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RESISTANCE TO MAJORITY OPINION:
RELIGION AND THE "HARD CORE"

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RESIST

RESISTANCE TO MAJORITY OPINION: RELIGION AND THE "HARD CORE"

By

Scott Howard Clarke

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ABSTRACT

RESISTANCE TO MAJORITY OPINION: RELIGION AND THE "HARD CORE"

By

Scott Howard Clarke

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's "Spiral of Silence" theory states that social cohesion is maintained via conformity pressures experienced by everyone. Individuals scan the mass media to determine whether their opinions on controversial issues are in the social majority and whether their views are gaining public support. Those who perceive that their opinions are in the minority or are losing support will be silenced. Nevertheless, a "hard core" of persons often resists opinion change. This study examines religious groups as a source of opinion resistance on two controversial social issues: abortion and homosexuality.

Dean Kelley theorized that "exclusivist" (or "sectarian") religious groups resist societal values through absolutist interpretations of "truth," rigid in-group conformity and the use of alternative communication systems. These are the same three methods of resistance that Noelle-Neumann hypothesizes for the hard core.

This project devised and tested an operational definition of the opinion "hard core." The study's results reveal that hard cores were younger than other respondents, but were otherwise similar to the sample as a whole. Hard cores were also heavier consumers of both mass and alternative (religious) media. In addition, the data suggest that hard cores may have disproportionately come from "exclusivist" religious groups.

The hard core also appears to be issue specific. These persons perceived the prevailing opinion climate and the future climate of opinion on both issues to be more liberal than other respondents did. The hard core's opinions on the abortion issue were more conservative than others' opinions. However, their opinions on the homosexuality issue were not significantly different from other respondents' opinions.

The study's findings are discussed in terms of the Spiral of Silence, and several suggestions for future investigations of the "hard core" are offered. These suggestions include greater research attention to persons' reference groups and to their alternative media use as methods of resisting mass media influence.

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RESISTANCE TO MAJORITY OPINION: RELIGION AND THE "HARD CORE"

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The Spiral of Silence

Introduction. The "Spiral of Silence" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1991, 1993) has been called "one of the most significant theoretical developments in public opinion research" (Glynn & Park, 1997, p. 213), linking individual- and social-level variables in a dynamic process of opinion formation and change (Glynn & Park, 1997; Kennamer, 1990). It also gives mass media a central role in this process (Noelle-Neumann, 1973; Price & Allen, 1990).

A sizeable portion of American research into the Spiral of Silence has been concerned with clarifying or critiquing various portions of the theory. However, just two studies (Glynn & McLeod, 1982, 1984) have investigated the opinion "hard cores" who are able to resist social conformity pressures. These projects examined only one facet of possible resistance – stability of voting intention – leaving "much to be desired" (Glynn & McLeod, 1985, p. 61; see also Noelle-Neumann, 1985). Therefore, the task of determining just what characterizes the hard core, those who are "hardly susceptible to the threat of isolation [nor] ruled by fear of isolation" (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, p. 274), remains. This is hardly surprising, since communication theory tends to "overlook, or at least underplay, the role of resistance" (Knowles & Linn, 2004).

This study develops the concept of the opinion hard core, both theoretically and empirically. Those descriptions of the "hard core" scattered throughout Noelle-Neumann's writings will be compared to the characteristics of "sectarian" religious groups. It will be shown that both the "hard core" and "sectarian" groups have three traits

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in common – absolutist/"dogmatic" attitudes, strong in-group ties, and alternative communication sources. Insights from the sociological, social-psychological and communication literatures will be presented to demonstrate how these traits permit the hard core to resist social conformity pressures. Finally, the theoretical developments advanced in this analysis will be empirically tested.

Background. According to Noelle-Neumann, the theory of a "spiral of silence" grew out of her work studying German elections. In 1965, supporters of both major parties consistently reported similar voting intentions, giving the impression of a "neck-and-neck race". However, a "last minute swing" led to a surprise "bandwagon effect" for the Christian Democratic Party (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, 1993). Noelle-Neumann hypothesized that voters developed divergent expectations of which party would win based on biased television coverage of the incumbent party. She hypothesized that this coverage led to a "climate of opinion" more favorable to the Christian Democrats, which gave their supporters greater confidence. At the same time, supporters of other parties became disheartened and fell silent, further weakening their apparent strength and producing the bandwagon effect (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, 1993).

Noelle-Neumann subsequently observed similar behaviors in other contexts, leading her to conclude that a pervasive fear of social isolation exists. She hypothesized that a threat of social ostracism lay behind what she termed a "spiral of silence" (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1974, 1993).

This hypothesis led Noelle-Neumann to search for historical evidence of such a phenomenon. She found in Tocqueville's history of the French Revolution what she calls a "precise description of the dynamics of the spiral of silence" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993,

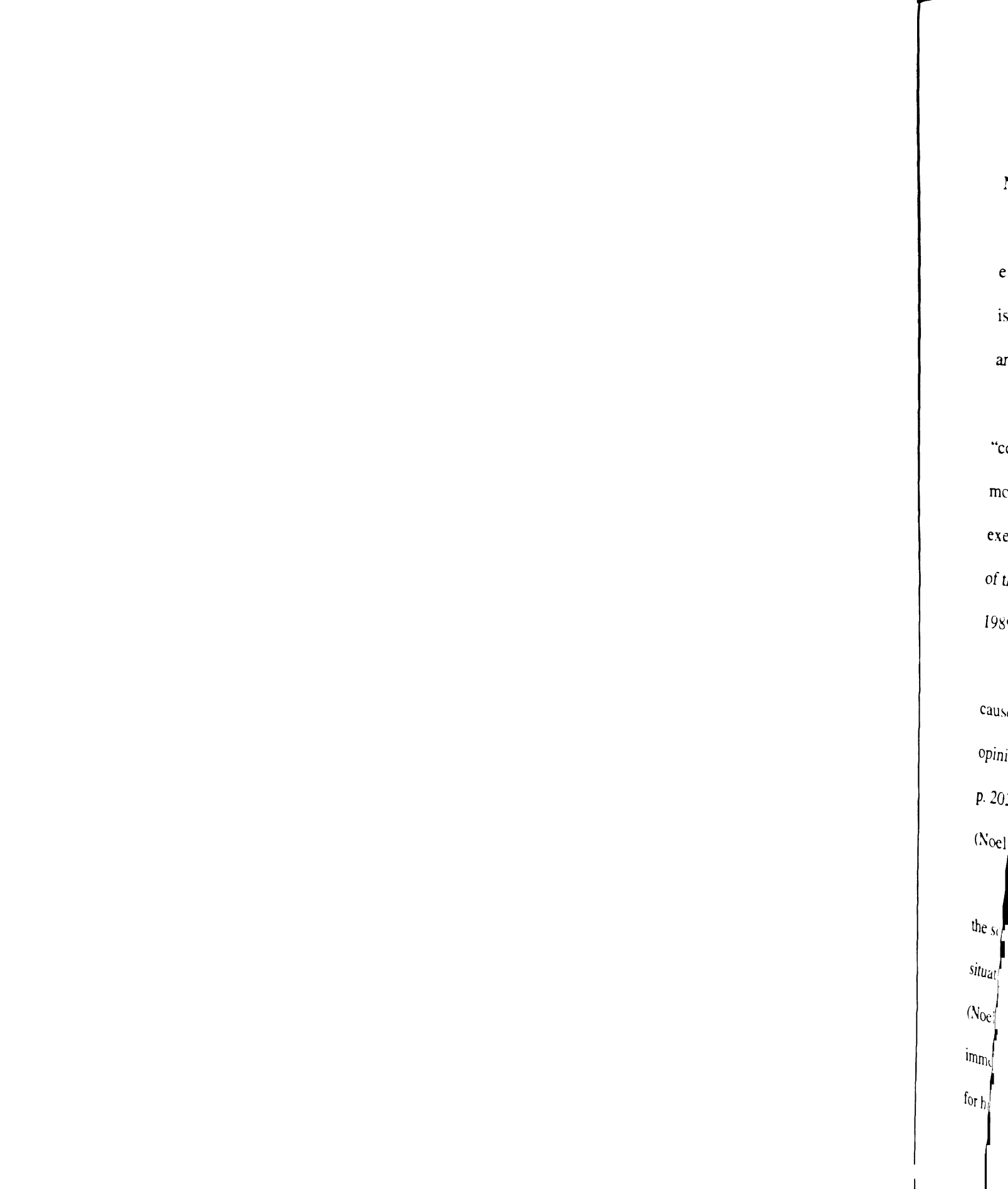
p. 7). Tocqueville recounts how popular contempt for religion grew prior to the revolution, while the faithful were silenced:

> Those who retained their belief in the doctrines of the Church became afraid of being alone in their allegiance and, dreading isolation more than the stigma of heresy, professed to share the sentiments of the majority. So what was in reality the opinion of only a part (though a large one) of the nation came to be regarded as the will of all and for this reason seemed irresistible even to those who had given it this false appearance (Tocqueville, 1856/1955, p. 155)

Noelle-Neumann often cites this passage (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1974, 1979, 1991, 1993) as suggesting both a collective "threat of isolation" and an individual "fear of isolation".

Next, Noelle-Neumann turned to ongoing experiments in social psychology for scientific evidence of such social pressures. She considered Solomon Asch's (1952; 1956; 1958) "conformity" experiments to be particularly applicable to her hypothesis of silence. In her later works, she reports finding extensive historical and experimental evidence for the Spiral of Silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, 1993, 1995). Therefore, the next section reviews the major propositions of Noelle-Neumann's theory, along with her more recent elaborations and clarifications of it.

The Theory. Noelle-Neumann defines "public opinion" as a process of social control, "centered on ensuring a sufficient level of consensus within society on the community's values and goals" (1993, p. 229). Public opinion in this sense includes social expectations regarding ideas, opinions or modes of behavior (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, 1993). Society maintains consensus by pressuring "deviant" individuals to conform through threat of social "isolation," "rejection" or "ostracism" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 228-229). This pressure is said to be stronger in egalitarian societies (Noelle-Neumann,



1993) and during periods of social crisis, threat, or "rapidly changing values" (Noelle-Neumann, 1989, p. 7).

The "social nature" (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, p. 70) of individuals makes them especially sensitive to consensus pressure. Although everyone experiences this fear of isolation "continuously" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 202), it is "generally unconscious and probably genetically based" (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, p. 259).

Noelle-Neumann maintains that the "threat of isolation" is effective only for "controversial" (Noelle-Neumann, 1989, p. 26) topics having a "strong emotional or moral component" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 200), since only these are capable of exerting conformity pressure (1977; 1985; 1989; 1993; 1994). She claims that this aspect of the theory has always been assumed, but was not always explicit (Noelle-Neumann, 1989, 1991, 1993).

The "fear of appearing contemptible to others" (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, p. 72) causes individuals to constantly monitor their social environment for clues about "which opinions and forms of behavior are gaining or losing strength" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 202). Noelle-Neumann calls this unconscious process a "quasi-statistical sense" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 202).

Individuals use two primary sources for assessing the distribution of opinions in the social environment: their firsthand observations and the mass media. In most situations, however, the mass media – particularly television – exert the greater influence (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1985, 1993, 1999). "For all questions outside [an individual's] immediate personal sphere he is almost totally dependent on mass media for the facts and for his evaluation of the climate of opinion" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 51). Noelle-

Neumann assumes the mass media to be ideologically consonant, ubiquitous, and capable of producing cumulative long-term effects (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1999).

In Noelle-Neumann's (1974) view, "the mass media have to be seen as *creating* [italics added] public opinion: they provide the environmental pressure to which people respond" (p. 51). This pressure is created through two complementary processes. First, the media popularize and legitimate certain viewpoints by selecting which issues to cover (an agenda-setting function). This exposure, in turn, enables individuals holding similar opinions to express themselves more articulately and confidently (an "articulation function") (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, 1993).

This process is particularly useful when the "tenor of the media" (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, 1994) supports a minority viewpoint, since it convinces the minority that its view is morally "right". By contrast, those whose perspectives are not covered by the media are rendered "effectively mute" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 173).

Occasionally, media content becomes so biased that it fosters "a state of pluralistic ignorance" in which minority opinion holders believe they are in the majority, or vice versa (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, p. 80). Furthermore, "under very special circumstances...the climate of opinion among the people and that dominant among media journalists diverge," creating a "dual climate of opinion" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 168). Noelle-Neumann says such circumstances may arise during election campaigns, "because at such times direct communication between the candidates and the population takes on more importance in addition to media communication" (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, p. 80; see also Noelle-Neumann, 1989).

In sum, then, individuals scan both their immediate social environment and the mass media to determine whether their views are in the majority or are gaining support. If either is the case, these individuals should be confident and willing to publicly express them. On the other hand, those whose views are in the minority or are losing support will "become cautious and silent, thus reinforcing the impression of weakness, until the apparently weaker side disappears completely except for a hard core that holds on to its previous values, or until the opinion becomes taboo" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 202).

Little is known about the "hard core" that remains at the end of an opinion change process. Noelle-Neumann confesses only a basic understanding herself. She refers to the "hard core" as "exceptions to the rule" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 170), since these individuals, like the "avant-garde," "either know no fear of isolation or have overcome it" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 139). The next section reviews Noelle-Neumann's various writings on the "hard core".

The Hard Core. The earliest tests of the Spiral of Silence revealed that some minority opinion holders were more willing to express themselves than were those in the numerical majority (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1974, 1993). These findings convinced Noelle-Neumann that some individuals were able to resist the social threat of isolation (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). She hypothesized two such groups. The first was those persons who are able to resist (or even *use*) public opinion pressure to introduce social change, commonly called the "avant-garde" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). The second consisted of those individuals who remain confident in their opinions at the end of an opinion "spiral". She labeled this group the "hard core" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1993).

The avant-garde and the hard core thus appear at both ends of an opinion change process. "At the beginning and towards the end of changes in the climate of opinion, minorities – avant-garde and hard core – are more willing to stand up for their opinion than the majority..." (Noelle-Neumann, 1977, p. 151). Avant-gardes are oriented to the future, confident that their views will eventually win out. Conversely, the hard core is oriented to the past, to "traditional" social views (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). In fact, the hard core may consider itself to be an "avant-garde," leading public opinion *back* to its point of view (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). Noelle-Neumann summarizes:

> Unlike the members of the avant-garde, a hard core can turn its back to the public, can close itself completely off when it finds itself in public with strangers, can encapsulate itself like a sect and orient itself to the past or to the most distant future (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 170).

How the hard core manages to "close itself off" to public opinion pressure is unclear to Noelle-Neumann (1993), although she claims that personality traits alone cannot account for this phenomenon. This suggests that it is an individual's *perspective* on social pressure that matters. Noelle-Neumann (1993) notes three such perspectives in her analysis of the avant-garde. First, social "deviants" may be largely unaffected by public opinion pressure (p. 140). Second, individuals may endure the pressure because they believe they must – even if it means suffering. Third, some people enjoy public scrutiny and are even motivated by it. The hard core likely takes these same perspectives, since Asch observed the same three characteristics in his "independent" subjects (Asch, 1952, 1956, 1958).

Elsewhere, Noelle-Neumann suggests that some individuals "may get accustomed to isolation" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 49). That passage provides further insights into the hard core's methods of resistance:

> These findings suggest that, after a lengthy struggle, a minority faction may be reduced to a hard core of persons who are not prepared to conform, to change their opinions, or even to be silent in the face of public opinion. Some members of this group may get accustomed to isolation, and many of them may manage to support their opinions by selecting out persons and media which confirm their views (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, pp. 48-49).

This statement demonstrates that the hard core is in fact a minority group. Noelle-Neumann has proposed that members of the avant-garde and the hard core *together* do not exceed "10 to 15% of the population" – they may be considered "marginal groups" (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, p. 85).

Furthermore, the idea that hard cores may select "persons and media which confirm their views" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 49) parallels Noelle-Neumann's ideas on the "dual climate of opinion". This "gap in perception" results when

> ...persons who have much exposure to the media take a different view of the climate of opinion and where the majority is to be found than persons who do not have much exposure to the media and essentially depend on their immediate observations (Noelle-Neumann, 1989, p. 21).

An individual's "immediate observations" undoubtedly involve "persons and media which confirm their views" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 49). Indeed, Noelle-Neumann often states that the concepts of the "hard core" and the "dual climate of opinion" require further development (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1994). Nevertheless, she downplays ideas linking the two. For instance:

> ...I have not talked about friends and acquaintances, about the individual's various reference groups. I do not see these as alternatives in the process of opinion formation, that is, it is not either the mass media or the reference groups...You cannot talk about alternatives – the influence of the mass media versus the influence of primary groups, in all seriousness; at best you can talk about very interesting mutual reinforcement or attenuation" (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, p. 84).

Perhaps Noelle-Neumann is thinking only of persons who are not members of the avante-garde or the opinion hard core. At any rate, her statement that the hard core "...can turn its back to the public, can close itself completely off when it finds itself in public with strangers, *can encapsulate itself like a sect...*" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 170, italics added) suggests an important avenue of investigation.

