175
Gender (female)	0.590	0.594	0.114	0.993	0.324
Race (white)	-0.907	0.580	-0.170	-1.565	0.122
Income (household, more than \$50,000)	-0.097	0.623	-0.018	-0.156	0.876
Employed (part time or full time)	-0.139	0.624	-0.026	-0.222	0.825

*statistical significance ($p < 0.05$); $R^2 = 0.348$; Adj. $R^2 = 0.143$

The tolerance levels were above 0.2, indicating no collinearity within data (there were no predictors highly correlated with each other).

Parentheses indicate code 1 for each dummy variable.

Table 17. Multiple regression analysis for salience (H1)-low involvement groups

Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Metaphorical message	1.525	0.428	0.365	3.560	0.001*
Age	0.236	0.125	0.242	1.889	0.063
U.S. citizenship	0.666	0.757	0.093	0.879	0.382
Policy relevance	-1.002	0.630	-0.174	-1.590	0.116
Political sophistication	0.355	0.289	0.135	1.227	0.224
Use of social media for political news	-0.267	0.366	-0.080	-0.729	0.468
Involvement	-0.007	0.200	-0.004	-0.034	0.973
Familiarity with the digital slang	0.985	0.434	0.248	2.270	0.026*
Liberal	1.167	0.748	0.256	1.560	0.123
Conservative	0.586	0.748	0.104	0.784	0.436
Independent- ideology	0.380	0.693	0.085	0.548	0.585
Democrat	-0.117	0.628	-0.028	-0.186	0.853
Republican	0.105	0.660	0.021	0.159	0.874
Independent –partisanship	0.123	0.549	0.029	0.224	0.824
Attention to politics (half of the time or more)	-0.353	0.469	-0.084	-0.752	0.455
Internet as main source for political news	1.234	0.478	0.278	2.582	0.012*
Digital media use (daily)	2.004	1.242	0.166	1.613	0.111
Education (two or more years of college)	-0.643	0.503	-0.150	-1.279	0.205
Gender (female)	0.799	0.494	0.178	1.617	0.110
Race (white)	-0.736	0.469	-0.170	-1.568	0.121
Income (household-\$ 50, 000 or more)	0.658	0.484	0.155	1.359	0.178
Employed (part time or full time)	0.373	0.446	0.089	0.836	0.406

*statistical significance ($p < 0.05$); $R^2 = 0.350$, $\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.157$

The tolerance levels were above 0.2, indicating no collinearity within data (there were no predictors highly correlated with each other).

Parentheses indicate code 1 for each dummy variable

Table 18. Multiple regression analysis for political knowledge (H2)-across all groups

Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Metaphorical messages	0.053	0.182	0.023	0.293	0.770
Age	-0.081	0.043	-0.167	-1.883	0.062
U.S. citizenship	-0.145	0.327	-0.034	-0.442	0.659
Policy relevance	0.109	0.197	0.046	0.551	0.583
Political sophistication	0.290	0.125	0.196	2.327	0.021*
Use of social media for political news	0.014	0.161	0.007	0.085	0.932
Involvement	0.106	0.063	0.139	1.667	0.097
Familiarity with the digital slang	0.030	0.170	0.014	0.176	0.861
Liberal	0.213	0.305	0.082	0.699	0.486
Conservative	-0.275	0.334	-0.087	-0.822	0.412
Independent- ideology	0.033	0.276	0.013	0.120	0.905
Democrat	0.042	0.248	0.018	0.169	0.866
Republican	0.373	0.285	0.132	1.311	0.192
Independent –partisanship	-0.173	0.216	-0.073	-0.800	0.425
Attention to politics (half of the time or more)	0.139	0.200	0.059	0.697	0.487
Internet as main source for political news	-0.134	0.194	-0.054	-0.691	0.491
Digital media use (daily)	0.780	0.391	0.151	1.993	0.048*
Education (two or more years of college)	0.318	0.200	0.134	1.587	0.114
Gender (female)	-0.099	0.190	-0.041	-0.522	0.603
Race (white)	0.033	0.189	0.014	0.176	0.861
Income (household;\$ 50, 000 or more)	0.166	0.190	0.069	0.877	0.382
Employed (part time or full time)	0.153	0.180	0.064	0.851	0.396

*statistical significance ($p < 0.05$); $R = 0.195$, Adj. $R = 0.082$

The tolerance levels were above 0.2, indicating no collinearity within data (there were no predictors highly correlated with each other).

Parentheses indicate code 1 for each dummy variable

Table 19. Multiple regression analysis for persuasion (agreement with the message) (H3)-across all groups