This study focuses on the characteristics of "sectarian" (O'Dea, 1966; Stark & Bainbridge, 1979) religious groups, since they appear likely to be opinion hard cores. The selection of this group was guided by six theoretical considerations. First, Noelle-Neumann (1993) criticizes Lowell (1919) for excluding religion (among other topics) from his definition of public opinion, stating that her concept "is not [similarly] restricted in subject matter" (p. 64). Second, the Spiral of Silence is partly derived from Noelle-Neumann's reading of Toqueville (1856/1955), which in itself suggests the appropriateness of religion as a topic. Third, Noelle-Neumann (citing Tönnies, 2000) alludes to religion's protective potential: "Under certain conditions...the exposed individual is sheltered by the intimacy and trust engendered through, for example, a shared religion. In great civilizations, however, the individual stands exposed even more openly to the demands of society (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, pp. 61-62). Fourth, Noelle-Neumann (1993) cites the Bible as a source of information about public opinion. Fifth, she claims that the "threat of isolation" is only effective for issues with a "strong emotional or *moral* component" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 200, italics added.). Sixth, the hypothesis of silence in the face of majority opposition cannot account for religious martyrdom (Boyarin, 1999; Riddle, 1931; M. Sherif & Cantril, 1947).

Religious groups' positions on social issues are frequently at odds with prevailing public opinion. However, their influence on individuals' willingness to publicly express controversial opinions has never been tested. Noelle-Neumann, following Tönnies (2000), assumes that religion's protective influence is limited to "primitive societies" (1989, p. 7). Furthermore, her analysis of Tocqueville (1856/1955) indicates that religious persons are just as susceptible to the Spiral of Silence as anyone else. However, a more plausible explanation is that Tönnies (2000) and Tocqueville (1856/1955) are speaking of qualitatively different *types* of religion in different cultural contexts.

Church-Sect Theory

Church and Sect. Max Weber (1922/1963) first proposed a conceptual distinction between "churches," "sects" and "cults," based largely on the degree of institutionalization prevalent within a religious group. He defined an established, formalized and highly structured religious group as a "church" (Stark & Bainbridge, 1979, 1985; Troeltsch, 1931/1981; Weber, 1922/1963). This is the type of group that Tocqueville (1856/1955) studied. A "cult," on the other hand, is an informal, compact group that gathers periodically to perform common rituals (Durkheim, 1912/1976; Weber, 1922/1963). Therefore, the "shared religion" in a primitive society (Tönnies, 2000) is a "cult" in the original sense of the word.

A "sect" is similar to a "cult" in many respects. The major distinction between the two is that a "cult" is a newly formed religious group, while a "sect" is typically formed by division within an existing body (Stark & Bainbridge, 1979, 1985; Troeltsch, 1931/1981; Weber, 1922/1963). Both groups exist "in a high state of tension with their

surrounding sociocultural environment" (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985, p. 24). This is the dimension most relevant to the Spiral of Silence.

O'Dea (1966, p. 68) defines "churches" by their "tendency to adjust to and compromise with the existing society and its values and institutions." "Sects," on the other hand, promote "separatism from the general society and withdrawal from or defiance of the world and its institutions and values" (1966, p. 68, see also B. Johnson, 1963; Troeltsch, 1931/1981; Wilson, 1959, 1970). Sectarian groups may remain within an established church, hoping to reform it (O'Dea, 1966; Stark & Bainbridge, 1979, 1985; Wuthnow, 1988). Alternatively, they may secede from a church (or another sect) to form their own community (O'Dea, 1966; Stark & Bainbridge, 1985).

Strictness and Leniency. Dean Kelley (1972) proposed a more elegant typology, defining a religious group in terms of its "strictness". He describes groups as relatively "ecumenical" or "exclusivist". These terms permit the classification of non-Christian groups as well as Christian groups that do not consider themselves "churches," "denominations," "sects" or "cults" (Clark, 1949; D. M. Kelley, 1972). Therefore, this study uses Kelley's terminology.

Kelley (1972) examines three characteristics of a social group: its goals, social controls and communication patterns. The Spiral of Silence is also concerned with these traits at the societal level – social consensus, the threat of isolation and the climate of opinion, respectively. Noelle-Neumann (1985) believes *societal* forces determine individual opinion expression (or silence): "'Climate of opinion' – the concept is particularly well suited to express the external influence associated with public opinion,

which also represents an internal influence on human beings, as well as the omnipresence of public opinion from which nobody can withdraw" (p. 84).

Kelley (1972), however, assumes that *small group processes* exert the strongest influence on individuals; particularly for those who belong to "strict" groups. This hypothesis is more intuitively appealing and is supported by the bulk of the conformity literature (Bond & Smith, 1996). Kelley hypothesizes that group strictness directly translates to social strength, the "cohesion, vitality, and functional effectiveness" (p. 56) of a group. He states: *"A group with evidences of social strength will proportionately show traits of strictness; a group with traits of leniency will proportionately show evidences of social weakness rather than strength"* (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 86).

Kelley (1972) defines "strictness" and "leniency" in terms of the social "cost" of group membership. He states that exclusivist groups are defined by absolutism, conformity and fanaticism, whereas ecumenical groups stress relativism, diversity and dialogue. Each of these traits reflects the group's relative separation from, or accommodation to, society (B. Johnson, 1963; O'Dea, 1966).

Strict groups practice doctrinal *absolutism.* They believe that only they possess the "truth" and that all others are in error. Their teachings are believed to explain everything and members follow them with "uncritical and unreflective tenacity" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 79). Conversely, lenient groups observe doctrinal *relativism.* They believe that "no one has a monopoly on truth" (p. 82) and members are skeptical of any such claims to authority. Furthermore, religion is seen as only one source of personal values and fulfillment in a modern society.

Exclusivist groups require strict *conformity,* not only in matters of faith and morals but also in personal habits such as speech, dress or conduct. Kelley (1972) states:

> These peculiarities are the uniform of the group, which demonstrates to all that they are different from other people. These are their shared stigmata of solidarity, their badge of belonging. The ridicule and persecution it draws down, even upon children, is an important element in reinforcing the mutual support within the group and in increasing their separation from the hostile outside world (p. 80).

Deviance is not tolerated – such groups discipline non-conforming members by methods like "shunning," group confessions or even excommunication. Ecumenical groups have no such requirements – individual differences are respected and *diversity* is encouraged (see also Troeltsch, 1931/1981).

Strict groups evidence a communication pattern in which the flow of messages out of the group exceeds the flow into it. Kelley (1972) calls this *fanaticism.* This imbalance is created when groups either form a community physically isolated from the outside world or issue such a barrage of outgoing messages themselves that incoming ones are ineffective. Lenient groups, on the other hand, are characterized by *dialogue*, "the exchange of differing insights among equals" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 82).

Kelley (1972) proposes a direct relationship between a group's "strictness" and the "social strength" of its membership. Strong groups demonstrate commitment, discipline and missionary zeal, while weak groups are characterized by "lukewarmness," individualism and reserve.

Kelley (1972) defines *commitment* as the degree to which individuals' goals are "highly or wholly identified with – or derived from – those of the group" (p. 57. See also Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy, & Sikkink, 1998). Because strict groups demand more from their members, they receive more. Members are willing to "suffer persecution,

to sacrifice status, possessions, safety, and life itself" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 57) for the group's cause. Weak groups are characterized by *"lukewarmness,"* or social lassitude. Since lenient groups emphasize the relativity of values, none merit personal sacrifice (see also Rosenberg, 1951).

Strong groups are willing to enforce *discipline,* sanctions or punishments for deviance. Members of strict groups are willing to follow authority without question and to "fully submit themselves" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 85) to group discipline. Because lenient groups are characterized by *individualism*, group discipline becomes impractical: "It works only until it comes in conflict with each individual's convictions, disposition, or convenience, whereupon he is inclined to abandon the group rather than submit to its demands" (p. 85). Such groups find it increasingly difficult to motivate their members.

A third characteristic of strong groups is their members' *missionary zeal,* "an eagerness to tell the Good News to others, with warmth and confidence and winsomeness in the telling, *refusing to be silenced* even by repression or persecution" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 58, italics added.). The heavy outflow of communication from strict groups is matched by a high degree of internal communication, enhancing group cohesion and stability. On the other hand, members of weak groups are generally reluctant to share their views with others, since they believe all truth is relative. Kelley (1972) calls this personal *reserve*: "One of the by-products of individualism seems to be a reluctance to expose one's personal convictions and deepest feelings to public scrutiny, let alone to flaunt or intrude or impose them unsought on indifferent or resistant others" (p. 85). This statement directly echoes Noelle-Neumann's (1974; 1991; 1993) formulation of the Spiral of Silence.

Strictness and the Hard Core. Kelley's theory has several important implications for the Spiral of Silence. First, it suggests that individuals will value social *consensus* differently, depending on their group loyalties. Members of ecumenical groups seek balance and compromise with opposing views (consensus). For members of exclusivist groups, however, there is only *one* truth – "consensus" is irrelevant. Kelley states: "One would think that knowledge began with them, that all other attempts to explain life are sadly in error and hardly worthy of notice, let alone respect or credence" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, pp. 78-79).

Second, Kelley assumes that people will value *conformity* according to their group membership. Exclusivist groups require strict conformity, not only in attitudes, but also in lifestyle. Such "deviant" practices invite ridicule and persecution by outsiders, but the social pressure they exert is tolerated – even welcomed – as "proof" of their group's legitimacy. Ecumenical groups value individualism, so social pressure is unexpected (D. M. Kelley, 1972). As a result, these individuals should be less equipped to handle threats of isolation.

Third, the theory explains differential exposure to the "*climate of opinion*". Ecumenical groups are open to dialogue and the exchange of ideas, whereas exclusivist groups tend to isolate themselves from outside communication. Strict groups also produce a "flood" of their own messages and foster greater communication among members. Therefore, one would expect the climate of opinion to have different effects on the members of each group.

Iannaccone (1997) believes Kelley's measures of religious "strictness" can be summarized as "the degree to which a group demands sacrifice and stigma or,

equivalently, the degree to which it limits and thereby increases the cost of non-group activities, such as socializing with members of other religions or pursuing 'secular' pastimes" (p. 104). This "economic" view of religion restates and explains the dynamic of Kelley's (1972) thesis, that strict groups require a commitment level from their members sufficient to endure social stigma. Those persons who are unwilling to commit either do not join the group, or leave it once the social "cost" becomes too high (Iannaccone, 1994, 1997). Successful groups typically provide substitutes for the things that they prohibit members from attaining elsewhere. He explains, "Sects that isolate their members socially must provide alternative social networks with ample opportunities for interaction, friendship, and status" (Iannaccone, 1994, p. 1204).

The foregoing discussion suggests that members of "strict" religious groups may be opinion hard cores. The following sections develop Kelley's (1972) notions of strictness from the sociological, social-psychological and communication literatures. This review will be guided by his characteristics of exclusivity and social strength, which are also present in Noelle-Neumann's (1974; 1993) writings on the hard core: absolutism and commitment (attitude theory), conformity and discipline (reference group theory), and fanaticism and missionary zeal (communication theory).

Attitude Theory

Dogmatism. Kelley's (1972) discussion of doctrinal absolutism echoes Rokeach's theory of "dogmatism" (Rokeach, 1960; Rokeach & Restle, 1960). Rokeach assumed that the human mind is composed of two interdependent and asymmetrical components that

he called the "belief-disbelief system". This structure involves a system of beliefs that one accepts and a series of systems that one rejects, respectively.

Individual belief-disbelief systems vary along several dimensions, demonstrating how "open" or "closed" they are. The first dimension is *isolation,* the degree to which one is reluctant to recognize cognitively similar beliefs. In isolated systems, a dogmatic person may "compartmentalize" contradictory beliefs, accentuate the differences or minimize the similarities between belief and disbelief systems, consider contradictory information irrelevant or deny that a contradiction even exists (Rokeach, 1960; Rokeach & Restle, 1960).

The second dimension of belief-disbelief systems is their *differentiation.* Systems are said to be differentiated based both on the amount of knowledge one possesses and the perception of similarity between adjacent disbelief subsystems (Rokeach, 1960). Dogmatic persons have a relatively high discrepancy in the degree of differentiation between their belief and disbelief systems (Rokeach, 1960; Rokeach & Restle, 1960).

A third dimension of belief-disbelief systems is their *comprehensiveness* (or narrowness). This refers to the number and range of disbelief subsystems that a person possesses (Rokeach, 1960). Dogmatic individuals have narrow disbelief systems (Rokeach, 1960; Rokeach & Restle, 1960).

The belief-disbelief system is arranged such that certain beliefs are more basic than are others (see also Hunter, Levine, & Sayers, 1976; Rokeach, 1976). The central region represents a person's "primitive" beliefs, those that everyone is assumed to share. Asch's (1952; 1956; 1958) experiments tested subjects' primitive beliefs regarding the perception of line lengths. An intermediate region represents a person's beliefs about the

nature of authority and those in authority. The peripheral region represents those beliefs that an individual derives from authority. Dogmatic people have stronger beliefs in absolute authority (Rokeach, 1960; Rokeach & Restle, 1960). Rokeach (1960) writes:

> We suspect that the world of people is generally evaluated according to the authorities and belief systems they line up with...When an authority is seen to be absolute, for example, it also leads to extreme cognitive distinctions between persons as faithful and unfaithful, orthodox and heretical, loyal and subversive, American and un-American, friend and enemy (p. 45).

As persons encounter new information, they screen it for compatibility with their existing belief systems. This screening process begins at the level of primitive beliefs and filters down through authority beliefs to one's "world outlook" (peripheral beliefs). The information may be screened out or distorted at any point along the way, a process Rokeach (1960) calls cognitive narrowing. He hypothesizes that individuals will selectively avoid contact with information that would "threaten the validity of their ideology or proselyte for competing ideologies" (p. 48).

Belief-disbelief systems may also be analyzed according to an individual's time perspective. Rokeach (1960) explains: "A narrow time perspective is one in which the person overemphasizes or fixates on the past, or the present, or the future without appreciating the continuity and the connections that exist between them" (p. 51). Noelle-Neumann (1993) similarly characterizes the "hard core" as oriented "to the past or to the most distant future" (p. 170).

Rokeach and his colleagues (Rokeach, Toch, & Rottman, 1960) extend the concept of dogmatism from individuals to groups, since "what holds true of people considered in isolation should also apply to people who hold beliefs in common and form groups" (p. 377). Indeed, Kelley's (1972) definition of absolutism as a "closed system of

meaning and value which explains everything" (p. 84) reveals the dogmatic character of strict religious groups.

Reference Group Theory

Asch's (1952; 1956; 1958) experiments tested the effects of group influence on a solitary individual. Since these experimental groups were all small (a maximum of 9 members -- see Asch, 1952; 1956), it is puzzling that Noelle-Neumann considers societal pressures more potent than group influences. This is likely the result of a failure to distinguish between group-level and collective processes (Merton, 1968; Salmon & Kline, 1985).

Nor did Asch's groups exert just one form of social influence, as Noelle-Neumann assumes. In fact, Cialdini and Trost (1998) distinguish three types of influence, which they label social norms. They define social norms as "rules and standards that are understood by members of a group, and that guide and/or constrain social behavior without the force of laws" (Cialdini & Trost, 1998, p. 152; see also Rokeach, 1980). They explain that, although norms may or may not be explicit, they are socially enforced.

Festinger's (1950; 1954) Social Comparison Theory provides several insights into the process of social consensus. Individuals look to social groups for validation of their opinions. Consequently, they usually seek out groups in which others hold opinions similar to their own (but see Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1987). When a discrepancy exists between an individual's opinion and that of the group, a "pressure toward uniformity" (Festinger, 1950, 1954) will motivate the individual to change his/her opinion "so as to move closer to others in the group," or to try to convert "others in the group to bring them

closer" to the individual's opinion (Festinger, 1954, p. 126). If the discrepancy cannot be resolved, the individual will be motivated to cease associating with the group – or the group may excommunicate the member (Festinger, 1950; Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1963; Schachter, 1951).

Reference groups may serve positive or negative functions (Newcomb, 1958; Newcomb & Charters, 1950). *Positive* reference groups motivate individuals to assimilate their norms as a basis for self-appraisal (see also Festinger, 1954). *Negative* reference groups, on the other hand, not only motivate the rejection of their norms but also the formation of counter-norms (Merton, 1968; Newcomb, 1958; Newcomb & Charters, 1950). The Sherifs make very similar points in their discussion of "in-groups" and "out-groups: (M. Sherif & Sherif, 1956). They consider an in-group to be synonymous with a reference group, a group "to which the individual relates himself as a part or to which he aspires to relate himself psychologically" (M. Sherif, 1953, p. 206). Groups with which one does not identify are defined as out-groups (M. Sherif & Sherif, 1956).

Social Categorization Theory proposes that people classify themselves and others into distinct categories that minimize the apparent differences between persons within a group and maximize the perceived differences between groups. This is in essence a form of belief-disbelief isolation (Rokeach, 1960; Rokeach & Restle, 1960) at the group level, also called social stereotyping (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1982). Lippman (1922/1965, p. 59) explains the cognitive "necessity" for stereotyping: "For the attempt to see all things freshly and in detail, rather than as types and generalities, is exhausting, and among busy affairs practically out of the question."

Social categorization serves two purposes. The first is cognitive: "ordering, systematizing, and simplifying the complex network of social groups confronting individuals in their social environment" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 21). The second is evaluative, serving "to protect, maintain, or enhance the value systems applying to distinctions between social groups" (p. 21). This exaggeration of similarities and differences is conceptually similar to ego involvement (C. W. Sherif, 1980; C. W. Sherif & Sherif, 1967; C. W. Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1981; M. Sherif & Cantril, 1947; M. Sherif & Hovland, 1961).

Individuals use social categories to define themselves in terms of their reference groups:

> Psychological group membership is thus a matter of acquisition, development or internalization of a cognitive representation of self as identical to or interchangeable with other members of the group, on dimensions (behavioural, attitudinal, perceptual, etc.) which characterize, define or are stereotypical of the group. In this way, psychological group belongingness is inextricably linked with stereotypical social uniformities in behaviour, attitudes, perceptions, etc. – that is, with expression of or conformity to ingroup norms (Hogg & Turner, 1987, p. 148).

Generally, individuals have multiple reference groups, both positive and negative. The critical factor in a person's opinion formation is which group's are most salient in a given situation (Charters & Newcomb, 1958; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; H. H. Kelley, 1955; Wood, 2000). Hogg and Turner call this selection process "referent informational influence" (Hogg & Turner, 1987; Turner, 1982, 1985).

The "variability of self-categorization" allows individuals to select which social stimuli are relevant, to determine which group norms are appropriate for responding to the stimuli, and to decide which forms those responses should take (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994).

Communication Patterns

Noelle-Neumann (1973) assumes that the mass media are consonant, ubiquitous and have cumulative effects. The Spiral of Silence (1989) predicts that users of "trend-setting media (media which are cited by other media and heeded by politicians)" will take tolerant attitudes toward "emotionally loaded and morally charged" topics (p. 20). This is because Noelle-Neumann (1973; 1993; 1994) believes the general "tenor of the media" leans left. Some doubt the plausibility of this hypothesis, particularly in the more pluralistic United States system (Alley, 1990a, 1990b; Csikszenthmihalyi, 1991; Glynn & McLeod, 1985; Katz, 1983; Salmon & Kline, 1985; Selnow, 1990; Selnow & Gilbert, 1993).

At any rate, exclusivist groups also assume a liberal media bias – particularly against conservative religion (Bozell, 2003; Budde, 1997; Buddenbaum, 2001; Ferré, 1985; Haynes, 2000; Newman, 1996; Schultze, 1996; Wildmon, 1985; Wright, 1997). Therefore, these groups often produce their own communications to counter the mass media's "prevailing attitude in a controversy" (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, p. 80). This practice reflects Noelle-Neumann's (1974) early thinking: "...many of them [hard cores] may manage to support their opinions by selecting out ...media which confirm their views" (p. 49).

Rokeach's (1960) concept of "cognitive narrowing" hypothesizes that

> ...people often selectively avoid contact with stimuli, people, events, books, etc., that threaten the validity of their ideology or proselyte for competing ideologies...A person may expose himself only to one point of view in the press, selectively choose his friends and associates solely or primarily on the basis of compatibility of systems, selectively avoid contact with those who adhere to different systems, and ostracize renegades (pp. 48-49).

Groups may practice narrowing by screening media, "publishing lists of taboo books," and similar tactics (Rokeach, 1960, p. 118). Cognitive narrowing is similar to the selective avoidance and bolstering processes hypothesized by dissonance theory (Abelson, 1959, 1968; Festinger, 1957, 1964; Kiesler, Collins, & Miller, 1969). The following section summarizes research on the "selective exposure" hypothesis.

Selective Exposure. Studies of selective exposure to communication have been conducted since the hypothesis was first proposed. Nevertheless, there is little agreement on whether the phenomenon actually exists (Cotton, 1985; Freedman & Sears, 1965; Frey, 1986; Katz, 1968; Sears, 1968; Sears & Freedman, 1967). Early research found little evidence for selective exposure, despite its intuitive appeal (McGuire, 1968).

However, these studies were often methodologically flawed in a number of ways. Many considered only two levels of dissonance (low vs. high), rather than the three levels (low, moderate, and high) Festinger (1957) proposed (Cotton, 1985; Frey, 1986; Rhine, 1967). Furthermore, the induction of dissonance was typically assumed, rather than measured (Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Brock, 1965; Cotton, 1985; Mills, 1968). Finally, subjects were typically limited in the amount and scope of consonant or dissonant information from which to select (Cotton, 1985; Frey, 1986; Mills, 1968).

Researchers have found greater evidence for selective information seeking than for the selective avoidance of messages (Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Brock, 1965; Cotton, 1985; Freedman & Sears, 1965; Sears, 1968; Sears & Freedman, 1967). Similar findings have been reported in the mass communication literature (Atkin, 1985; Berelson, 1948; Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947; Katz, 1968; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1964), leading some to

theorize that audiences primarily seek out consonant information (Atkin, 1985; Freedman & Sears, 1965; Klapper, 1964, 1967; Sears, 1968; Sears & Freedman, 1967).

However, several recent studies show that religious conservatives *do* actively avoid media content incompatible with their beliefs. Most avoid sexually explicit content, and many avoid violent fare as well (Buddenbaum, 2001; Chamberlain, 1987; Hamilton & Rubin, 1992; Jackson-Beeck, 1977; McFarland, 1996; Paik & Marzban, 1995; Stout & Buddenbaum, 1996; Stout, Scott, & Martin, 1996; Tankard & Harris, 1980; Umble, 1990; Warren, 2001). These groups typically consider the mass media "hostile" to their faith (Buddenbaum, 2001; Ferré, 1985; Haynes, 2000; Maus, 1990; Pippert, 1990; Schultze, 1996, 1990b; Wildmon, 1985). Members of strict groups cite objectionable content more frequently than any other reason for their selective mass media use (Buddenbaum, 2001; Chamberlain, 1987; Gantz & Kowalewski, 1979; Hamilton & Rubin, 1992; McFarland, 1996).

Alternative Media Use. Not only do strict religious group members selectively avoid the mass media, but they often choose to expose themselves to "alternative" media reflecting their own points of view (Apostolidis, 2000; Bourgault, 1985; Buddenbaum, 1981; Erickson, 1992; Hill, 1983; Litman & Bain, 1989; McFarland, 1996; Parker, Barry, & Smythe, 1955; Tamney & Johnson, 1984). This practice contributes to an imbalanced communication flow out of these groups (D. M. Kelley, 1972).

Strict groups are the largest producers of religious media. These groups operate extensive publishing houses (Altholz, 1985; Board, 1990; Ferré, 1990; D. M. Kelley, 1972; Schement & Stephenson, 1996; Schultze, 1996; Waters, 2001). They also run cable TV networks (Bourgault, 1985; Ersoz, 1998; Hoover, 1990) and the majority of non-

commercial broadcasting stations (Erickson, 1992; Ersoz, 1998; Hadden, 1990; Hill, 1983; Melton, Lucas, & Stone, 1997; Schultze, 1990a; Voskuil, 1990; Wuthnow, 1990). In addition, they produce recorded music (Gill, 1990; Howard, 1992; Romanowski, 1990, 2000), home videos (E. Johnson, 1998; Mookas, 1998; Warren, 2002) and websites (Bunt, 2000; Helland, 2002; Newey, 1996; Soukup, Buckley, & Robinson, 2001) to spread their messages.

Unfortunately, most Spiral of Silence research considers only the tenor of the "mass" media, downplaying or ignoring the role of alternative media sources (Baldassare & Katz, 1996; Glynn & McLeod, 1984; Moy, Domke, & Stamm, 2001; Neuwirth & Frederick, 2004; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Scheufele, 1999). This is most likely due to Noelle-Neumann's (1985; 1989; 1993) emphasis on the effects of "trend-setting" or "influential" (mass) media.

However, Tichenor and Wackman's (1973) study suggests that alternative media may be the more influential, depending on the community and the issue being addressed. In their study, users of "suburban" media (a local newspaper) were compared with those who used "metropolitan" media (newspapers and television newscasts). Both the "tenor of the media" and the perceived "climate of opinion" on a controversial issue were "sharply" different, depending on which mix of media individuals used (Tichenor & Wackman, 1973).

Dual Climate of Opinion. Noelle-Neumann considers television a particularly influential medium (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, 1993). Therefore, one would expect the average television viewer to take tolerant attitudes toward social and moral issues, at least publicly. Nevertheless, religious television audiences vigorously oppose premarital sex,

extramarital sex, homosexuality, and abortion rights, across demographic groups (Cotugno & Wuthnow, 1984; Gerbner, Gross, Hoover, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1984; Gross, 1990; Hoover, 1990).

These viewers may experience a "dual climate of opinion," since their opinions and those "dominant among media journalists diverge" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 168). Kelley (1972) gives two complementary reasons for this phenomenon. First, religious TV viewers' selective exposure has both limited their perception of the collective climate (Rokeach, 1960) and has provided them an alternative perspective on social reality (Moscovici & Faucheux, 1972). This is what he means by "a flood of outgoing messages that swamps any incoming ones" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 81). Second, interpersonal communication with similar others is greater for members of strict groups. Kelley (1972) continues, "A virtual flood of outgoing communications would be matched by a high degree of reverberance within. That is, members would be continually giving and receiving messages among themselves about the group's goals, its daily life, the progress of other members, and so on" (p. 58).

Lazarsfeld and his associates (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968) noted the same two processes in their pioneering election study. They discovered that the mass media were not as powerful as Noelle-Neumann (1973) believes, since fully half the voters they studied *never* changed their voting intention in the six months prior to the election. Two characteristics that these "constants" had in common were selective exposure to the mass media and stronger interpersonal networks. They remark:

> While the individual preserves his security by sealing himself off from propaganda which threatens his attitudes, he finds those attitudes reinforced in his contacts with other members of his group. Because of

> their common group membership, they will share similar attitudes and will exhibit similar selective tendencies (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. xxxii).

They assume that an individual's degree of group commitment determines the relative weight that a person gives to mass versus interpersonal communication. Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1964) state that "individual opinions, attitudes, habits and values" are anchored in a person's reference groups. Therefore, the mass media can exert only indirect influence, since interpersonal communication serves to "counteract or reinforce their message" (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1964, p. 45; see also Noelle-Neumann, 1985).

Summary

The social psychological and communication literatures reviewed above support Dean Kelley's (1972) three traits of group strictness. These same three traits are also clearly visible in Noelle-Neumann's writings on the "hard core". She states:

> Unlike the members of the avant-garde, a hard core can turn its back to the public, can close itself completely off when it finds itself in public with strangers, can encapsulate itself like a sect and orient itself to the past or to the most distant future (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 170).

Strict groups' doctrinal *absolutism* means that members consider public opinion on an issue to be irrelevant. The group effectively "turns its back to the public" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 170). Kelley (1972) states: "Not only is theirs the only interpretation, but it explains everything...the faithful...are simply not interested in what, in their view, can only be error" (pp. 79-80). Therefore, the threat of isolation does not affect them (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, 1993, 1995).

The strict *conformity* requirements within exclusivist groups ensure that members are more influenced by *group* than collective pressure. The stigma aroused by members' distinctive lifestyles "may redound to the reinforcement of social strength by increasing the cost of belonging, heightening the demand upon members, raising the validation of the meanings carried by the group" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 80). Strict groups tend to emphasize "traditional" customs and morality. In Noelle-Neumann's words (1993), the group "encapsulates itself...and orients itself to the past or to the most distant future" (p. 170).

Finally, the *fanaticism* with which exclusivist groups communicate their message effectively insulates them from public opinion. Kelley states:

> For the outsider who has his own religious views, which he feels are entitled to some consideration and respect, it is disillusioning to discover that the fanatic is not really interested in what he has to say. There is no genuine give-and-take of discussion; at best it is a disputation, in which his views are given only the attention needed to refute them (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 81).

This missionary zeal allows the group to "close itself completely off when it finds itself in public with strangers" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 170). Indeed, members "refuse to be silenced, even at the price of suffering or death" (D. M. Kelley, 1972, p. 81).

A second passage describing the hard core also demonstrates Kelley's three traits of group strictness:

> These findings suggest that, after a lengthy struggle, a minority faction may be reduced to a hard core of persons who are not prepared to conform, to change their opinions, or even to be silent in the face of public opinion. Some members of this group may get accustomed to isolation, and many of them may manage to support their opinions by selecting out persons and media which confirm their views (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, pp. 48-49).

Doctrinal *absolutism* means that members are unwilling to compromise with "error" – they "are not prepared...to change their opinions" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 48). Group *conformity* teaches members to welcome social isolation, ridicule and persecution as proof of the truth of their message (Straw, 2001). These persons "are not prepared to conform" to social pressure (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 48). As Noelle-Neumann observes, "Some members of this group may get accustomed to isolation" (p. 49). Finally, group members' *fanaticism* means they "are not prepared... to be silent in the face of public opinion" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, pp. 48-49). The above passage also supports Kelley's (1972) hypotheses of an imbalanced flow of communication out of the group (including their own media) as well as a greater flow within the group: "...many of them may manage to support their opinions by selecting out persons and media which confirm their views" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 49).

It is unlikely that Kelley and Noelle-Neumann borrowed from each other, since their theories appeared roughly simultaneously (1972, 1973). Therefore, it is striking how similar Kelley's definition of group strictness is to Noelle-Neumann's concept of the hard core.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The Spiral of Silence literature states that individuals scan both their immediate social environment and the mass media to determine whether their views on controversial social issues are in the majority or are gaining support. If either is the case, individuals should be confident and willing to publicly express their opinions. On the other hand, those whose views are in the minority or are losing support should fall silent (Noelle-

Neumann, 1974, 1991, 1993). Empirical support for these propositions has been mixed, however (Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997; Katz, 1983; Salmon & Kline, 1985; Scheufele & Moy, 2000).

Other research suggests that individuals' *perceptions* of opinion distributions, rather than the actual distribution, most directly influence their willingness to publicly express an opinion (Glynn & Park, 1997; Kennamer, 1990; Price & Allen, 1990; Salmon & Kline, 1985; Salwen, Lin, & Matera, 1994; Scheufele & Moy, 2000).

The following four hypotheses test the effects of actual and perceived opinion climates on individuals' opinion expression behavior.

H1: Individuals holding a majority opinion on a social issue will be more willing to publicly express their opinion than will individuals holding a minority opinion.

H2: Individuals who perceive that they hold a majority opinion on a social issue will be more willing to publicly express their opinion than will individuals who perceive that they hold a minority opinion.

H3: Individuals whose opinion on a social issue is gaining social support will be more willing to publicly express their opinion than will individuals whose opinion is losing social support.

H4: Individuals who perceive that their opinion on an issue is gaining social support will be more willing to publicly express their opinion than will individuals who perceive that their opinion is losing social support.

Noelle-Neumann (1993) states that opinions can be expressed behaviorally as well as verbally. In either case, the means of expression must be sufficiently public to make one's fear of social isolation salient. Although these propositions have only been tested a few times (Donsbach & Stevenson, 1984; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Salmon & Oshagan, 1990; Scheufele & Eveland, 2001), the results suggest that mode of expression can affect individuals' willingness to give their opinions on an issue. This may be

evidence of individual differences in commitment to one's beliefs (Gerard, 1968; Glynn & Park, 1997; Kiesler, 1968). It may also be evidence that other fears (e.g., fear of public speaking, confrontation, or appearing ignorant) are more salient to opinion expression than a fear of social isolation (Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Salmon & Oshagan, 1990). The following hypothesis tests this thesis.

H5: Individuals will be more willing to publicly express their opinion the less directly confrontational the means of expression.

The Spiral of Silence hypothesizes a single climate of opinion, created by the media – at least most of the time. Occasionally, a "dual climate" is created when "the climate of opinion among the people and that dominant among media journalists diverge" (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 168). Nevertheless, several researchers have shown that individuals are capable of distinguishing *multiple* opinion climates, each having different points of reference (Glynn & Park, 1997; Oshagan, 1996; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Salmon & Oshagan, 1990). Therefore, the following hypothesis is advanced.

H6: Individuals will be able to distinguish between social opinion climates and the climates of their reference groups.

Noelle-Neumann's early research revealed that certain individuals were more likely to be silenced than others. These included individuals with lower incomes, the less educated, rural residents, older persons, women and ethnic minorities (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1993). However, these are the same persons who tend to affiliate with strict religious groups (Hoge, 1979; Iannaccone, 1994, 1997; D. M. Kelley, 1972). If Kelley (1972) is correct, these persons should be *less* likely to be silenced than others. Therefore, the following hypothesis is advanced.

H7: Members of socially disadvantaged groups will be less willing to publicly express their opinion than will other individuals.

The Spiral of Silence holds that members of the hard core will be unaffected by a threat of social isolation (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1991, 1993). Noelle-Neumann (1974, p. 48) states, "...after a lengthy struggle, a minority faction may be reduced to a hard core of persons who are not prepared to conform" to majority opinion. Noelle-Neumann's (1974; 1991; 1993) discussion of the hard core suggests that membership in this group varies by social issue. However, this notion has not been directly tested. Therefore, the following research question is advanced:

RQ1: Is the hard core issue-specific?

Kelley (1972) characterizes strict religious groups by three traits: doctrinal absolutism, strong in-group conformity, and alternative communication patterns. Noelle-Neumann (1974; 1993) states that the hard core is also characterized by these three traits. Therefore, it appears likely that members of strict religious groups may be a particular type of opinion hard core. The following hypotheses test this conjecture.

H8: Members of strict religious groups will be more willing to publicly express their opinion on a social issue than will other individuals.

H9: Members of strict religious groups who perceive that they hold a minority opinion on a social issue will be more willing to publicly express their opinion than will other individuals.