Predictor	B	SE	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Metaphorical messages	0.059	0.238	0.017	0.250	0.803
Age	0.024	0.058	0.034	0.409	0.683
U.S. citizenship	-0.442	0.450	-0.068	-0.983	0.327
Policy relevance	0.524	0.267	0.154	1.963	0.051
Political sophistication	-0.119	0.164	-0.056	-0.725	0.469
Use of social media for political news	-0.017	0.193	-0.006	-0.089	0.929
Involvement	0.324	0.083	0.296	3.889	0.000*
Familiarity with the digital slang	0.236	0.224	0.075	1.054	0.293
Liberal	0.114	0.399	0.031	0.287	0.774
Conservative	-0.271	0.427	-0.061	-0.634	0.527
Independent- ideology	-0.183	0.367	-0.051	-0.498	0.619
Democrat	-0.692	0.319	-0.202	-2.168	0.031*
Republican	-0.745	0.363	-0.187	-2.053	0.042*
Independent –partisanship	-0.200	0.288	-0.059	-0.695	0.488
Attention to politics (half of the time or more)	0.330	0.257	0.097	1.282	0.202
Internet as main source for political news	0.119	0.256	0.033	0.465	0.642
Digital media use(daily)	-0.503	0.536	-0.064	-0.938	0.350
Education (two or more years of college)	-0.043	0.268	-0.013	-0.162	0.872
Gender (female)	-0.051	0.255	-0.015	-0.199	0.843
Race (white)	-0.196	0.247	-0.056	-0.797	0.427
Income (household- \$50, 000 or more)	-0.027	0.250	-0.008	-0.107	0.915
Employed (part time or full time)	0.432	0.236	0.126	1.826	0.070

*statistical significance ($p < 0.05$); $R^2 = 0.238$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.144$

The tolerance levels were above 0.2, indicating no collinearity within data (there were no predictors highly correlated with each other).

Parentheses indicate code 1 for each dummy variable

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Topic Involvement Scales

ISSUE 1 - EDUCATION: REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

1. I think about REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES a great deal.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

2. REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

3. I actively seek information about REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

4. I consider myself to be at risk of not benefiting from REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

5. I am not personally affected by REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

6. I am concerned about REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

7. REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES does not involve me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

8. I have strong opinions about the issue of REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

9. REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES is not important to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

10. REDUCING TUITION RATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES has significant consequences for my life.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

ISSUE 2 - REDUCING CRIME: VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION

1. I think about VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION a great deal.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

2. VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

3. I actively seek information about VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

4. I consider myself to be at risk of not benefiting from VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

5. I am not personally affected by VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

6. I am concerned about VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

7. VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION does not involve me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

8. I have strong opinions about VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

9. VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION is not important to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

10. VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS NATION has significant consequences for my life.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

ISSUE 3 - SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM: RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM

1. I think about RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM a great deal.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

2. RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

3. I actively seek information about RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

4. I consider myself to be at risk of not benefiting from RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

5. I am not personally affected by RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

6. I am concerned about RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

7. RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM does not involve me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

8. I have strong opinions about RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

9. RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM is not important to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

10. RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM has significant consequences for my life.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

ISSUE 4- ENERGY: ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES

1. I think about ENERGY PROBLEMS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES a great deal.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

2. ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES constitute an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

3. I actively seek information about ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

4. I consider myself to be at risk of not benefiting from ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

5. I am not personally affected by ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

6. I am concerned about ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

7. The ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES issue does not involve me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

8. I have strong opinions about ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

9. ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES are not important to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

10. ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES have significant consequences for my life.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

ISSUE 5- GLOBAL WARMING: CLIMATE CHANGE

1. I think about CLIMATE CHANGE a great deal.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

2. CLIMATE CHANGE is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

3. I actively seek information about CLIMATE CHANGE.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

4. I consider myself to be at risk because of CLIMATE CHANGE.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

5. I am not personally affected by the CLIMATE CHANGE.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

6. I am concerned about the CLIMATE CHANGE.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

7. The CLIMATE CHANGE does not involve me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

8. I have strong opinions about the CLIMATE CHANGE.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

9. CLIMATE CHANGE is not important to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

10. CLIMATE CHANGE has significant consequences for my life.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

ISSUE 6- SOCIETAL WELFARE: PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES

1. I think about PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES a great deal.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

2. PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

3. I actively seek information about PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

4. I consider myself to be at risk of not benefitting from PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

5. I am not personally affected by PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

6. I am concerned about PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

7. PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES does not involve me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

8. I have strong opinions about PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

9. PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES is not important to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

10. PUBLIC UNIVERSITY INVESTMENT IN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES has significant consequences for my life.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

ISSUE 7- GLOBAL TRADE: GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS

1. I think about GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS a great deal.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

2. GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS represent an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

3. I actively seek information about GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

4. I consider myself to be at risk because of GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

5. I am not personally affected by GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

6. I am concerned about GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

7. GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS do not involve me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

8. I have strong opinions about GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

9. GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS are not important to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

10. GLOBAL TRADE AND TRANS NATIONAL CORPORATIONS have significant consequences for my life.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

Appendix 2: Questionnaires (original format)

Questionnaire 1

Instructions: On page 3 you will see a text representing a (fictitious) policy proposal announced by the (fictitious) president of the United States. Please READ THE MESSAGE FROM PAGE 3 ONLY DURING THE TIME ALLOCATED BY THE EXPERIMENT COORDINATOR, and then answer the questions that follow. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO THE MESSAGE once the time expired, so read it carefully, at your normal pace.

PLEASE DO NOT TURN BACK TO THE MESSAGE WHILE ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS.

Indicate your answer to each statement by putting an “X” in the appropriate space on the scale/box provided. Please respond to all the statements as honestly as possible. You are not expected to know details or to be current with aspects related to any of the issues relating to the message.

Your responses to the questions will remain completely confidential.