H10: Members of strict religious groups who perceive that their opinion on an issue is losing social support will be more willing to publicly express their opinion than will than will other individuals.

Kelley (1972) states that members of exclusivist groups will perceive public opinion as irrelevant, since they believe that only their group possesses the "truth" (see also Rokeach, 1960; Rokeach & Restle, 1960). This idea is echoed by Noelle-Neumann

(1993, p. 170), who states that the hard core "can turn its back to the public". The following hypotheses test this notion.

H11: Members of strict religious groups will accurately perceive majority social opinion on a given social issue.

H12: Members of strict religious groups will take their group's position on a given social issue.

Some research indicates that members of strict religious groups reject the mass media's perspective on social issues because they perceive it to be "hostile" to their beliefs (Buddenbaum, 2001; Ferré, 1985; Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Gunther, 1992; Haynes, 2000; Schmitt, Gunther, & Liebhart, 2004; Schultze, 1996; Wildmon, 1985). The following hypothesis tests this idea.

H13: Members of strict religious groups will evidence a "hostile media perception."

Kelley's (1972) analysis of strict religious groups indicates that committed members may possess unique personality traits (see also Rokeach, 1960) and have distinctive communication patterns. However, it is unclear whether opinion hard cores also possess these traits. The following research questions investigate this possibility further.

RQ2: What is the demographic profile of the hard core?

RQ3: How do the hard core's perceptions of reference group support for their opinions differ from other individuals' perceptions?

RQ4: How do the hard core's media use patterns differ from other individuals' usage?

Noelle-Neumann (1993) continues, "The other possibility is that the hard core simultaneously feels itself to be an avant-garde" (p. 170). However, research into

exclusivist religious groups indicates that this is not necessarily the case. Therefore, the following research question is advanced.

RQ5: Do members of strict religious groups believe that their view on a given social issue will eventually become the majority opinion?

Kelley's (1972) three traits of group strictness have traditionally been studied in isolation from one another. These include studies of religious dogmatism (Kemp, 1957; Rokeach, 1956, 1960), authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Laythe, Finkel, Bringle, & Kirkpatrick, 2002) or fundamentalism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Emerson, 1996; Laythe et al., 2002); religious reference group studies (Charters & Newcomb, 1958; Jackson & Hunsberger, 1999; H. H. Kelley, 1955; A. E. Roberts, Koch, & Johnson, 2001); and the influences of religious media (Cotugno & Wuthnow, 1984; Gerbner et al., 1984). However, the relative impact of each of these traits on members' opinions, and their willingness to express them, is unknown (Csikszenthmihalyi, 1991; Glynn & McLeod, 1985; Katz, 1983; Salmon & Kline, 1985). Therefore, the following research questions are advanced:

RQ6: How well does religious fundamentalism relate to individuals' opinions on a social issue?

RQ7: How well does religious fundamentalism relate to individuals' willingness to express an opinion on a social issue?

RQ8: How well does religious involvement relate to individuals' opinions on a social issue?

RQ9: How well does religious involvement relate to individuals' willingness to express an opinion on a social issue?

RQ10: How well does religious media use relate to individuals' opinions on a social issue?

RQ11: How well does religious media use relate to individuals' willingness to express an opinion on a social issue?

RQ12: Does group strictness, religious fundamentalism, religious involvement, or religious media use best predict individuals' opinions on a social issue?

RQ13: Does group strictness, religious fundamentalism, religious involvement, or religious media use best predict individuals' willingness to express an opinion on a social issue?

Chapter 2: Method

Sample. The hypotheses and research questions outlined in the last chapter were tested using a purposive sample of religious congregations in Southwestern Michigan. Protestant Christian groups were selected, for three reasons: 1) few non-Christian religious groups were available in the sample area; 2) Christian groups within the sample area were considerably larger than those of other faiths, thereby increasing the likelihood of locating "hard core" members within them; and 3) the study included a measure of religious fundamentalism specific to Protestant Christianity (see Appendix A).

A total of 12 churches within a 20-mile radius were contacted over a six-month period. Every effort was made to include at least two congregations from each region of Kelley's (1972) "exclusivist-ecumenical gradient" – exclusivist, ecumenical, and near the "ecumenical hurdle" (p. 90). Hoge and Roozen's (1979a) expert ratings were used to more accurately place groups along the continuum. The groups contacted were an Assembly of God, a Church of the Nazarene, and an Independent Baptist Church ("exclusivist"); an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and an American Baptist Church (at the "ecumenical hurdle"); and three United Methodist Churches, two Presbyterian Churches (USA), one United Church of Christ – Congregationalist, and an Episcopal Church (USA) ("ecumenical").

Following Jelen (1991; 1992), letters were sent to the pastor or priest of each congregation explaining the project and asking for his/her church's participation. Those who did not respond were contacted by telephone. In some churches, the pastor or priest stated that he/she was required to consult with a lay committee to secure permission to participate in the project. Seven of the 12 churches contacted initially agreed to

participate in the project. Prior to data collection, however, two churches withdrew their consent and could not be persuaded to reconsider.

The author visited the five participating churches between July and November 2005. In four of the churches (Assembly of God, Church of the Nazarene, Independent Baptist and Episcopal), the visit occurred during a regular Sunday morning worship service. The pastor or priest of each church would introduce the researcher during the "announcements" period of the service and ask the congregation to cooperate. The researcher would explain the general nature of the project (to investigate the relationship between faith, the media and public opinion) and assured members that their responses would be completely confidential. The survey instruments were distributed to members either in the church bulletins or as they left the services (see Chamberlain, 1987; Jelen, 1991; Jelen, 1992). One week later, the pastor/priest was contacted again and asked to remind congregants to complete and return the surveys if they had not already done so. This was intended to increase overall response rates.

In one church (United Methodist), the author was only permitted to survey members of the finance committee. Since the members of this committee are likely to differ from the average parishioner, their responses were excluded from final analysis (8 persons total).

The surveys included stamped envelopes bearing a university address. For each congregation, the stamps used on the return envelopes were different. This permitted easy sorting of responses without having to add a survey item. No other identifiers were used on the survey instruments or the envelopes.

Four of the 12 churches initially contacted provided congregation-level data, for a group response rate of 33.3%. A total of 440 surveys were distributed to these churches, and 245 usable responses were received. This resulted in an individual-level response rate of 55.7%. Both Chamberlain (1987) and Jelen (1991; 1992) used similar methodologies, with comparable response rates (59.7% and 56.3%, respectively). This study's response rates by congregation were as follow: Assembly of God, 47.6%; Church of the Nazarene, 57.4%; Episcopal Church (USA), 52.6%; Independent Baptist Church, 56.8%. These group response rates are similar to previous mail surveys of Episcopalians (60.1%) (Roof, 1978), Catholics ("approximately 60%") (M. R. Welch, Johnson, & Pilgrim, 1990, p. 188), and the Reformed Church in America (44.2%) (Nemeth & Luidens, 1989).

Issues Studied. The survey items were constructed to measure respondents' demographic background, religious background, current religious affiliations, mainstream and religious media consumption patterns, and their perceptions of the climate of opinion on two social issues: abortion and homosexuality.

These issues were chosen because they are both "emotionally charged and morally loaded" topics (Noelle-Neumann, 1989, p. 26). They also received considerable media coverage during the course of data collection. Abortion rights were in the news because of two vacancies on the United States Supreme Court; since President Bush appointed prospective Justices widely believed to hold pro-life positions (Kirkpatrick, 2005; Stolberg, 2005; Toner, 2005). Homosexuality also made national news, since many States were enacting legislation concerning same-sex marriages (Goldscheid, 2005; Jones, 2005). In addition, several Christian denominations – including the Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the United Church of Christ and the United

Methodist Chuch – debated official policies regarding same sex unions and the ordination of gays and lesbians to leadership positions (Anonymous, 2005a, 2005b; Kareem, 2005). Therefore, each of these issues should be highly salient, making the "pressure" of public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 228) especially powerful.

National opinion data show that 23.5% of the public supports legal abortion "under any circumstances," 12.8% support it "in most circumstances," and another 41.3% support it "only in a few circumstances." On the other hand, 22.4% of the public believes that abortion should be "illegal in all circumstances" (Gallup Organization, 2006). These data demonstrate that over half (54.1%) of the public takes moderate stances on this issue

Table 1: Abortion Issue (National Opinion Data)

Do you think abortion should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances? [Respondents who replied, "legal only under certain circumstances" were probed: Do you think abortion should be legal in most circumstances or only in a few circumstances?] (Source: Gallup Organization, 2006)

Sample Year	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**
Mean[a]	3.09***	2.90	2.78	2.86	2.92	3.00**
Standard Deviation	1.56	1.53	1.44	1.48	1.52	1.57
(Sample Size)	(981)	(1278)	(803)	(994)	(984)	(975)

Sample Year	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**
Mean[a]	3.02**	2.78	2.81	2.81	2.74
Standard Deviation	1.54	1.55	1.50	1.51	1.52
(Sample Size)	(995)	(992)	(995)	(990)	(985)

[a]Mean opinion, transformed to a five-point scale, where 1 = "illegal in all circumstances," 2 = "legal only in a few circumstances," 3 = "legal under only certain circumstances," 4 = "legal in most circumstances," and 5 = "legal under any circumstance." These data are based on responses to the probe question – scale point "3" is provided for reference purposes. Data were collected from a national random telephone sample. Significance tests (Games-Howell) were performed on the mean differences between 2005 data and earlier sample years. *** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

(i.e., "legal under only certain circumstances"). Furthermore, the percentage of extreme "pro-choice" (23.5%) or "pro-life" (22.4%) positions within the general public is statistically equivalent (see Table 1).

Even so, public opinion on abortion has grown more conservative over six of the past ten years (see Table 1). In fact, the "social opinion climate" in 2005 ($M = 2.74$) was significantly more conservative than it was in 1995 ($MD = -.35$, $p < .001$), 2000 ($MD = -.26$, $p < .01$), or 2001 ($MD = -.28$, $p < .01$). Much of the shift has been from the extreme "pro-choice" position (down 10.4% since 1995) to the extreme "pro-life" position (up 8.7% since 1995) (Gallup Organization, 2006).

National opinion data also show that 57.6% of the public believes that homosexuality is "always wrong," and another 4.7% believes that it is "almost always wrong." On the other hand, 30.8% of the public believes that homosexuality is "not wrong at all," and another 6.9% believes that it is "wrong only sometimes" (Davis & Smith, 2005). These data demonstrate that public opinion is polarized on this issue – just 11.6% of the public takes either of the more "moderate" stances above. In fact, over half (57.6%) of the public supports the extreme "anti-gay" position – a figure nearly double that for the extreme "pro-gay" (30.8%) position (see Table 2).

Nevertheless, public opinion on homosexuality has steadily grown more liberal over the past ten years (see Table 2). In fact, the "social opinion climate" in 2004 ($M = 2.49$) was significantly more liberal than it was in 1994 ($MD = .33$, $p < .001$). Much of the shift has been from the extreme "anti-gay" position (down 8.9% since 1994) to the extreme "pro-gay" position (up 7.5% since 1994) (Davis & Smith, 2005).

Table 2: Homosexuality Issue (National Opinion Data)

What is your opinion about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex – do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes or not wrong at all? (Source: Davis & Smith, 2005)

Sample Year	**1994**	**1996**	**1998**	**2000**	**2002**	**2004**
Mean[a]	2.16***	2.36	2.44	2.44	2.58	2.49
Standard Deviation	1.73	1.80	1.82	1.82	1.86	1.84
(Sample Size)	(1884)	(1784)	(1753)	(1697)	(884)	(868)

[a]Mean opinion, transformed to a five-point scale, where 1 = "always wrong," 2 = "almost always wrong," 4 = "wrong only sometimes," and 5 = "not wrong at all." Data were collected from personal interviews with a national random sample. Significance tests (Games-Howell) were performed on the mean differences between 2004 data and earlier sample years. *** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

Clearly, the public perceives the issues of abortion and homosexuality very differently. Although most persons take moderate positions on abortion, few take moderate positions on homosexuality. Furthermore, the "extreme" opinion groups are about equal in size for the abortion issue, but the extreme "anti-gay" faction is nearly twice the size of its "pro-gay" counterpart. Furthermore, the public opinion trend is more conservative on abortion, but more liberal on homosexuality.

There are several likely explanations for these differences. One is that the nature of the surveys themselves may have produced a greater "social desirability" response bias in the telephone surveys (abortion issue) than in the personal interviews (homosexuality issue) (Holbrook, Green, & Krosnick, 2003; Rockwood, Sangster, & Dillman, 1997). Therefore, respondents would have been more likely to give moderate responses to the abortion item than to the homosexuality item.

In addition, the nature of the actual survey items may have produced a greater number of "moderate" responses on the abortion issue (Davis & Smith, 1992; Krosnick, 1999). This is because the abortion item was actually a two-part question. Therefore,

respondents may have initially been more willing to take the mid-range response ("legal under only certain circumstances") than either of the polar extremes. Nevertheless, the follow-up question forced them to choose a position more moderate than the poles, but away from the center of the scale (Gallup Organization, 2006). The homosexuality item also offered respondents two positions more moderate than the polar extremes, but contained no mid-range response option (Davis & Smith, 2005).

In fact, using four-point scales for each of the issues produces similar opinion distributions overall. Specifically, nearly two-thirds of the public takes right-of-center positions on each issue (63.8% for abortion, 62.3% for homosexuality), while a little over a third takes left-of-center positions (36.2% for abortion, 37.7% for homosexuality). The major difference between the issues is how skewed each distribution is toward the polar extremes. Public opinion on homosexuality ($SD = 1.81$), as noted above, is significantly more polarized than public opinion on abortion ($SD = 1.52$, $p < .001$).

The survey items also differed in the nature of the question being asked. For one item, respondents were asked was whether abortion should be *legal* or *illegal*. For the other item, respondents were asked whether homosexuality was morally *right* or *wrong*. Individuals may well believe that abortion is morally wrong, but still support others' legal right to have the procedure if they so choose (Henshaw & Martire, 1982; Luker, 1984; Scott, 1989). An item gauging public perceptions of the morality of abortion would be more appropriate for testing the Spiral of Silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1985). However, national opinion trend data using such an item is currently unavailable.

In addition to the above considerations, public perceptions of abortion and homosexuality may diverge as a result of the way each issue is framed in the media

(Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974; Nelson & Oxley, 1999; Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). "Pro-choice" advocates typically frame the abortion issue in terms of biology and women's rights (Ball-Rokeach, Power, Guthrie, & Waring, 1990; Granberg, 1981; Luker, 1984). Likewise, "gay rights" advocates generally frame the homosexuality issue in terms of biology and civil rights (De Cecco & Parker, 1995; Tygart, 2000). Therefore, supporters of either position probably hold their views for *similar* reasons. On the other hand, "pro-life" advocates usually frame abortion as the murder of innocent children (Baker, Epstein, & Forth, 1981; Ball-Rokeach et al., 1990; Granberg, 1981; Luker, 1984). "Anti-gay rights" advocates typically frame homosexuality as a threat to traditional institutions, particularly marriage and the family (Brooke, 1993; Jones, 2005; Mookas, 1998). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect supporters of these positions probably hold their views for very *different* reasons.

These issue frames may also explain why the observed opinion trends on abortion and homosexuality are moving in opposite directions. If "pro-life" advocates have been more successful in their framing attempts than "pro-choice" advocates (Ball-Rokeach et al., 1990), then the media may be supporting their views (Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2003; Press & Cole, 1999). Similarly, "gay rights" advocates may have been more successful than their opponents at attracting media attention (De Cecco & Parker, 1995; Wilcox, 2003). Therefore, each of these groups should be emboldened to speak out, since they have the mass media on their side. Furthermore, if the abortion issue has successfully been framed as a choice between child murder and women's privacy, it is reasonable to expect that the public would side with the "greater" perceived moral good (i.e., saving children's lives). Conversely, if the homosexuality issue has successfully been framed as

a choice between alternative views of marriage and family, then it is reasonable to expect that the public would again side with the "greater" perceived moral good (i.e., protecting gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons from discrimination). This process would continue to "spiral," producing actual social opinion change over time (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1999).

Regardless of the social opinion climate, however, members of strict religious groups should take positions opposing abortion and homosexuality (Brooke, 1993; Evans, 1997, 2002; Jelen & Wilcox, 2003; Mookas, 1998; Smidt, 1989; Tamney, Johnson, & Burton, 1992; Woodrum, 1988; Yip, 1997, 2004). This is because these persons are theorized to adopt *group*, versus societal norms (D. M. Kelley, 1972; Rokeach, 1976, 1960).

Measures Used. The following section describes the measures used to test the hypotheses and research questions outlined in the last chapter. This review will proceed in the order of the concepts raised in the hypotheses and research questions.

Willingness to Express an Opinion. Willingness to express an opinion was determined by three different methods. These measures were then used to test Hypotheses 1-5 and 7-10, as well as Research Questions 7, 9, 11 and 13. The first measure was individuals' willingness to express a controversial opinion *verbally*. Noelle-Neumann (1993, p. 17) typically tests this by asking survey respondents to imagine themselves on a "five-hour train ride," during which a fellow passenger brings up a controversial issue. Respondents are instructed to imagine that the passenger takes a position "diametrically opposed to their own" (p. 18), after which they are asked whether they would be likely to discuss the issue further with that passenger.

Several researchers have designed alternative measures to the "train test," since most Americans are unaccustomed to lengthy train trips (Glynn & McLeod, 1985; Noelle-Neumann, 1994; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Scheufele, 1999). This study uses Scheufele's measure, since it meets Noelle-Neumann's (1993; 1994) three conditions for testing the "threat of isolation". First, it is a commonplace situation. Second, the "public" consists of persons unknown to the respondent. Third, the "public" is large enough to activate respondents' fears of isolation yet small enough to prevent other factors (such as a fear of public speaking) from confounding the results.

Scheufele's (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Lee, 2001) method asks sample respondents to imagine themselves at "some kind of social gathering" with persons they do not know. They are instructed to imagine that the discussion of a controversial issue at the gathering leads them to believe that "most people in the group" do not support their point of view. Respondents are then asked how likely they would be to express their own opinion in such a situation (see Questions 12, 19, Appendix A).

A second measure used in this study was individuals' willingness to express a controversial opinion *behaviorally*, using various methods mentioned in Noelle-Neumann's writings (1993; 1994). In addition, respondents were also asked to list which actions they have *actually* taken in the past, since Scheufele and others (2001) found that persons were less likely to give their opinions in real situations than in hypothetical ones (see also Oshagan, 1996; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Scheufele, 1999).

The resulting 12 items were used to produce two indices per issue. The first 6 items (concerning respondents' willingness to express themselves behaviorally) were averaged to form an index of "behavioral willingness". The second 6 items (concerning

individuals' actual opinion behaviors in the past) were averaged to produce an index of "prior behavioral expression". These indices demonstrated high internal consistencies. The behavioral willingness index had Cronbach's alphas (α) of .82 (abortion) and .84 (homosexuality), while the behavioral expression index had alphas of .75 (abortion) and .41 (homosexuality). The low reliability of the homosexuality behavioral expression index is due to low response rates – just 8 respondents stated that they had ever done *anything* to express their opinions behaviorally.

Majority/Minority Opinion. Noelle-Neumann (1994) consistently portrays social opinion processes as a struggle between "two camps". Individuals use a "quasi-statistical sense" to determine whether their views are in the "majority" or in the "minority". To test this hypothesis, respondents' own opinions on both issues were solicited. In addition, respondents' perceptions of the prevailing social opinion (H3, H9, H11) for each issue, and their perceptions of their religious groups' positions (H12) on each issue were also solicited. The actual social majority opinion (H1, H11) was derived from published national opinion data (see Tables 1 and 2) (Davis & Smith, 2005; Gallup Organization, 2006). The actual majority opinions within respondents' religious groups (H12) were determined by aggregating individuals' own opinion data by group.

All abortion items (Questions 7, 8, 10 and 11) were reverse coded to match the scales used on the homosexuality items (Questions 14, 15, 17 and 18). In other words, respondents holding more socially conservative positions on either issue received lower scores than those holding more socially liberal positions.

Respondents' own positions on each issue were subtracted from the actual or perceived majority positions, creating difference scores ranging from –4 to 4. These

scores were divided into "two camps" (Noelle-Neumann, 1994). "Majority" opinion holders were operationally defined as those whose own positions either matched or fell within one scale point (i.e., -1 to 1) of the relevant reference climate. This is because individuals' "quasi-statistical sense" is not precise – it can only determine the *relative* size of the opinion majority or minority (Noelle-Neumann, 1985, 1993, 1994). Similarly, "minority" opinion holders were defined as those who perceived their own positions as falling further than one scale point away (i.e., -2 to –4 or 2 to 4) from the referent majority. The resulting two groups were used to test Hypotheses 1-2, 9 and 11-12.

Social Support. The Spiral of Silence states that individuals' willingness to express an opinion is based on the degree of social support they perceive for their views. The actual social support trend (H3) for each issue was derived from published national opinion data over the past five years (see Tables 1 and 2) (Davis & Smith, 2005; Gallup Organization, 2006). This time frame was chosen since it matches the one used by respondents to estimate the future opinion climates (see below).

Public opinion on abortion was significantly more conservative in 2005 (M = 2.74) than it was in 2000 (MD = -.26, $p < .01$) (see Table 1). Much of the shift has been away from the extreme "pro-choice" position ("legal under any circumstances," down 7.3%) to the "pro-life" end of the scale ("legal in only a few circumstances," up 2.9%; "illegal in all circumstances," up 4.3%) (Gallup Organization, 2006). Support for the position at the scale midpoint ("legal under only certain circumstances") fell by 2.9% over the same period. Therefore, respondents holding the two "pro-life" positions were operationally defined to be "gaining social support" for their views. These persons received a score of "2" on the opinion trend scale. Respondents holding the two "pro-

choice" positions, or the middle range position, were operationally defined to be "losing social support" for their views. These persons received a score of "1" on the opinion trend scale.

Public opinion on homosexuality, on the other hand, was slightly more liberal in 2004 ($M = 2.49$) than it was in 2000 ($MD = .05$) (see Table 2). Much of the shift has been away from the extreme "anti-gay" position ("always wrong," down 1.2%) to the extreme "pro-gay" position ("not wrong at all," up 2.0%) (Davis & Smith, 2005). Mean support for the two "moderate" positions also fell by 0.9% over the same period. Although these opinion shifts are small, they continue a steady liberalizing trend on the issue (see Table 2). Therefore, respondents holding the two "pro-gay" positions were operationally defined to be "gaining social support" for their views. These persons received a score of "2" on the opinion trend scale. Respondents holding the two "anti-gay" positions, or the middle range position, were operationally defined to be "losing social support" for their views. These persons received a score of "1" on the opinion trend scale. The opinion trend scores for each issue were used to test Hypothesis 3.

Respondents' perceptions of social support for an issue (H4, H10) in "five years' time" were subtracted from their assessments of current social opinion, creating difference scores ranging from –4 to 4. Those respondents who perceived that future social opinion would either match or fall within two scale points (i.e., -2 to 2) of their own positions were operationally defined to be "gaining social support," since they perceived the social majority to be moving *toward* their views. These persons received a score of "2" on the opinion trend scale. Similarly, those respondents who perceived that future social opinion would fall further than two scale points away (i.e., -3 to –4 or 3 to 4)

from their own positions were operationally defined to be "losing social support," since they perceived the majority to be moving *away from* their views. These persons received a score of "1" on the opinion trend scale. The opinion trend scores for each issue were used to test Hypotheses 4 and 10.

Method of Expression. Hypothesis 5 predicts a greater willingness to express one's views the less directly confrontational the means of expression. To test this hypothesis, the six items comprising the behavioral willingness scale for each issue were correlated using the Spearman-Rho rank order statistic. The six items comprising the behavioral expression scale for each issue were similarly correlated.

Opinion Climates. Respondents' perceptions of four separate opinion climates were solicited. These were the prevailing social climate on an issue, the perceived future climate on an issue, the perceived "official" position of one's religious group on an issue, and the amount of perceived agreement among one's "five closest friends" on an issue. The first two of these were operationally defined as "social opinion" climates and the last two were defined as "reference group" opinion climates. These climates were used to test Hypothesis 6 and Research Question 3. In addition, respondents' own opinions were subtracted from the first three of these climates, creating difference scores of –4 to 4. Respondents' perceptions of their friends' agreement with their own opinions on each issue were used in their original form, producing scores ranging from 0 to 5. Both sets of scores for each issue were used to test Research Questions 12-13.

Demographic Influences. Hypothesis 7 predicts that members of socially disadvantaged groups will be less willing to express an opinion than other individuals. For the purposes of this study, "socially disadvantaged" groups are operationally defined

as the elderly, women, non-Whites, those with less formal education, and those who perceived themselves as "economically challenged" or "working class" (see Appendix A).

Group Strictness. Group strictness scores were derived from Hoge and Roozen's (Hoge, 1979; Hoge & Roozen, 1979b) expert ratings of Protestant denominations. Hoge and Roozen (Hoge, 1979; Hoge & Roozen, 1979b) operationalized eight dimensions of group strictness mentioned by Kelley (1972; 1978). These dimensions are presented and explained in Appendix B.

Hoge and Roozen asked 21 religious experts (church historians, sociologists of religion, denominational leaders, and seminary professors) to rate 17 large Protestant denominations using these eight items. Since these researchers analyzed the items separately, they did not report an alpha level. Therefore, a Cronbach's alpha was computed for the combined scale, based on Hoge and Roozen's (Hoge & Roozen, 1979b, p. E-11) reported inter-item correlations. Coefficient alpha (α) is .90, when all eight items are scored in the same direction. Hoge (1979, p. 367) also reported a correlation of .96 between the experts' ordering of denominations based on the eight items and the order found in Kelley's (1972, p. 89) "exclusivist-ecumenical gradient." Hoge and Roozen's (Hoge, 1979, p. 185) mean expert ratings were assigned to participants in this study, based on their denominational affiliation. These ratings were used in the tests of Hypotheses 8-13, as well as Research Questions 5 and 12-13.

"Hostile Media" Perception. Respondents' perceptions of three presumed indicators of media hostility toward religion (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994; Gunther, 1992; Gunther & Chia, 2001; Schmitt et al., 2004) were solicited. These three items were

averaged to create a "hostile media perception" (H13) scale. This scale demonstrated a high internal consistency, having an alpha (α) of .83.

Opinion "Hard Cores". The opinion "hard core" (RQ 1-4) was operationally defined as follows. First, respondents' own opinions on each issue were subtracted from their perceptions of the relevant social and future opinion climates, resulting in difference scores of –4 to 4 for each climate. Respondents who received scores of "–4" or "4" (i.e., maximum opinion incongruity) on a given issue were then examined for their willingness to speak out on that issue. Only those persons who reported being "very likely" to speak out on a given issue (i.e., a score of "4") were selected.

Individuals whose difference scores were "4" (i.e., perceiving themselves to be more liberal/progressive than society) and whose speaking scores were "4" were defined as the "avant-garde." Those whose difference scores were "–4" (i.e., perceiving themselves to be more conservative/traditional than society) and whose speaking scores were "4" were defined as opinion "hard cores." These operational definitions meet both of Noelle-Neumann's (1974; 1991; 1993) conceptual conditions. First, members of the avant-garde and the hard core must perceive themselves to be in the current or future social opinion minority on an issue. Second, these persons must be completely willing to speak out on that issue – evidence of their immunity to public opinion pressure. The selection of conservative minorities as "hard cores" and liberal minorities as the "avant-garde" reflect respondents' *perceptions* of social opinion, rather than actual opinion trends (see Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1991, 1993).

Media Use. Respondents were asked to consider the types of mass ("mainstream") and alternative (religious) media that they use and to report approximately how often they

used each type. Data on respondents' use of television, movies, radio, music and other audio sources, the Internet, newspapers, magazines and books were solicited in a series of 24 items. The first 12 items were averaged to form an index of mass media use, and the second 12 were averaged to form an index of religious media use. The mass media index had an alpha (α) of .73 and the religious media index had an alpha (α) of .81, suggesting high internal consistencies among the items. These indices were used to test Research Questions 4 and 10-13.

Religious Fundamentalism. Respondents' reported belief in five doctrines espoused by members of Christian "fundamentalist" groups (Ammerman, 1991; Kellstedt & Smidt, 1991; Torrey, Dixon, Harris, & Meyer, 1988; Woodberry & Smith, 1998) were solicited, as a measure of doctrinal absolutism (D. M. Kelley, 1972, 1978; Rokeach, 1956, 1960). These five items were averaged to form an index of religious fundamentalism. This index demonstrated a very high internal consistency, having an alpha (α) of .91. This index was used to test Research Questions 6-7, 12-13.

Religious Involvement. Respondents were asked about their religious group activity, as an indicator of their commitment to these groups (D. M. Kelley, 1972). Religious "involvement" is believed to be broader than simple measures of church attendance (Cornwall, 1987; Davidson & Knudsen, 1977; Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 1996; M. K. Roberts & Davidson, 1984; K. W. Welch, 1981; White, 1968). Therefore, respondents were also asked to report the number of religious groups to which they belonged and how often they attended these groups.

Religious group membership data were transformed to a six-point item to facilitate comparison with the two attendance items. Persons who reported belonging to

no religious groups received a score of "0"; those who said they were members of one, two, or three groups received scores of "1," "2," and "3," respectively. Those who reported belonging to four or five religious groups received a score of "4," and those who said they were members of six or more groups received a score of "5".

The two attendance items and the group membership item were averaged to create a "church involvement" index. This index exhibited a fair level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) of .61 and a standardized item alpha (SI α) of .63. This item's lower than expected alpha level is likely due to the unusually high church attendance levels among the sample – 91.4% of respondents reported attending once a week or more often. Since group participation levels among the sample were considerably lower than church attendance (just 27.9% reported attending religious groups once a week or more often), the three items did not co-vary sufficiently to produce a higher alpha.

Sample Characteristics. The demographic characteristics of sample respondents are presented in Table 3. Those who responded to the survey ranged in age from 18-88 years, with a mean of 57.24 years. The churches sampled were heavily Caucasian in composition, and 95.9% of sample respondents were White. More women than men were observed attending the churches sampled, and women comprised 58.5% of the respondents. The mean educational attainment among sample respondents was "some college," and most respondents perceived themselves to be in the middle economic class.

Table 3: Sample Demographics

	Sample	Episcopal	Nazarene	Baptist	Assembly	Non-HC	Hard Core
N	245	41	31	163	10	216	28
Age	57.24	59.07	56.03	57.03	56.56	58.31	48.81**
Gender[a]	1.41	1.39	1.47	1.41	1.40	1.42	1.39
Race[b]	1.06	1.02	1.00	1.08	1.00	1.06	1.07
Education[c]	2.98	4.00***	2.71	2.77	3.11	2.96	3.15
Economic Level[d]	2.83	3.12*	2.68	2.79	2.78	2.85	2.70

[a] 1 = "male," 2 = "female." [b] 1 = "White," 2 = "mixed race," 3 = "non-White." [c] 1 = "Some high school or less," 2 = "high school diploma," 3 = "some college," 4 = "college degree," 5 = "some post-graduate study," 6 = "post-graduate degree.' [d] 1 = "economically challenged", 2 = "working class," 3 = "middle class," 4 = "professional," 5 = "upper class."

Chapter 3: Results

The results of the statistical analyses are summarized below in terms of the study's hypotheses and research questions. Tables summarizing more comprehensive analyses will be referenced throughout.

Hypothesis 1 states that persons holding a majority opinion on an issue will be more willing to publicly express their views than those holding a minority opinion. Fully 89.2% of respondents actually held majority opinions on the abortion issue, and 84.9% actually held majority opinions on the homosexuality issue. Nevertheless, only abortion opinion majorities were more willing to speak out ($p < .001$) than minorities (see Table 4). No other significant differences in willingness to express an opinion or in prior opinion behavior were found. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 receives only limited support.

Hypothesis 2 states that persons who *perceive* that they hold a majority opinion on an issue will be more willing to publicly express their views than those who perceive that they hold a minority opinion. Just over half (50.8%) of respondents perceived their opinions on abortion to be in the social majority, and less than half (47.1%) of respondents perceived their opinions on homosexuality to be in the majority. Nevertheless, abortion majorities were actually *less* willing to behaviorally express their views ($p < .001$) than minorities (see Table 4). No other significant differences in willingness to express an opinion or in prior opinion behavior were found. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

Hypothesis 3 states that persons whose opinions on an issue are gaining social support will be more willing to publicly express their views than those whose opinions are losing support. Although two-thirds (66.8%) of respondents took positions on

Table 4: Willingness to Express, by Majority Status (Sample)

(Opinion Climate)	Abortion		Homosexuality	
	Majority	*Minority*	*Majority*	*Minority*
Actual Social Opinion				
Willingness to Speak	3.31** (215)	2.81 (26)	3.31 (203)	3.14 (36)
Behavioral Willingness	2.59 (216)	1.77 (26)	2.05 (203)	1.83 (36)
Prior Behavior	0.26 (216)	0.38 (26)	0.04 (203)	0.08 (36)
Perceived Social Opinion				
Willingness to Speak	3.19 (122)	3.31 (117)	3.31 (112)	3.25 (126)
Behavioral Willingness	2.02 (122)	3.04*** (118)	1.79 (112)	2.23 (126)
Prior Behavior	0.20 (122)	0.36 (118)	0.04 (112)	0.05 (126)

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

abortion that were actually gaining social support, nine out of ten (89.1%) respondents took positions on homosexuality that were actually losing support. Persons whose views on abortion were gaining social support *were* more willing to verbally ($p < .001$) and behaviorally ($p < .001$) express their opinions than those whose views were losing support (see Table 5). No significant differences in willingness to express an opinion on homosexuality were found, however. Nor were there any actual differences in prior opinion expression for either issue. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 receives only partial support.