Thank you, in advance, for completing this questionnaire.

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President X of the United States:

“Solar Power Gone Viral is, you could say, the hash tag for the solar power plan that we are launching today, a program destined to combat climate change. As we all know, power plants are a major contributor to carbon pollution in the United States. These plants produce the energy that we need by burning coal. They also release carbon dioxide, thus oversharing their toxic emissions with all of us. These toxic emissions are not virtual threats in the cybersphere; they are real threats to the atmosphere as they trap heat, thus endangering our planet. One way to limit the carbon emissions is by empowering all the homeowners in America to use alternative energy such as solar power.

By enacting the *Solar Power Gone Viral* plan the Government and homeowners will split the costs for producing solar power in every household in America. There are two costs for producing residential solar power: the cost for purchasing the equipment and the cost for installation. The Government will pay upfront half of these costs combined, while the owner will cover the other half. Moreover, this other half will be reimbursed to the owner over five years, as tax credit, with the condition of continuing use of the equipment. This plan will expand the use of solar energy, which will eventually lead to a significant reduction of carbon pollution. It is beneficial for everybody now and in the future. So, give this idea a *Like* and we will *Share* the costs! I am confident that this plan will have a lot of followers, thus spreading solar power usage across America. “

1. Please mark with an "X" the space that best fits your answer to each of the following questions:

A. I think about GLOBAL WARMING/CLIMATE CHANGE a great deal.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

B. I am concerned about the GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

C. GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

D. GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE is not important to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

2. Please list as many elements as you can recall from the message that you have just read. (ONE ELEMENT PER ROW/NO PARAPHRASING OR INTERPRETATION NECESSARY HERE).

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

3. Please evaluate the sentences from bellow regarding the message that you read and mark the correct answer.

E. The new program encompasses multiple types of renewable energy solutions such as tidal, wind, and geothermal.

☐ True ☐ False

F. The presidential message aims at encouraging businesses, not residential home owners to add solar power to their facilities.

☐ True ☐ False

G. The program launched by the president in this message is limited to a specific category of homeowners, those who have the resources to cover up front the entire costs of the equipment and of the installation.

☐ True ☐ False

H. The homeowners who take advantage of this program will not receive tax credit for their initial contribution if they stop using the solar power equipment and return to conventional sources of energy.

☐ True ☐ False

4. Imagine that the policy measure announced by the President X in the message that you read at the beginning of this experiment becomes effective. What consequences do you see?

A. For yourself

B. For the U.S. population

C. For the U.S. industry

D. For the whole planet

5. Indicate your level of agreement with the message that you read at the beginning of this questionnaire by putting an "X" in the appropriate space on the scale provided.

Bad idea ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Good idea

Beneficial ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Harmful

Unfavorable ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Favorable

Negative ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Positive

6. How much do you agree overall with the proposal from the presidential message?

I do not agree at all ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ I agree completely

7. How likely is it that you would disseminate (comment, share, tweet, etc.) this presidential message or aspects from it if it were posted on social media?

Unlikely ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Most likely

DEMOGRAPHICS

Instructions: Listed below are a few demographic questions about you that will help me to understand your answers. Please write or select the appropriate response.

8. What is your age? _____

9. What is your current academic level?

☐ Freshman

☐ Sophomore

☐ Junior

☐ Senior

☐ Graduate

☐ Other

10. What is your gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Transgender

☐ I prefer not to
respond

11. What is your race?

☐ White

☐ Black

☐ Asian

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

☐ Other (ex.bi or multi-racial)

12. What is your household income?

☐ Under \$ 15,000

☐ \$ 15,000 – \$ 24, 999

☐ \$25,000 – \$ 34,999

☐ \$35, 000 – \$ 49, 999

☐ \$ 50,000 – \$ 74, 999

☐ \$ 75, 000 - \$ 100, 000

☐ \$ 100, 000+

13. What is your employment status?

☐ Employed full time

☐ Employed part time

☐ Unemployed

14. Are you a U.S. citizen?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Do you or your immediate family own a property in the U.S.?

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. What is your political ideology?

☐ Conservative ☐ Liberal ☐ Independent ☐ Other

17. In TODAY's politics which of the following options describes you best?

- ☐ Strong Democrat
- ☐ Weak Democrat
- ☐ Independent leaning Democrat
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Independent leaning Republican
- ☐ Weak Republican
- ☐ Strong Republican
- ☐ I do not know

18. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Check only one box when presented with multiple choices.

A. What are the three branches of the U.S. government between which the power is split, according to the Constitution?

- ☐ executive; economic; legislative
- ☐ legislative; executive; judicial
- ☐ judiciary; legislative; military

B. How many major political parties are there in the United States today?

☐ 2

☐ 5

☐ 1

C. Which amendment to the Constitution protects the freedom of the press?

☐ Second

☐ First

☐ Fourth

D. Who is currently the Chief Justice of the United States?

E. Who is the Secretary of State in the United States?

19. How often do you pay attention to what is going on in government and politics?

☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ About half of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ Never

20. Thinking specifically about government and politics, where do you get most of your news about this topic? Check one.

☐ On television

☐ On the Internet

☐ On the radio

☐ In print

21. Do you get news about politics mostly from?

☐ "Hard news" sources (traditional news channels, quality newspapers' websites, public radio news programs etc.)

☐ "Soft news" sources (satirical shows, political entertainment programs, social media etc.)

22. Check all of the social networking sites that you get news from about government and politics.

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Google Plus

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Other _____

23. Do you know what the word SELFIE means?

☐ Yes

☐ No

24. Do you know what the word DIGITAL NATIVE means?

☐ Yes

☐ No

25. How often to do you use digital media (on all digital devices combined)?

☐ Daily

☐ Twice a week

☐ Once a week

☐ Twice a month

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

Questionnaire 2

Instructions: On page 3 you will see a text representing a (fictitious) policy proposal announced by the (fictitious) president of the United States. Please READ THE MESSAGE FROM PAGE 3 ONLY DURING THE TIME ALLOCATED BY THE EXPERIMENT COORDINATOR, and then answer the questions that follow. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO THE MESSAGE once the time expired, so read it carefully, at your normal pace.

PLEASE DO NOT TURN BACK TO THE MESSAGE WHILE ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS.

Indicate your answer to each statement by putting an “X” in the appropriate space on the scale/box provided. Please respond to all the statements as honestly as possible. You are not expected to know details or to be current with aspects related to any of the issues relating to the message.

Your responses to the questions will remain completely confidential.

Thank you, in advance, for completing this questionnaire.

Page intentionally left blank

President X of the United States:

“We are launching today *Share Fare*, a new plan meant to help our seniors by sharing the costs of retirement with the Government. Currently 75 million workers do not have access to retirement plans through their employers. That is about half of the workforce in America. From these people only a few open IRA accounts on their own, although an IRA is a good instrument for planning for the future as it boosts your financial “posts.” This means that a significant number of people are unprepared for their retirement years and will be struggling if they want or need to live in a retirement facility when the time comes.

“The *Share Fare* plan provides incentives for those workers who are not offered retirement plans through their employers to open their own IRA accounts. Half of the living costs in a retirement facility for these people will be subsidized by the Government in certain conditions. Look at it as a follow for follow program! Therefore, if you do not have a retirement plan yet and start contributing to an IRA account with a minimum of \$ 2,000 per year, you will receive federal subsidies, when you legally retire, for 50% of the housing costs in a retirement facility of Government approved standards. Why crash the squad of the federal budget later when you can start getting settled on your own right away? Plus, a YOLO decision today will not help in the future, either. We have different tiers of retirement facilities participating in this program, so the more money you contribute to your IRA account, the higher the chances to be swag in a retirement community in the future. This program is lit and on point!”

1. Please mark with an "X" the space that best fits your answer to each of the following questions:

A. I have strong opinions about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

B. I think about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM a great deal.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

C. SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

D. I actively seek information about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly Agree

2. Please list as many elements as you can recall from the message that you have just read. (ONE ELEMENT PER ROW/NO PARAPHRASING OR INTERPRETATION NECESSARY HERE).

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

3. Please evaluate the sentences below regarding the message that you read and mark the correct answer.

E. The plan announced in the president's message is addressed to all workers, regardless of whether they have retirement plans through their employers or not, in order to improve their quality of life at retirement.

☐ True ☐ False

F. The Government does not encourage workers to open IRA accounts on their own because these contributions will lose their value in time.

☐ True ☐ False

G. The sharing of costs between the Government and the workers - as presented in the message - involves people's contribution over the years to IRA accounts, with amounts that will be relevant in qualifying for subsidies of housing expenses in retirement community of different qualities.

☐ True ☐ False

H. The presidential proposal encourages people to plan for the future – which is to make financial decisions today that will be beneficial during the retirement age, instead of depending on the federal aid at that time.

☐ True ☐ False

4. Imagine that the policy measure announced by the President X in the message that you read at the beginning of this experiment becomes effective. What consequences do you see?

A. For yourself

B. For Americans with high income

C. For Americans with low income

D. For the whole country

5. Indicate your level of agreement with the message that you read at the beginning of this questionnaire by putting an "X" in the appropriate space on the scale provided.

Bad idea ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Good idea

Beneficial ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Harmful

Unfavorable ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Favorable

Negative ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Positive

6. How much do you agree overall with the proposal from the presidential message?

I do not agree at all ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ I agree completely

7. How likely is it that you would disseminate (comment, share, tweet, etc.) this presidential message or aspects from it if it were posted on social media?

Unlikely ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Most likely

DEMOGRAPHICS

Instructions: Listed below are a few demographic questions about you that will help us to understand your answers. Please write or select the appropriate response.

8. What is your age? _____

9. What is your current academic level?

☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate

☐ Other

10. What is your gender?

☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Transgender ☐ I prefer not to respond

11. What is your race?

☐ White ☐ Black ☐ Asian ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Other (ex.bi or multi-racial)

12. What is your household income?

☐ Under \$ 15,000 ☐ \$ 15,000 – \$ 24, 999 ☐ \$25,000 – \$ 34,999
☐ \$35, 000 – \$ 49, 999 ☐ \$ 50,000 – \$ 74, 999 ☐ \$75, 000 - \$ 100, 000
☐ \$ 100, 000+

13. What is your employment status?

☐ Employed full time ☐ Employed part time ☐ Unemployed

14. Are you a U.S. citizen?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Do you have anybody in your immediate family that lives or is planning to move soon in a retirement facility?