Table 5: Willingness to Express, by Social Support (Sample)

(Opinion Trend)	Abortion		Homosexuality	
	Gaining	*Losing*	*Gaining*	*Losing*
Actual Opinion Trend				
Willingness to Speak	3.44*** (161)	2.88 (80)	3.12 (26)	3.30 (213)
Behavioral Willingness	2.97*** (162)	1.56 (80)	2.12 (26)	2.00 (213)
Prior Behavior	0.33 (162)	0.18 (80)	0.12 (26)	0.04 (213)
Perceived Opinion Trend				
Willingness to Speak	3.22 (188)	3.39 (46)	3.31 (154)	3.28 (79)
Behavioral Willingness	2.41 (189)	3.04 (46)	1.86 (154)	2.37 (79)
Prior Behavior	0.28 (189)	0.30 (46)	0.05 (154)	0.05 (79)

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Hypothesis 4 states that persons who *perceive* that their opinion on an issue is gaining social support will be more willing to publicly express their views than those who perceive that their opinion is losing support. Fully 80.4% of respondents perceived their views on abortion to be gaining social support, and 66.1% perceived their views on homosexuality to be gaining support. Nevertheless, no significant differences in

willingness to express an opinion or in prior opinion expression were found, for either issue (see Table 5). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Hypothesis 5 states that persons will be more likely to express their views on an issue the less directly confrontational the means of opinion expression. The data suggest that individuals were much more likely to report a *willingness* to express an opinion than to have actually *done* so (Scheufele et al., 2001). Fully 76.5% of respondents reported a willingness to engage in at least one behavior to express their opinion on abortion. However, just 14.8% had ever done so. Similarly, 66.4% of respondents reported a willingness to engage in at least one behavior to express their opinion on homosexuality, but just 3.3% had ever done so.

There were clear differences in respondents' *willingness* to express an opinion behaviorally. There were also obvious differences in respondents' prior opinion expression *behaviors* (see Table 6). Furthermore, the rank order in which the issues appear was nearly identical. Although respondents reported a high degree of willingness to be quoted by name in the mass media, they were very unlikely to have ever been quoted. The strong correlations between the other methods suggest that this is evidence of a lack of *opportunity* to express an opinion, rather than lack of motivation. The overall pattern of findings suggests that the method of opinion expression *does* influence persons' willingness to give their views (Salmon & Oshagan, 1990). Nevertheless, respondents seemed just as willing (and as likely) to express an opinion using more directly confrontational methods as they were using less confrontational ones. Therefore, the Hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Table 6: Willingness to Express, by Method

(Method of Expression)	Behavioral Willingness[a]	Prior Behavior[a]
Interviewed Live by Media	.77***	.71***
Pass Out Literature	.75***	.35***
Use a Bumper Sticker	.73***	.26***
Be Quoted by Name in Media	.70***	-.01
Attend a Demonstration	.68***	.25***
Wear a Button	.61***	.31***

[a]Spearman-Rho rank-order correlations between willingness to express an opinion or prior opinion behavior for each of the issues.
* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Hypothesis 6 states that individuals will be able to distinguish between social opinion climates and the climates of their reference groups. The data show that this is the case. In fact, sample respondents believed that prevailing social opinion on abortion was over a point more liberal than their own opinions ($MD = 1.02$, $p < .001$, see Table 7). They also believed that social opinion on the issue would become a quarter point ($MD = .24$, $p < .001$) *more* liberal over the next five years. On the other hand, respondents believed that their religious groups' "official" positions on abortion were over a third of a point ($MD = -.36$, $p < .001$) more *conservative* than their own. They also believed that a majority ($M = 4.08$) of their "five closest friends" agreed with their own positions on the issue.

Respondents believed that prevailing social opinion on homosexuality was over a point more liberal than their own positions ($MD = 1.08$, $p < .001$, see Table 8). They also

Table 7: Perceptions of Opinion Climates (Abortion)

	Sample	Episcopal	Nazarene	Baptist	Assembly	Non-HC	Hard Core
N	245	41	30	161	10	227	15
Own Opinion[a]	2.08	3.61***	1.87	1.75	1.70	2.15***	1.00
Perceived Social[a]	3.10	3.18	3.17	3.09	2.90	3.04	4.07***
Perceived Future[a]	3.34	3.35	3.24	3.36	3.30	3.25	4.86***
Perceived Church[a]	1.72	3.19***	1.89	1.46	1.40	1.75	1.27
Perceived Friends[b]	4.08	3.70	4.16	4.17	3.71	4.09	3.93
Willingness to Speak[c]	3.25	2.78**	3.39	3.34	3.40	3.20	4.00**
Behavioral Willingness[d]	2.49	1.39**	2.32	2.84	1.90	2.44	3.33
Prior Behavior[d]	0.28	0.32	0.01	0.32	0.10	0.26	0.47

[a]Mean on a five-point scale (1 = "never legal under any circumstances," 3 = "legal only under certain circumstances," and 5 = "legal under any circumstances"). [b]Mean perceived agreement of one's "five closest friends" with one's own position on abortion. [c]Mean on a four-point scale (1 = "very unlikely," 2 = "somewhat unlikely," 3 = somewhat likely," 4 = "very likely" to speak out). [d]Mean number of six behavioral methods of opinion expression respondent is willing to use.
* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Table 8: Perceptions of Opinion Climates (Homosexuality)

	Sample	Episcopal	Nazarene	Baptist	Assembly	Non-HC	Hard Core
N	245	41	31	162	10	221	18
Own Opinion[a]	1.52	3.38***	1.06	1.18	1.00	1.56	1.00
Perceived Social[a]	2.60	2.45	2.39	2.70	2.30	2.50	3.78***
Perceived Future[a]	3.16	3.11	3.03	3.24	2.50	3.04	4.61***
Perceived Church[a]	1.65	3.80***	1.13	1.28	1.40	1.68	1.22
Perceived Friends[b]	4.34	3.67**	4.64	4.47	4.00	4.38	3.88
Willingness to Speak[c]	3.28	3.03	3.35	3.32	3.40	3.22	4.00***
Behavioral Willingness[d]	2.02	1.46	1.74	2.24	1.60	1.91	3.44**
Prior Behavior[d]	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

[a]Mean on a five-point scale (1 = "always wrong," 2 = "almost always wrong," 3 = "wrong only sometimes," and 5 = "not wrong at all"). [b]Mean perceived agreement of one's "five closest friends" with one's own position on homosexuality. [c]Mean on a four-point scale (1 = "very unlikely," 2 = "somewhat unlikely," 3 = somewhat likely," 4 = "very likely" to speak out). [d]Mean number of six behavioral methods of opinion expression respondent is willing to use.
* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

believed that social opinion on the issue would become over half a point *more* liberal ($MD = .56, p < .001$) over the next five years. In addition, respondents believed that their religious groups' "official" positions on homosexuality were slightly more liberal than their own ($MD = .20, p < .05$). Nevertheless, they believed that the vast majority ($M = 4.34$) of their "five closest friends" agreed with their own positions on the issue. These data support Hypothesis 6.

Hypothesis 7 states that members of socially disadvantaged groups will be less willing to publicly express their opinions than others. The data indicate that willingness to express an opinion behaviorally was inversely related to age ($p < .001$) for both issues (see Tables 9 and 10). Willingness to verbally express one's opinion on homosexuality was also related to gender ($p < .01$), with women less willing to give their views than men. No other significant demographic differences in willingness to express an issue were found, either verbally or behaviorally, for either issue. Therefore, Hypothesis 7 receives only partial support.

Hypotheses 8 states that members of strict religious groups will be more willing to express their opinions on social issues than other individuals. Each respondent was assigned a strictness score for his/her religious group. The score was the mean of Hoge and Roozen's (Hoge, 1979, p. 185) expert ratings for eight dimensions of group strictness, with three of the items (conservatism, social action, pluralism) reverse-scored to match the remaining five. The mean strictness scores are as follow: Episcopalians ($M = 1.90$), Nazarenes ($M = 4.69$), Independent Baptists ($M = 4.76$), and members of the Assembly of God ($M = 5.30$).

Table 9: Abortion Legality, by SES (Sample)

$N = 243$	Age	Gender	Race	Educ.	Econ. Level	Days to Return	Social Cong.[a]	Future Cong.[a]	Church Cong.[a]	Friends Cong.[a]	Willing Speak[b]	Behave Will.[c]	Prior Behave[c]
Age	1.00												
Gender	.04	1.00											
Race	-.03	.09	1.00										
Education	-.18**	.05	-.05	1.00									
Economic Level	-.10	-.05	-.12	.41***	1.00								
Days to Return	-.15*	-.10	.02	.08	-.02	1.00							
Social Congruity[a]	.17	.00	.06	-.07	.03	.06	1.00						
Future Congruity[a]	.19**	.03	.08	-.08	.03	-.01	.68***	1.00					
Church Congruity[a]	-.01	.18**	-.18**	-.04	-.06	.04	-.15*	-.09	1.00				
Friends Congruity[a]	.14	.02	-.12	-.06	-.07	.02	-.04	.04	.13	1.00			
Willing to Speak[b]	-.10	.10	.03	-.03	.04	-.08	-.11	-.06	.20**	.15*	1.00		
Behavioral Willing.[c]	-.30***	.02	.05	.03	.02	-.09	-.24**	-.23**	.10	.13	.44***	1.00	
Prior Behavior[c]	-.07	-.03	-.05	.21**	.15*	-.02	-.09	-.09	.11	.13	.18**	.38***	1.00

[a]Amount of congruity between respondents' own opinion and their perceptions of the relevant social or reference group opinion climate. [b]Score on a four-point scale (1 = "very unlikely," 2 = "somewhat unlikely," 3 = somewhat likely," 4 = "very likely" to speak out). [c]Number of six behavioral methods of opinion expression respondent is willing to use. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Table 10: Homosexuality Morality, by SES (Sample)

$N = 244$	Age	Gender	Race	Educ.	Econ. Level	Days to Return	Social Cong.[a]	Future Cong.[a]	Church Cong.[a]	Friends Cong.[a]	Willing Speak[b]	Behave Will.[c]	Prior Behave[c]
Age	1.00												
Gender	.04	1.00											
Race	-.03	.09	1.00										
Education	-.18**	.05	-.05	1.00									
Economic Level	-.10	-.05	-.12	.41***	1.00								
Days to Return	-.15*	-.10	.02	.08	-.02	1.00							
Social Congruity[a]	.24***	.06	.06	-.05	-.02	-.03	1.00						
Future Congruity[a]	.17**	.13	.06	.05	.01	-.04	.60***	1.00					
Church Congruity[a]	-.11	.00	-.03	-.05	-.10	.06	-.08	-.10	1.00				
Friends Congruity[a]	.14*	.10	-.12	-.10	.04	-.04	.13	.02	.07	1.00			
Willing to Speak[b]	-.11	.22**	.08	-.03	-.10	-.03	.04	.01	.04	.17**	1.00		
Behavioral Willing.[c]	-.29***	.11	.04	-.03	-.03	-.02	-.11	-.12	.06	.23**	.44***	1.00	
Prior Behavior[c]	-.09	.05	-.03	.08	-.01	.03	-.02	-.03	.06	.09	.09	.21**	1.00

[a]Amount of congruity between respondents' own opinion and their perceptions of the relevant social or reference group opinion climate. [b]Score on a four-point scale (1 = "very unlikely," 2 = "somewhat unlikely," 3 = somewhat likely," 4 = "very likely" to speak out). [c]Number of six behavioral methods of opinion expression respondent is willing to use. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Table 11: Abortion Legality (Sample)

$N = 244$	Strict	Fund.	Church Involve	Hostile Media	Econ. Level	Days to Return	Social Cong.[a]	Future Cong.[a]	Church Cong.[a]	Friends Cong.[a]	Willing Speak[b]	Behave Will.[c]	Prior Behave[c]
Church Strictness	1.00												
Fundamentalism	.58***	1.00											
Church Involvement	-.03	.04	1.00										
Hostile Media	.51***	.50***	.03	1.00									
Mainstream Media	-.37***	-.27***	-.08	-.27***	1.00								
Religious Media	.34***	.30***	.24***	.30***	-.03	1.00							
Social Congruity[a]	-.20**	-.15*	-.08	-.21**	-.07	-.28***	1.00						
Future Congruity[a]	-.21**	-.11	-.09	-.26***	.02	-.16*	.68***	1.00					
Church Congruity[a]	.07	.05	.08	.11	-.06	.21**	-.15*	-.09	1.00				
Friends Congruity[a]	.13	.10	.13	.08	-.22**	.18**	-.04	.04	.13	1.00			
Willing to Speak[b]	.24***	.11	.15*	.18**	-.06	.30***	-.11	-.06	.20**	.15*	1.00		
Behavioral Willing.[c]	.23***	.13*	.12	.21**	.04	.31***	-.24**	-.23**	.10	.13	.44***	1.00	
Prior Behavior[c]	-.03	.03	.08	.04	.14*	.17**	-.09	-.09	.11	.13	.18**	.38***	1.00

[a]Amount of congruity between respondents' own opinion and their perceptions of the relevant social or reference group opinion climate. [b]Score on a four-point scale (1 = "very unlikely," 2 = "somewhat unlikely," 3 = somewhat likely," 4 = "very likely" to speak out). [c]Number of six behavioral methods of opinion expression respondent is willing to use. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Table 12: Homosexuality Morality (Sample)

$N = 245$	Strict	Fund.	Church Involve	Hostile Media	Econ. Level	Days to Return	Social Cong.[a]	Future Cong.[a]	Church Cong.[a]	Friends Cong.[a]	Willing Speak[b]	Behave Will.[c]	Prior Behave[c]
Church Strictness	1.00												
Fundamentalism	.58***	1.00											
Church Involvement	-.03	.04	1.00										
Hostile Media	.51***	.50***	.03	1.00									
Mainstream Media	-.37***	-.27***	-.08	-.27***	1.00								
Religious Media	.34***	.30***	.24***	.30***	-.03	1.00							
Social Congruity[a]	.01	.05	.00	-.02	-.14*	-.04	1.00						
Future Congruity[a]	-.20**	-.11	-.05	-.18**	.01	-.03	.60***	1.00					
Church Congruity[a]	.13	.19**	.16*	.03	.01	.02	-.08	-.10	1.00				
Friends Congruity[a]	.24***	.14*	.09	.16*	-.25***	.12	.13	.02	.07	1.00			
Willing to Speak[b]	.13*	-.03	.16*	.02	.01	.28***	.04	.01	.04	.17**	1.00		
Behavioral Willing.[c]	.12	.03	.15*	.06	.02	.27***	-.11	-.12	.06	.23**	.44***	1.00	
Prior Behavior[c]	-.05	-.07	.05	.02	.07	.07	-.02	-.03	.06	.09	.09	.21**	1.00

[a]Amount of congruity between respondents' own opinion and their perceptions of the relevant social or reference group opinion climate. [b]Score on a four-point scale (1 = "very unlikely," 2 = "somewhat unlikely," 3 = somewhat likely," 4 = "very likely" to speak out). [c]Number of six behavioral methods of opinion expression respondent is willing to use. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

The data demonstrate that members of strict groups *were* significantly more willing to verbally express an opinion on the issues of abortion ($p < .001$) and homosexuality ($p < .01$) than members of the ecumenical group. They were also significantly more willing to behaviorally express an opinion on abortion ($p < .001$). No significant differences were observed with regard to respondents' prior opinion expression behaviors (see Tables 11 and 12). Therefore, Hypothesis 8 receives only partial support.

Hypothesis 9 states that members of strict religious groups who perceive that they hold a minority opinion on an issue will be more willing to express their views than other individuals. Slightly over half (52.5%) of respondents from strict groups perceived their opinions on abortion to be in the social minority, and about the same number (51.0%) of respondents from strict groups perceived their homosexuality views to be in the minority.

Table 13: Willingness to Express, by Majority Status (Strict Groups)

(Opinion Climate)	Abortion		Homosexuality	
	Strict Minority	*All Others*	*Strict Minority*	*All Others*
Perceived Social Opinion				
Willingness to Speak	3.35 (106)	3.17 (133)	3.27 (104)	3.29 (134)
Behavioral Willingness	3.10*** (107)	2.06 (133)	2.27 (104)	1.84 (134)
Prior Behavior	0.34 (107)	0.23 (133)	0.04 (104)	0.05 (134)

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Furthermore, the abortion minorities *were* more willing to behaviorally express their views ($p < .001$) than other sample respondents (see Table 13). No other significant differences in willingness to express an opinion or in prior opinion behavior were found. Therefore, Hypothesis 9 receives only limited support.

Hypothesis 10 states that members of strict religious groups who perceive that their opinion on an issue is losing social support will be more willing to express their views than other individuals. Just one in five (21.1%) respondents from strict groups perceived their views on abortion to be losing social support, and slightly over a third (36.3%) perceived their views on homosexuality to be losing support. Nevertheless, strict group members who perceived their views on homosexuality to be losing social support *were* more willing to behaviorally ($p < .001$) express their opinions than other respondents (see Table 14). No other significant differences in willingness to express an opinion or in prior opinion behavior were found. Therefore, Hypothesis 10 receives only limited support.

Table 14: Willingness to Express, by Social Support (Strict Groups)

(Opinion Trend)	Abortion		Homosexuality	
	Strict Losing	*All Others*	*Strict Losing*	*All Others*
Perceived Opinion Trend				
Willingness to Speak	3.40 (43)	3.22 (191)	3.28 (74)	3.31 (159)
Behavioral Willingness	3.00 (43)	2.43 (192)	2.45* (74)	1.84 (159)
Prior Behavior	0.30 (43)	0.28 (192)	0.05 (74)	0.04 (159)

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Hypothesis 11 states that members of strict religious groups will accurately perceive majority opinion on a given social issue. The actual social opinion mean for the abortion issue was 2.74 (see Table 1). Sample respondents' mean perception of social opinion was 3.10 ($MD = .36, p < .001$, see Table 7), and the mean for members of strict groups was 3.09 ($MD = .35, p < .001$). Therefore, respondents from all groups showed evidence of pluralistic ignorance on the issue, believing the opinion climate to be more liberal than it actually was.