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. What is your political ideology?

☐ Conservative ☐ Liberal ☐ Independent ☐ Other

17. In TODAY's politics which of the following options describes you best?

- ☐ Strong Democrat
- ☐ Weak Democrat
- ☐ Independent leaning Democrat
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Independent leaning Republican
- ☐ Weak Republican
- ☐ Strong Republican
- ☐ I do not know

18. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Check only one box when presented with multiple choices.

F. What are the three branches of the U.S. government between which the power is split, according to the Constitution?

- ☐ executive; economic; legislative
- ☐ legislative; executive; judicial
- ☐ judiciary; legislative; military

G. How many major political parties are there in the United States today?

☐ 2

☐ 5

☐ 1

H. Which amendment to the Constitution protects the freedom of the press?

☐ Second

☐ First

☐ Fourth

I. Who is currently the Chief Justice of the United States?

J. Who is the Secretary of State in the United States?

19. How often do you pay attention to what is going on in government and politics?

☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ About half of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ Never

20. Thinking specifically about government and politics, where do you get most of your news about this topic? Check one.

☐ On television ☐ On the Internet ☐ On the radio ☐ In print

21. Do you get news about politics mostly from?

☐ "Hard news" sources (traditional news channels, quality newspapers' websites, public radio news programs etc.)

☐ "Soft news" sources (satirical shows, political entertainment programs, social media etc.)

22. Check all of the social networking sites that you get news from about government and politics.

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Google Plus

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Other _____

23. Do you know what the word SELFIE means?

☐ Yes

☐ No

24. Do you know what the word DIGITAL NATIVE means?

☐ Yes

☐ No

25. How often to do you use digital media (on all digital devices combined)?

☐ Daily

☐ Twice a week

☐ Once a week

☐ Twice a month

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

Questionnaire 3

Instructions: On page 3 you will see a text representing a (fictitious) policy proposal announced by the (fictitious) president of the United States. Please READ THE MESSAGE FROM PAGE 3 ONLY DURING THE TIME ALLOCATED BY THE EXPERIMENT COORDINATOR, and then answer the questions that follow. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO THE MESSAGE once the time expired, so read it carefully, at your normal pace.

PLEASE DO NOT TURN BACK TO THE MESSAGE WHILE ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS.

Indicate your answer to each statement by putting an “X” in the appropriate space on the scale/box provided. Please respond to all the statements as honestly as possible. You are not expected to know details or to be current with aspects related to any of the issues relating to the message.

Your responses to the questions will remain completely confidential.

Thank you, in advance, for completing this questionnaire.

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President X of the United States:

“The *Solar Power* Plan that we are launching today is a program destined to combat climate change. As we all know, power plants are a major contributor to carbon pollution in the United States. These plants produce the energy that we need, by burning coal. They also release carbon dioxide, thus exposing all of us to their toxic emissions. These toxic emissions are real threats to the atmosphere as they trap heat, thus endangering our planet. One way to limit the carbon emissions is by empowering all the homeowners in America to use alternative energy such as solar power.

By enacting the *Solar Power* Plan the Government and homeowners will split the costs for producing solar power in every household in America. There are two costs for producing residential solar power: the cost for purchasing the equipment and the cost for installation. The Government will pay upfront half of the all these costs combined while the owner will cover the other half.

Moreover, this other half will be reimbursed to the owner over five years, as tax credit, with the condition of continuing use of the equipment. This plan will expand the use of solar energy, which will eventually lead to a significant reduction of carbon pollution. It is beneficial for everybody now and in the future. So if you participate in the program, we will split the costs! I am confident that this plan will be considered attractive, thus spreading solar power usage across America”.

1. Please mark with an "X" the space that best fits your answer to each of the following questions:

A. I think about GLOBAL WARMING/CLIMATE CHANGE a great deal.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

B. I am concerned about GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

C. GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

D. GLOBAL WARMING /CLIMATE CHANGE is not important to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

2. Please list as many elements as you can recall from the message that you have just read. (ONE ELEMENT PER ROW/NO PARAPHRASING OR INTERPRETATION NECESSARY HERE).

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

3. Please evaluate the sentences from below regarding the message that you read and mark the correct answer.

A. The new program encompasses multiple types of renewable energy solutions such as tidal, wind, and geothermal.

☐ True ☐ False

B. The presidential message aims at encouraging businesses , not residential home owners, to add solar power to their facilities.

☐ True ☐ False

C. The program launched by the president in this message is limited to a specific category of homeowners, those who have the resources to cover up front the entire costs of the equipment and of the installation.

☐ True ☐ False

D. The homeowners who take advantage of this program will not receive tax credit for their initial contribution if they stop using the solar power equipment and return to conventional sources of energy.

☐ True ☐ False

4. Imagine that the policy measure announced by the President X in the message that you read at the beginning of this experiment becomes effective. What consequences do you see?

A. For yourself

B. For the US population

C. For the US industry

D. For the whole planet

5. Indicate your level of agreement with the message that you read at the beginning of this questionnaire by putting an "X" in the appropriate space on the scale provided.

Bad idea ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Good idea

Beneficial ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Harmful

Unfavorable ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Favorable

Negative ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Positive

6. How much do you agree overall with the proposal from the presidential message?

I do not agree at all ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ I agree completely

7. How likely is it that you would disseminate (comment, share, tweet, etc.) this presidential message or aspects from it if it were posted on social media?

Unlikely ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Most likely

DEMOGRAPHICS

Instructions: Listed below are a few demographic questions about you that will help me to understand your answers. Please write or select the appropriate response.

8. What is your age? _____

9. What is your current academic level?

☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate ☐ Other

10. What is your gender?

☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Transgender ☐ I prefer not to respond

11. What is your race?

☐ White ☐ Black ☐ Asian ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Other (ex.bi or multi-racial)

12. What is your household income?

☐ Under \$ 15,000 ☐ \$ 15,000 – \$ 24, 999 ☐ \$25,000 – \$ 34,999
☐ \$35, 000 – \$ 49, 999 ☐ \$ 50,000 – \$ 74, 999 ☐ \$75, 000 - \$ 100, 000
☐ \$ 100, 000+

13. What is your employment status?

☐ Employed full time ☐ Employed part time ☐ Unemployed

14. Are you a U.S. citizen?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Do you or your immediate family own a property in the U.S.?

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. What is your political ideology?

☐ Conservative ☐ Liberal ☐ Independent ☐ Other

17. In TODAY's politics which of the following options describes you best?

- ☐ Strong Democrat
- ☐ Weak Democrat
- ☐ Independent leaning Democrat
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Independent leaning Republican
- ☐ Weak Republican
- ☐ Strong Republican
- ☐ I do not know

18. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Check only one box when presented with multiple choices.

A. What are the three branches of the U.S. government between which the power is split, according to the Constitution?

- ☐ executive; economic; legislative
- ☐ legislative; executive; judicial
- ☐ judiciary; legislative; military

B. How many major political parties are there in the United States today?

☐ 2

☐ 5

☐ 1

C. Which amendment to the Constitution protects the freedom of the press?

☐ Second

☐ First

☐ Fourth

D. Who is currently the Chief Justice of the United States?

E. Who is the Secretary of State in the United States?

19. How often do you pay attention to what is going on in government and politics?

☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ About half of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ Never

20. Thinking specifically about government and politics, where do you get most of your news about this topic? Check one.

☐ On television

☐ On the Internet

☐ On the radio

☐ In print

21. Do you get news about politics mostly from?

☐ "Hard news" sources (traditional news channels, quality newspapers' websites, public radio news programs etc.)

☐ "Soft news" sources (satirical shows, political entertainment programs, social media etc.)

22. Check all of the social networking sites that you get news from about government and politics.

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Google Plus

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Other _____

23. Do you know what the word SELFIE means?

☐ Yes

☐ No

24. Do you know what the word DIGITAL NATIVE means?

☐ Yes

☐ No

25. How often to do you use digital media (on all digital devices combined)?

☐ Daily

☐ Twice a week

☐ Once a week

☐ Twice a month

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

Questionnaire 4

Instructions: On page 3 you will see a text representing a (fictitious) policy proposal announced by the (fictitious) president of the United States. Please READ THE MESSAGE FROM PAGE 3 ONLY DURING THE TIME ALLOCATED BY THE EXPERIMENT COORDINATOR, and then answer the questions that follow. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO THE MESSAGE once the time expired, so read it carefully, at your normal pace.

PLEASE DO NOT TURN BACK TO THE MESSAGE WHILE ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS.

Indicate your answer to each statement by putting an “X” in the appropriate space on the scale/box provided. Please respond to all the statements as honestly as possible. You are not expected to know details or to be current with aspects related to any of the issues relating to the message.

Your responses to the questions will remain completely confidential.

Thank you, in advance, for completing this questionnaire.

Page intentionally left blank

President X of the United States:

“We are launching today the *Retirement Facilities Reform*, a new plan meant to help our seniors by sharing the costs of retirement with the Government. Currently 75 million workers do not have access to retirement plans through their employers. That is about half of the workforce in America. From these people only a few open IRA accounts on their own, although an IRA is a good instrument for planning for the future as it multiplies your savings. This means that a significant number of people are unprepared for the retirement years and will be struggling if they want or need to live in a retirement facility when the time comes.

The *Retirement Facilities Reform* plan provides incentives for those workers who are not offered retirement plans through their employers to open their own IRA accounts. Half of the living costs in a retirement facility for these people will be subsidized by the Government in certain conditions. If you start contributing, we will contribute, too. Therefore, if you do not have a retirement plan yet and start contributing to an IRA account with a minimum of \$ 2,000 per year, you will receive federal subsidies, when you legally retire, for 50% of the housing costs in a retirement facility of Government approved standards. Why appeal to the federal budget later when you can start getting settled on your own right away? Plus a bad decision today will not help in the future, either. We have different tiers of retirement facilities participating in this program so the more money you contribute to your IRA account, the higher the chances to be comfortable in a retirement community in the future. This is absolutely a great program! ”

1. Please mark with an "X" the space that best fits your answer to each of the following questions:

A. I have strong opinions about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

B. I think about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM a great deal.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

C. SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM is an issue that is personally relevant to me.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

D. I actively seek information about SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM/RETIREMENT FACILITIES REFORM.