The actual social opinion mean for the homosexuality issue was 2.49 (see Table 2). Sample respondents' mean perception of social opinion was 2.60 ($MD = .11$, see Table 8), and the sample mean for members of strict groups was 2.63 ($MD = .14$). Neither of these perceptions is significantly different from the actual social opinion climate. Therefore, Hypothesis 11 is supported for the homosexuality issue, but not for the abortion issue.

Hypothesis 12 states that members of strict religious groups will take their group's position on a given social issue. In fact, these respondents took positions on abortion that they perceived to be a quarter of a point ($MD = .25, p < .001$) more liberal than their religious groups' "official" positions. Conversely, they took positions on homosexuality that they perceived to be slightly ($MD = -.10, p < .05$) more conservative than their religious groups' positions.

By contrast, strict group members' positions on both issues were over a point (abortion, $MD = -1.32, p < .001$; homosexuality, $MD = -1.48, p < .001$) more conservative than their perceptions of the prevailing social climate. Therefore, the data tend to support Hypothesis 12.

Hypothesis 13 states that members of strict religious groups will evidence a "hostile media perception". The data in Tables 11 and 12 support this hypothesis. Group strictness was significantly related to a hostile media perception, at least as defined in this study ($p < .001$).

Research Question 1 asks whether the hard core is issue specific. Based on the operational definitions outlined in the last chapter, this study identified 1 member of the avant-garde and 28 hard-core respondents, or 11.8% of the sample (see Table 15). Hard cores were found in approximately equal numbers for *each* issue. However, only 17.8% of these persons were opinion "hard cores" on *both* issues (2.0% of the total sample). Therefore, the data suggest that the hard core *is* issue specific.

Table 15: Avant-Gardes and Hard Cores, by Issue (Sample)

	Avant-Gardes	Hard Cores	Both
N	1	28	29
Either Issue	0.4%	11.4	11.8
Abortion	0.0	6.1	6.1
Homosexuality	0.4	7.3	7.8
Both Issues	0.0	2.0	2.0

Furthermore, the hard core appeared to be concentrated within the "stricter" religious groups, and the sole avant-garde belonged to the "ecumenical" group (see Table 16). Even though these differences were not statistically significant, they did correspond to theoretical predictions (D. M. Kelley, 1972). The avant-garde's responses have been combined with all other "non-hard cores" in subsequent analyses.

Table 16: Hard Cores by Religious Group

	Episcopal	Nazarene	Baptist	Assembly	Sample
N	2	4	21	1	28
Either Issue	4.9%	12.9%	12.9%	10.0%	11.4%
Abortion	2.4	3.2	4.9	0.0	6.1
Homosexuality	2.4	6.5	5.5	10.0	7.3
Both Issues	0.0	3.2	2.5	0.0	2.0

Research Question 2 concerns the demographic profile of the hard core. The hard cores in this sample did not significantly differ from other respondents in terms of race (White), gender (female), education ("some college") or perceived economic level ("middle class"). Hard cores were nearly a decade younger than other sample respondents (*MD* = 9.50 years, $p < .001$), however.

Research Question 3 examines the hard core's perceptions of reference group support for their opinions. Hard cores did not perceive their religious groups' "official" positions on either issue to be significantly different from their own (abortion, *MD* = -.27; homosexuality, *MD* = -.22). In addition, hard cores believed that about four of their "five closest friends" agreed with their own positions on both issues (abortion, *M* = 3.93; homosexuality, *M* = 3.88) (see Tables 7 and 8).

Other sample respondents believed that their religious groups' "official" positions on abortion were significantly more *conservative* than their own (*MD* = .40, $p < .001$). Nevertheless, they believed that their groups' "official" positions on homosexuality reflected their own (*MD* = -.12). Like the hard cores, other sample respondents believed that about four of their "five closest friends" agreed with their own positions on both issues (abortion, *M* = 4.09; homosexuality, *M* = 4.38) (see Tables 7 and 8).

Research Question 4 asks about the opinion hard core's media use patterns. The data reveal that hard cores were heavier consumers of both mass *and* religious media (see Table 17). They watched religious movies more frequently than other respondents ($p < .05$). They also listened to both mainstream ($p < .05$) and religious ($p < .05$) music radio formats, and to recorded religious music ($p < .01$) more often than other respondents. No other significant differences were observed.

Table 17: Media Use (Sample)

(Means)	Mainstream[a]		Religious[a]	
	Non-HC's	*HC's*	*Non-HC's*	*HC's*
All Media Types	1.37	1.52	0.84	0.99
TV News	2.58	2.75	0.75	0.96
Entertainment TV	2.38	2.43	1.15	1.43
Newspapers	1.92	1.64	0.53	0.39
Music Radio	1.51	2.14*	1.38	2.00*
Recorded Music	1.26	1.68	1.28	1.93**
Books	1.31	1.29	1.43	1.68
Magazines	1.31	1.21	0.69	0.36
Movies	1.15	1.32	0.58	0.93*
Talk Radio	1.14	0.93	1.18	1.57
News Websites	0.93	1.07	0.37	0.21
Entertainment Websites	0.59	1.00	0.25	0.18
Other Audio Recordings	0.38	0.57	0.54	0.50

[a] 0 = "non-user" of medium, 1 = "monthly use," 2 = "weekly use," 3 = "daily use."
* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Research Question 5 asks whether members of strict religious groups believe that their views on a given social issue will eventually become the majority opinion. Members of all three strict groups perceived that social opinion on both issues would become even

more liberal than it currently is (abortion, $MD = -.25$, $p < .01$; homosexuality, $MD = -.54$, $p < .001$). Clearly, these persons did not believe that their views on either issue would eventually become the majority opinion (see Tables 7 and 8).

Research Question 6 asks how well the concept of religious "fundamentalism" relates to individuals' opinions. The more "fundamentalist" respondents perceived that their opinions on abortion were more discrepant (i.e., more conservative, $p < .05$) from prevailing social opinion than other respondents did (see Table 11). They also perceived greater support for their views on homosexuality from their religious groups ($p < .01$), as well as their friends ($p < .05$). No other significant differences were observed.

Research Question 7 asks how well religious "fundamentalism" relates to individuals' willingness to express their opinion on an issue. The data show that more highly "fundamentalist" respondents were more willing ($p < .05$) to behaviorally express an opinion on abortion than other respondents (see Tables 11 and 12). No other significant differences were observed.

Research Question 8 asks how well the concept of religious "involvement" relates to persons' opinions. The more heavily "involved" respondents were in their religious groups, the more they perceived support for their homosexuality views from those groups ($p < .05$). No other significant differences were observed.

Research Question 9 asks how well religious "involvement" relates to persons' willingness to express their opinion on an issue. The data show that more "involved" persons were more willing ($p < .05$) to verbally express an opinion on both issues than other respondents. They were also more willing to express their views ($p < .05$) on homosexuality behaviorally (see Tables 11 and 12).

Research Question 10 asks how well religious media use relates to individuals' opinions. The data demonstrate that heavier religious media users perceived their views as more discrepant (i.e., more conservative) from both current ($p < .001$) and future ($p < .05$) social opinion on the abortion issue. They also perceived greater support for their abortion views from both their religious groups ($p < .01$) and their friends ($p < .01$, see Table 11). No significant differences were observed for the homosexuality issue, however (see Table 12).

Research Question 11 asks how well religious media use relates to individuals' willingness to express their opinion on an issue. The data show that heavier religious media users were significantly more willing to express their opinions on both issues, whether verbally ($p < .001$) or behaviorally ($p < .001$, see Tables 11 and 12). They were also more likely to have done so ($p < .01$) for the abortion issue.

Research Question 12 asks whether groups' "strictness," or individuals' religious "fundamentalism," religious "involvement," or religious media use best predicts persons' opinions on a given social issue. Therefore, these four factors were entered into an ordinary least squares regression, along with respondents' demographic variables and mass media use. The independent variables' partial correlations with the dependent variable (individuals' own opinions on a given issue) were assessed, and those beta weights that were statistically significant were retained. These were then tested separately until the best combination of predictors, as determined by the model's R^2 value, was selected.

The analysis reveals that group strictness was the best predictor of respondents' attitudes on abortion (see Table 18). Not only is strictness the best predictor of the four

indices above, but it is also the best overall predictor of abortion attitudes. The four retained predictors (group strictness, religious fundamentalism, religious media use and perceived economic level) together explain 46% of the variance in persons' attitudes on abortion.

Table 18: Predictors of Own Opinion (Abortion)

Retained Variables	Coefficients	
	r	β
Church Strictness	-.61	-.42***
Religious Media Use	-.47	-.28***
Fundamentalism	-.48	-.13*
Economic Level	.21	.10*

Adjusted $R^2 = .46$
* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

A similar analysis reveals that group strictness was also the best predictor of respondents' attitudes on homosexuality (see Table 19). Not only is strictness the best predictor of the four indices above, but it is also the best overall predictor of homosexuality attitudes. The four retained predictors (group strictness, religious fundamentalism, church involvement and education) together explain 52% of the variance in persons' attitudes on homosexuality.

Research Question 13 asks whether groups' strictness, or individuals' fundamentalism, religious involvement, or religious media use best predicts persons' willingness to express their opinions on a social issue. Therefore, these four factors were entered into an ordinary least squares regression, along with respondents' opinion climate "difference scores," demographic variables and mass media use. The independent

Table 19: Predictors of Own Opinion (Homosexuality)

Retained Variables	Coefficients	
	r	β
Church Strictness	-.69	-.54***
Fundamentalism	-.55	-.19**
Education	.37	.13*
Church Involvement	-.09	-.11*

Adjusted R^2 = .52
* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

variables' partial correlations with the three dependent variables (respondents' willingness to speak out on a given issue, willingness to express an opinion behaviorally and prior opinion expression behavior) were individually assessed, and those beta weights that were statistically significant were retained. These were then tested separately until the best combination of predictors, as determined by the model's R^2 value, was selected.

The analyses reveal that religious media use was the best of the four indices studied at predicting respondents' willingness to express an opinion on the abortion issue, across all three measures (see Table 20). The three predictors retained in the first analysis (religious media use, perceived opinion congruity with one's religious group and age) together explain 15% of the variance in persons' willingness to verbally express an opinion on abortion. The three predictors retained in the second analysis (church strictness, religious media use and age) together explain 19% of the variance in persons' willingness to express an opinion on abortion behaviorally. *Only* religious media use predicted individuals' prior abortion opinion expression, explaining 4% of the variance.

Table 20: Predictors of Willingness to Express (Abortion)

Retained Variables	Coefficients	
	r	β
Willingness to Speak		
Religious Media Use	.32	.26***
Pcvd. Church Congruity	.26	.20**
Age	-.18	-.15*
Adjusted R^2 = .15		
Behavioral Willingness		
Age	-.35	-.31***
Religious Media Use	.29	.21**
Church Strictness	.25	.14*
Adjusted R^2 = .19		
Prior Behavior		
Religious Media Use	.21	.21**
Adjusted R^2 = .04		

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

The analyses reveal that religious media use was also the best of the four indices studied at predicting persons' willingness to express an opinion on the homosexuality issue, for two of the three measures (see Table 21). The four predictors retained in the first analysis (religious media use, perceived opinion congruity with one's friends, gender and age) together explain 16% of the variance in persons' willingness to verbally express an opinion on homosexuality. The three predictors retained in the second analysis (religious media use, perceived opinion congruity with one's friends and age) together explain 21% of the variance in persons' willingness to express an opinion on abortion behaviorally. A third analysis revealed that *none* of the factors listed above adequately

predicted persons' prior behavioral expression on the homosexuality issue, probably because so few respondents ($N = 8$) had ever done so.

Table 21: Predictors of Willingness to Express (Homosexuality)

Retained Variables	Coefficients	
	r	β
Willingness to Speak		
Religious Media Use	.31	.26***
Pcvd. Friends Congruity	.21	.19**
Gender	.19	.17*
Age	-.15	-.15*
Adjusted $R^2 = .16$		
Behavioral Willingness		
Age	-.33	-.34***
Pcvd. Friends Congruity	.25	.27***
Religious Media Use	.25	.18**
Adjusted $R^2 = .21$		

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This study was designed to develop the Spiral of Silence conceptually and empirically. In particular, the literature reviewed demonstrated three potential avenues for resistance to public opinion pressure and related these to the opinion "hard core" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1993).

The literature reviewed in the first section suggests that persons who belong to "exclusivist" religious groups might be one type of opinion hard core, for three reasons. First, they have different ideas about societal authority. Dean Kelley's (1972) concept of group "absolutism" is conceptually similar to Rokeach's theory of "dogmatism" (Rokeach, 1960), on a group level. Second, members of strict groups have stronger ties to their groups and weaker ties to the "outside" world (D. M. Kelley, 1972). This idea is strikingly similar to Tajfel's (1981; 1982) Social Categorization Theory. Third, strict group members have different communication flows, both within and out of the group (D. M. Kelley, 1972). This idea has been compared to the selective exposure hypothesis (Frey, 1986; Sears & Freedman, 1967) and the "hostile media perception" (Gunther & Chia, 2001; Gunther & Schmitt, 2004).

Kelley's (1972) three characteristics of a social group – its goals, social controls and communication patterns – match Noelle-Neumann's (1993) concerns with social consensus, the threat of isolation and the climate of opinion. Furthermore, Kelley's (1972) traits of group strictness – absolutism, conformity and fanaticism – also match Noelle-Neumann's (1974) hypothesized traits of the opinion hard core. She states that hard cores "are not prepared to conform [conformity], to change their opinions

[absolutism], or even to be silent in the face of public opinion [fanaticism]" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, pp. 49-50).

Summary of Results. Hypotheses and research questions based on this literature were tested using a purposive sample of 245 Protestant church members. The results indicate that stricter group members *did* perceive themselves to be opinion minorities and to hold more conservative opinions than the "social opinion climate." They also expected future social opinion to move even *further* away from their own positions on the two issues studied here.

Actual social opinion majorities *were* more willing than actual social opinion minorities to verbally express their views on the abortion issue. However, actual social opinion majorities were not significantly more willing than actual social opinion minorities to express their views on the homosexuality issue. The data for both issues demonstrate no significant differences between actual social majorities and actual social minorities in willingness to express an opinion behaviorally, and no difference in prior opinion expression behavior.

Persons who perceived that they were social opinion majorities were actually *less* willing than those who perceived that they were social opinion minorities to behaviorally express their views on the abortion issue. Furthermore, those who perceived that they were social opinion majorities were *not* more willing than those who perceived that they were social opinion minorities to express their views on the homosexuality issue. There were no significant differences between perceived social majorities and perceived social minorities in willingness to express an opinion verbally, or in prior expression behaviors.

These findings provide little evidence for one of the Spiral of Silence's major propositions. In fact, opinion majorities were *only* more willing to express their views than opinion minorities on one issue, and by one method. Even then, only half of those responding accurately perceived their social majority status. Actual majority status made no difference in individuals' willingness to express an opinion on the homosexuality issue, by any method. Furthermore, those who perceived themselves to be opinion majorities were *not* more willing to express an opinion than those who perceived themselves to be opinion minorities, on either issue. Therefore, neither actual nor perceived majority status appears to predict willingness to express an opinion among the members of this sample.

Persons whose opinions on abortion were actually gaining social support *were* more willing to verbally or behaviorally express their views than those whose opinions were actually losing social support. However, persons whose opinions on homosexuality were actually gaining social support were *not* more willing to express their views than those whose opinions were actually losing social support. There were no significant differences in prior opinion expression behaviors between those whose opinions were actually gaining social support and those whose opinions were actually losing social support.

Nor were there any significant differences observed between those who perceived that their opinions were gaining social support and those who perceived that their opinions were losing social support. This was the case for both issues and across all three methods of opinion expression.

These findings provide some evidence for one of the Spiral of Silence's major propositions. Indeed, persons whose opinions were actually gaining social support *were* more willing to express their views than persons whose opinions were actually losing social support, for one of the issues studied. The amount of actual social support made no difference in individuals' willingness to express an opinion on the homosexuality issue, by any method. Furthermore, persons' *perceptions* of social support for their opinions made no difference in their willingness to express their views, on either issue.

The persons in this study were able to distinguish between prevailing and future social opinion, the climate of their religious reference groups and their friends' opinions. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that sample respondents ignored the social opinion climates in favor of their religious groups' positions on the issues (Iannaccone, 1994; D. M. Kelley, 1972, 1978; Rokeach, 1956, 1960). Persons from all four religious groups consistently took issue positions that were over a point more conservative than their perceptions of current or future social opinion. In addition, they consistently took issue positions within half a point of what they perceived their respective religious groups' positions to be. Furthermore, persons' perceptions of their religious groups' positions were accurate.

Sample respondents consistently perceived that the majority of their closest friends agreed with their own opinions on each of the issues studied, suggesting a "looking glass perception" (Fields & Schuman, 1977; Glynn & McLeod, 1985; Kennamer, 1990; Noelle-Neumann, 1994; Price & Roberts, 1987). In addition, individuals who perceived greater support from their friends were more likely to express

their views on the homosexuality issue, both verbally and behaviorally (see also Oshagan, 1996).