Strongly Disagree ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Strongly Agree

2. Please list as many elements as you can recall from the message that you have just read. (ONE ELEMENT PER ROW/NO PARAPHRASING OR INTERPRETATION NECESSARY HERE).

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

3. Please evaluate the sentences from below regarding the message that you read and mark the correct answer.

A. The plan announced in the president's message is addressed to all workers, regardless of whether they have retirement plans through their employers or not, in order to improve their quality of life at retirement.

☐ True ☐ False

B. The Government does not encourage workers to open IRA accounts on their own because these contributions will lose their value in time.

☐ True ☐ False

C. The sharing of costs between the Government and the workers - as presented in the message - involves people's contribution over the years to IRA accounts, with amounts that will be relevant in qualifying for subsidies of housing expenses in retirement community of different qualities.

☐ True ☐ False

D. The presidential proposal encourages people to plan for the future – which is to make financial decisions today that will be beneficial during the retirement age, instead of depending on the federal aid at that time.

☐ True ☐ False

4. Imagine that the policy measure announced by the President X in the message that you read at the beginning of this experiment becomes effective. What consequences do you see?

A. For yourself

B. For Americans with high income

C. For Americans with low income

D. For the whole country

5. Indicate your level of agreement with the message that you read at the beginning of this questionnaire by putting an "X" in the appropriate space on the scale provided.

Bad idea ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Good idea

Beneficial ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Harmful

Unfavorable ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Favorable

Negative ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Positive

6. How much do you agree overall with the proposal from the presidential message?

I do not agree at all ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ I agree completely

7. How likely is it that you would disseminate (comment, share, tweet, etc.) this presidential message or aspects from it if it were posted on social media?

Unlikely ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____: ____ Most likely

DEMOGRAPHICS

Instructions: Listed below are a few demographic questions about you that will help us to understand your answers. Please write or select the appropriate response.

8. What is your age? _____

9. What is your current academic level?

☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior ☐ Graduate ☐ Other

10. What is your gender?

☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Transgender ☐ I prefer not to respond

11. What is your race?

☐ White ☐ Black ☐ Asian ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Other (ex.bi or multi-racial)

12. What is your household income?

☐ Under \$ 15,000 ☐ \$ 15,000 – \$ 24, 999 ☐ \$25,000 – \$ 34,999
☐ \$35, 000 – \$ 49, 999 ☐ \$ 50,000 – \$ 74, 999 ☐ \$ 75, 000 - \$ 100, 000
☐ \$ 100, 000+

13. What is your employment status?

☐ Employed full time ☐ Employed part time ☐ Unemployed

14. Are you a U.S. citizen?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Do you have anybody in your immediate family that lives or is planning to move soon in a retirement facility?

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. What is your political ideology?

☐ Conservative ☐ Liberal ☐ Independent ☐ Other

17. In TODAY's politics which of the following options describes you best?

- ☐ Strong Democrat
- ☐ Weak Democrat
- ☐ Independent leaning Democrat
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Independent leaning Republican
- ☐ Weak Republican
- ☐ Strong Republican
- ☐ I do not know

18. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Check only one box when presented with multiple choices.

A. What are the three branches of the U.S. government between which the power is split, according to the Constitution?

- ☐ executive; economic; legislative
- ☐ legislative; executive; judicial
- ☐ judiciary; legislative; military

B. How many major political parties are there in the United States today?

☐ 2

☐ 5

☐ 1

C. Which amendment to the Constitution protects the freedom of the press?

☐ Second

☐ First

☐ Fourth

D. Who is currently the Chief Justice of the United States?

E. Who is the Secretary of State in the United States?

19. How often do you pay attention to what is going on in government and politics?

☐ Always ☐ Most of the time ☐ About half of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ Never

20. Thinking specifically about government and politics, where do you get most of your news about this topic? Check one.

☐ On television ☐ On the Internet ☐ On the radio ☐ In print

21. Do you get news about politics mostly from?

☐ "Hard news" sources (traditional news channels, quality newspapers' websites, public radio news programs etc.)

☐ "Soft news" sources (satirical shows, political entertainment programs, social media etc.)

22. Check all of the social networking sites that you get news from about government and politics.

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Google Plus

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Other _____

23. Do you know what the word SELFIE means?

☐ Yes

☐ No

24. Do you know what the word DIGITAL NATIVE means?

☐ Yes

☐ No

25. How often to do you use digital media (on all digital devices combined)?

☐ Daily

☐ Twice a week

☐ Once a week

☐ Twice a month

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

Appendix 3: Message Strategy-Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Message type	Conceptual definition	Operational definition (Treatment)
1	Message containing metaphors for the high involvement topic	<p>“<i>Solar Power Gone Viral*</i> is, you could say, the hash tag for the solar power plan that we are launching today, a program destined to combat climate change. As we all know, power plants are a major contributor to carbon pollution in the United States. These plants produce the energy that we need by burning coal. They also release carbon dioxide, thus oversharing their toxic emissions with all of us. These toxic emissions are not virtual threats in the cybersphere; they are real threats to the atmosphere as they trap heat, thus endangering our planet. One way to limit the carbon emissions is by empowering all the homeowners in America to use alternative energy such as solar power.</p> <p>By enacting the <i>Solar Power Gone Viral</i> plan the Government and homeowners will split the costs for producing solar power in every household in America. There are two costs for producing residential solar power: the cost for purchasing the equipment and the cost for installation. The Government will pay upfront half of these costs combined, while the owner will cover the other half. Moreover, this other half will be reimbursed to the owner over five years, as tax credit, with the condition of continuing use of the equipment. This plan will expand the use of solar energy, which will eventually lead to a significant reduction of carbon pollution. It is beneficial for everybody now and in the future. So, give this idea a <i>Like</i> and we will <i>Share</i> the costs! I am confident that this plan will have a lot of followers, thus spreading solar power usage across America. “</p>
2	Message containing metaphors for the low involvement topic	<p>“We are launching today <i>Share Fare*</i>, a new plan meant to help our seniors by sharing the costs of retirement with the Government. Currently 75 million workers do not have access to retirement plans through their employers. That is about half of the workforce in America. From these people only a few open IRA accounts on their own, although IRA is a good instrument for planning for the future as it boosts your financial “posts”. This means that a significant number of people are unprepared for the retirement years and will be struggling if they want or need to live in a retirement facility when the time comes.</p> <p>The <i>Share Fare</i> plan provides incentives for workers who are not offered retirement plans through their employers to open their own IRA accounts. Half of the living costs in a retirement facility for these people will be subsidized by the Government in certain conditions. Look at it as a follow for follow program! Therefore, if you do not have a retirement plan yet and start contributing to an IRA account with a minimum of \$ 2000 per year you will receive federal subsidies, when you legally retire, for 50% of the housing costs in a retirement facility of Government approved standards. Why crash the squad of the federal budget later when you can start getting settled on your own right away? Plus, a YOLO decision today will not help in the future, either. We have different tiers of retirement facilities participating in this program, so the more money you contribute to your IRA account, the higher the chances to be swag in a retirement community in the future. This program is lit and on point!”</p>

Message type	Conceptual definition	Operational definition (Treatment)
3	Message not containing metaphors for the high involvement topic	<p>“The <i>Solar Power</i> Plan that we are launching today is a program destined to combat climate change. As we all know, power plants are a major contributor to carbon pollution in the United States. These plants produce the energy that we need, by burning coal. They also release carbon dioxide, thus exposing all of us to their toxic emissions. These toxic emissions are real threats to the atmosphere as they trap heat, thus endangering our planet. One way to limit the carbon emissions is by empowering all the homeowners in America to use alternative energy such as solar power.</p> <p>By enacting the <i>Solar Power</i> Plan the Government and homeowners will split the costs for producing solar power in every household in America. There are two costs for producing residential solar power: the cost for purchasing the equipment and the cost for installation. The Government will pay upfront half of the all these costs combined while the owner will cover the other half. Moreover, this other half will be reimbursed to the owner over five years, as tax credit, with the condition of continuing use of the equipment. This plan will expand the use of solar energy, which will eventually lead to a significant reduction of carbon pollution. It is beneficial for everybody now and in the future. So if you participate in the program, we will split the costs! I am confident that this plan will be considered attractive, thus spreading solar power usage across America”.</p>
4	Message not containing metaphors for the low involvement topic	<p>“We are launching today the <i>Retirement Facilities Reform</i>, a new plan meant to help our seniors by sharing the costs of retirement with the Government. Currently 75 million workers do not have access to retirement plans through their employers. That is about half of the workforce in America. From these people only a few open IRA accounts on their own, although IRA is a good instrument for planning for the future as it multiplies your savings. This means that a significant number of people are unprepared for the retirement years and will be struggling if they want or need to live in a retirement facility when the time comes.</p> <p>The <i>Retirement Facilities Reform</i> plan provides incentives for workers who are not offered retirement plans through their employers to open their own IRA accounts. Half of the living costs in a retirement facility for this people will be subsidized by the Government in certain conditions. If you start contributing, we will contribute, too. Therefore, if you do not have a retirement plan yet and start contributing to an IRA account with a minimum of \$ 2000 per year you will receive federal subsidies, when you legally retire, for 50% of the housing costs in a retirement facility of Government approved standards. Why appeal to the federal budget later when you can start getting settled on your own right away? Plus a bad decision today will not help in the future, either. We have different tiers of retirement facilities participating in this program so the more money you contribute to your IRA account, the higher the chances to be comfortable in a retirement community in the future. This is absolutely a great program! ”</p>

Note: * Leading metaphor

Appendix 4: Research Integrity and Compliance-IRB Letter of Approval



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

December 15, 2015

Mirela Stimus
Government and International Affairs
Tampa, FL 33626

RE: **Exempt Certification**
IRB#: Pro00024224
Title: How Presidents Can Become "Hip" by Using High Definition Metaphors
An Experiment on the Avenue of Strategic Communication of Leadership in the
Digital Age

Dear Ms. Stimus:

On 12/15/2015, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets criteria for exemption from the federal regulations as outlined by 45CFR46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Approved Items:

[Protocol Version #1](#)

[Informed consent \(no signature line\)](#)

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF HRPP policies and procedures.

Please note, as per USF HRPP Policy, once the Exempt determination is made, the application is closed in ARC. Any proposed or anticipated changes to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB review must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant an amendment or new application.

Given the determination of exemption, this application is being closed in ARC. This does not limit your ability to conduct your research project.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Schinka, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board