These findings suggest that respondents viewed the social opinion climates as a negative reference group, motivating them to reject societal norms and form counter-norms (Merton, 1968; Newcomb, 1958; Newcomb & Charters, 1950). This "social stereotyping" produced "uniformities in...attitudes, perceptions, etc. – that is,... conformity to ingroup norms" (Hogg & Turner, 1987, p. 148; see also M. Sherif, 1953; M. Sherif & Sherif, 1956). To summarize, reference groups appeared to be potent defenses against public opinion pressures, despite Noelle-Neumann's (1985) assertions to the contrary.

Respondents accurately perceived social opinion on the homosexuality issue. However, they perceived societal opinion on the abortion issue to be more liberal than it actually was – evidence of pluralistic ignorance (Breed & Ktsanes, 1961; Glynn, Ostman, & McDonald, 1995; Miller & McFarland, 1991; Noelle-Neumann, 1993). Perhaps this was due to unusual media attention to the abortion issue in recent years(Ball-Rokeach et al., 1990; Luker, 1984; Press & Cole, 1999), and especially during the period of data collection (Kirkpatrick, 2005; Stolberg, 2005; Toner, 2005). Respondents believed that future social opinion would become even more liberal on both issues than it currently is.

Kelley (1972) theorizes that members of exclusivist religious groups should be more willing to express their views than members of ecumenical groups. In fact, strict group members *were* more willing to verbally and behaviorally express their views on the abortion issue. They were also more willing to verbally express their views on the

homosexuality issue. However, strict group members were no more likely than other respondents to have behaviorally expressed an opinion in the past.

This study further hypothesized that members of strict groups would be more willing to express their opinions on a controversial issue, *even* if they perceived their views to be in the social minority. In fact, these persons *were* more willing than others to behaviorally express their views on the abortion issue. However, they were *not* significantly more willing than others to behaviorally express their views on the homosexuality issue. There were no significant differences between these persons and other respondents in willingness to express an opinion verbally, or in prior expression behavior.

This study also hypothesized that members of strict groups would be more willing to express their opinions on a given issue, *even* if they perceived their views to be losing social support. These persons *were* more willing than others to behaviorally express their views on the homosexuality issue. However, they were *not* significantly more willing than others to behaviorally express their views on the abortion issue. Again, there were no significant differences between these persons and other respondents in willingness to express an opinion verbally, or in prior expression behavior.

This findings of this study indicate that persons' willingness to express an opinion on an issue *was* influenced by the method of opinion expression they selected (Donsbach & Stevenson, 1984; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Salmon & Oshagan, 1990; Scheufele & Eveland, 2001). Nevertheless, respondents were just as willing to engage in more directly confrontational methods of expression, as they were to use less confrontational methods.

The data also indicate that a majority of respondents who report a willingness to express an opinion *never* actually do so (Scheufele et al., 2001). This finding casts serious doubt on the validity of Spiral of Silence studies that consider only respondents' willingness to engage in hypothetical opinion behaviors (see also Glynn et al., 1997).

Prior studies of the Spiral of Silence have found that persons from socially disadvantaged groups are often less willing to publicly express their opinions than others. These population groups are also disproportionately represented in exclusivist religious groups (D. M. Kelley, 1972). Therefore, this study presents an unusual opportunity to test the relative effects of demographics versus religiosity on individuals' opinion expression.

In fact, only age and gender were significantly related to respondents' willingness to express their views (Bond & Smith, 1996; J. Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Scheufele, 1999). Younger persons were more willing than older ones to behaviorally express their views on either issue. In addition, men were more likely to verbally express an opinion on homosexuality than women. No other demographic effects were found. It is important to note, however, that sample respondents were primarily White. This means that a possible silencing effect on racial or ethnic minorities could have been missed.

This study investigated the characteristics of opinion hard cores. Members of the hard core were younger than other respondents, but were otherwise demographically similar to the sample as a whole. The data suggest that these persons may have disproportionately come from the stricter religious groups, but the small number of hard cores identified precludes firm conclusions. The hard core also appears to be issue specific, since few persons were hard cores on both of the issues studied.

Hard cores perceived the prevailing social opinion climate and the future climate of opinion on both issues to be more liberal than other respondents did. Their own positions on the abortion issue were more conservative than others' were. However, their views on the homosexuality issue were not significantly different from others' positions. This is not surprising, given that the majority of those surveyed (as well as a majority of the population) believed that homosexuality is "always wrong." Hard cores also perceived their views on both issues to be accurate reflections of their religious reference groups' "official" positions. By definition, hard cores were more willing than others to verbally express an opinion on both issues. However, they were also more willing than others to behaviorally express an opinion on the homosexuality issue.

Hard cores were also heavier consumers of both mass and alternative (religious) media. These individuals listened to more mainstream and religious music radio formats, listened to more recorded religious music and watched more religious movies than others in the sample. Hard cores' heavier use of alternative media may explain their unusual ability to resist the climate of opinion, since religious media use predicted persons' opinions on the abortion issue and consistently predicted individuals' willingness to express an opinion, by any measure.

In a final test, Kelley's (1972) notion of group strictness was compared to its three components, in order to determine which measure best predicts persons' opinions and their willingness to express them. Group strictness better predicted respondents' opinions on both of the issues studied than any of its components did. Nevertheless, religious fundamentalism was also a significant predictor of persons' opinions on both issues. Clearly, fundamentalism independently contributes to the explained variance. This

suggests that both group-level (strictness) and individual-level (fundamentalism) forces are important determinants of a person's attitudes and opinions (Festinger, 1954; Hogg & Turner, 1987; Rokeach & Restle, 1960; Tajfel, 1982). This notion is further supported by the fact that church involvement was a third independent predictor of persons' opinions on the homosexuality issue.

Nevertheless, religious media use was the best predictor of individuals' willingness to verbally express their opinions on both issues. Religious media use was also the best predictor of persons' prior opinion expression behavior for the abortion issue. Furthermore, religious media use was a significant predictor of respondents' willingness to behaviorally express their opinions on either issue. Age was the only other factor that predicted both verbal and behavioral willingness to express an opinion for both of the issues. In other words, younger respondents were significantly more likely to express their views than older ones.

The finding that religious media use is the best overall predictor of opinion expression suggests that media effects can indeed be powerful (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1999). However, it is clearly *specialized*, rather than mass, media that have the most pronounced influence on persons' willingness to express controversial views (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Tichenor & Wackman, 1973). This is likely due to the perception of mass media "hostility" to religious faith throughout the sample (Gunther & Chia, 2001; Gunther, Christen, Liebhart, & Chia, 2001; Gunther & Schmitt, 2004; Schmitt et al., 2004).

In fact, the media use and opinion data presented throughout this study indicate that a "dual climate of opinion" (Noelle-Neumann, 1989, 1993) exists for each of these

issues, since "...persons who have much exposure to the [mass] media take a different view of the climate of opinion and where the majority is to be found than persons who do not have much exposure to the [mass] media..." (Noelle-Neumann, 1989, p. 21). These data suggest that a broad spectrum of people – *not* just the opinion hard core – "...may manage to support their opinions by selecting out persons and media which confirm their views" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 49).

The findings of this study should be interpreted with some caution, since they were collected from a purposive sample designed to maximize the number of opinion hard cores found. Furthermore, using survey research methods to measure the Spiral of Silence may bias findings in favor of persons who are most likely to express an opinion, since they would be more likely to respond to the survey in the first place (Salmon & Kline, 1985). Still, the results reported here suggest several fruitful avenues for future research.

For Future Research. Only a few researchers have used experimental methods to test the effectiveness of social opinion pressures (Gonzenbach, 1992; Moreno-Riano, 2002; Oshagan, 1996). Perhaps this is because Noelle-Neumann (1991) believes that the contrived nature of many experiments limit their applicability to public opinion theory. On the other hand, the problems with survey research noted above suggest that her method also has its shortcomings (Salmon & Kline, 1985). Future researchers should test the Spiral of Silence using both methods and compare the results. This research should attempt to gauge persons' *actual* opinion likelihood, since both this study and others (Scheufele et al., 2001) have shown that persons report a greater willingness to engage in opinion expression (i.e., behavioral intention, M. S. Kim & Hunter, 1993a; M. S. Kim &

Hunter, 1993b) than actual expression behavior (Baldassare & Katz, 1996; Donsbach & Stevenson, 1984; Glynn & Park, 1997; Oshagan, 1996; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990; Scheufele et al., 2001).

Future Spiral of Silence research would also benefit from an analysis of the interpersonal networks persons use to gain information about controversial social issues (Marsden & Lin, 1982). The roles of opinion leaders (Katz, 1957, 1983; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1964) and the relative contributions of persons having "strong" versus "weak" social ties (Granovetter, 1973, 1982; Rogers, 1995) to one another should be investigated further.

Religious groups could also be studied in terms of their "local" or "cosmopolitan" orientations (Roof, 1976, 1978). This theory states that some persons are more attached to their immediate social networks (including local reference groups, such as churches) and others are more attached to the broader society (Merton, 1968). This idea fits well with Kelley's (1972) theory, suggesting that exclusivist groups should be more local and ecumenical groups more cosmopolitan. Such an analysis may help illuminate the relative contribution of reference groups versus "cosmopolitan" sources of public opinion (e.g., the mass media, Rogers, 1995).

The relative influences of group strictness and individual absolutism (e.g., fundamentalism) should be investigated over a range of religious groups from across the "exclusivist-ecumenical gradient" (D. M. Kelley, 1972). These effects should also be tested on non-religious groups, which have been shown to behave in many ways like religious sects (Wallis, 1975; Wilson, 1967).

In addition, the role of alternative media sources (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Tichenor & Wackman, 1973) and their possible counterbalancing effects on the climate of opinion presented in the mass media should also be investigated more systematically. The findings presented here demonstrate that persons' religious media use reliably predicts their willingness to express an opinion on each of the issues studied. These findings stand in sharp contrast to Noelle-Neumann's – as well as Gerbner and his associates' (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980, 2002; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999) – emphases on the "powerful" effects of the *mass* media (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1985, 1991, 1993).

Furthermore, future studies of the Spiral of Silence should use systematic content analyses of both the mass (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1994, 1999) *and* alternative media sources that groups of people routinely use. This should better illuminate how each form of media "create" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 51) or reinforce persons' opinions and their willingness to express them. It would also help define the conditions under which each type of media is most effective. Research into the "hostile media perception" is promising in this regard (Gunther & Chia, 2001; Gunther et al., 2001; Gunther & Schmitt, 2004; Schmitt et al., 2004).

The characteristics of the opinion hard core outlined in this study should be investigated on larger groups of people, to determine how reliable the preliminary findings are. The characteristics of the avant-garde should also be studied in relation to the hard core. Noelle-Neumann (1977; 1993) predicts that the two groups should be highly similar in their outlooks and practices, but this hypothesis has yet to be tested. In addition, the broad spectrum of persons actively resisting public opinion pressure in this

study suggests that the operational definitions of the avant-garde and the opinion hard core employed here may be too restrictive. Future researchers should test a continuous measure of opinion resistance.

Finally, the possible influence of respondents' race or ethnicity on opinion expression should be investigated more carefully (Bond & Smith, 1996). Prior Spiral of Silence research suggests that willingness to speak out may have a cultural component (Scheufele & Moy, 2000), but the churches sampled in this study were heavily Caucasian. Since members of non-White racial or ethnic groups are known to take unique perspectives on certain social issues (Bolzendahl & Brooks, 2005; Steensland et al., 2000), they are likely to differ in their willingness to express an opinion on those issues as well.

These suggestions should assist researchers in clarifying the conditions under which the Spiral of Silence is – and is *not* – operative, each of which would make an invaluable contribution to the development of public opinion theory.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Social Opinions Survey

Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in an academic research study exploring the relationship between religiosity, media use and social opinions.

This survey is completely voluntary and should take only 10-15 minutes of your time. You may refuse to participate in this study or not to answer certain questions. You may also discontinue the survey at any time without penalty.

All data gathered will be reported only in aggregate form. In other words, your responses will never be linked to you individually. All data will be kept confidential and no individually identifiable information will be released in any report of research findings. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the investigator: Dr. Charles T. Salmon, Acting Dean, College of Communication Arts and Sciences, Michigan State University, East Lansing MI 48824, 517-355-3410 or salmon@msu.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Social Opinions Survey

1) Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements, using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

a) The Bible is inerrant (absolutely true) in its original manuscripts.
1 2 3 4 5

b) Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus.
1 2 3 4 5

c) Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for humanity's sins.
1 2 3 4 5

d) Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead.
1 2 3 4 5

e) Jesus will physically return to earth someday.
1 2 3 4 5

2) Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements, using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

a) The mainstream (non-religious) mass media have a liberal bias.
1 2 3 4 5

b) The mainstream (non-religious) mass media are generally unfriendly toward religion.
1 2 3 4 5

c) Religious media offer a perspective on social issues that the mainstream media ignore.
1 2 3 4 5

3) The columns below list a variety of mass media sources people use for information and entertainment. Please indicate how frequently you use each of the types listed. The left column includes all media except religious. The right column includes religious media only. Under each, please check "N" if you never use that source, "M" if you use it once a month or more, "W" if you use it once a week or more, and "D" if you use it every day.

	General				Religious			
a) Television (Entertainment)	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
b) Television (News)	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
c) Movies/Home Video	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
d) Radio (Music Formats)	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
e) Radio ("Talk" or Teaching)	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
f) Recorded Music	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
g) Other Audio Recordings	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
h) Internet (Entertainment)	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
i) Internet (News/Info.)	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
j) Newspapers	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
k) Magazines	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D
l) Books	__N	__M	__W	__D	__N	__M	__W	__D

4) How often do you attend religious services?

___More often than once a week
___Once a week
___A few times a month
___Several times a year
___Yearly or less often

5) How many religious groups such as Bible studies, prayer groups, etc. do you regularly participate in, whether they are within your local congregation or not? Please give a number.

6) How often do you attend religious group meetings? (Please answer for the group you attend most frequently)

___More often than once a week
___Once a week
___A few times a month
___Several times a year
___Yearly or less often
___Never

The following section asks for your opinions on issues that are often in the news.

7) Ever since the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion, there has been considerable debate on the issue within social and religious circles. Many religious groups have taken official stands on the legality of abortion. Now consider your church or denomination: What is its position regarding abortion? Should abortions be legal under any circumstances, legal under only certain circumstances, or never legal under any circumstance?

Legal Under...

Any Circumstances		**Certain Circumstances**		**No Circumstances**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

___ don't know my church's stance on abortion

8) What do you think? Should abortions be legal under any circumstances, legal under only certain circumstances, or never legal under any circumstance?

Legal Under...

Any Circumstances		**Certain Circumstances**		**No Circumstances**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

9) How many of your five closest friends do you think agree with your position on abortion? Please give a number.

10) Now, regardless of your own opinion, how do you think most people in society feel about the issue? Do they think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal under only certain circumstances, or never legal under any circumstance?

Legal Under...

Any Circumstances		**Certain Circumstances**		**No Circumstances**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

11) What do you think will happen in the future: what will people's views be like in five years' time? Will most people in society think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal under only certain circumstances, or never legal under any circumstance?

Legal Under...

Any Circumstances		Certain Circumstances		No Circumstances
1	2	3	4	5

12) Now, imagine you're at some kind of social gathering where you don't know anyone. You're talking to a group of people when somebody brings up the issue of abortion. From the discussion you can tell that most people in the group do not support your point of view. In this kind of situation, some people would express their opinions and some would not. How likely is it that you would express your own opinion in a situation like this?

___ very likely
___ somewhat likely
___ somewhat unlikely
___ very unlikely

13) Which of the following would you be willing to do to show your opinion on abortion? Place a check mark next to those activities you would be willing to do. In addition, please CIRCLE any of the following activities that you have personally *done* in the past.

___ wear a button
___ place a bumper sticker on your car
___ attend a demonstration defending your view
___ pass out literature defending your view
___ allow yourself to be quoted by name in the mass media
___ allow yourself to be interviewed live on radio or TV

14) The issue of homosexuality has been debated within social and religious circles for centuries. Many religious groups have taken official stands on the practice of homosexual relations. Now consider your church or denomination: What is its position regarding homosexuality? Does it consider sexual relations between two adults of the same sex to be always wrong, wrong only sometimes or not wrong at all?

Wrong...

Always		Sometimes		Not At All
1	2	3	4	5

___ don't know my church's stance on homosexuality

15) What do you think? Are sexual relations between two adults of the same sex always wrong, wrong only sometimes or not wrong at all?

Wrong...

Always		**Sometimes**		**Not At All**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

16) How many of your five closest friends do you think agree with your position on homosexual relations? Please give a number.

17) Now, regardless of your own opinion, how do you think most people in society feel about the issue? Do they think sexual relations between two adults of the same sex is always wrong, wrong only sometimes or not wrong at all?

Wrong...

Always		**Sometimes**		**Not At All**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

18) What do you think will happen in the future: what will people's views be like in five years' time? Will most people in society think that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex is always wrong, wrong only sometimes or not wrong at all?

Wrong...

Always		**Sometimes**		**Not At All**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

19) Now, imagine you're at some kind of social gathering where you don't know anyone. You're talking to a group of people when somebody brings up the issue of homosexuality. From the discussion you can tell that most people in the group do not support your point of view. In this kind of situation, some people would express their opinions and some would not. How likely is it that you would express your own opinion in a situation like this?

___ very likely
___ somewhat likely
___ somewhat unlikely
___ very unlikely

20) Which of the following would you be willing to do to show your opinion on homosexuality? Place a check mark next to those activities you would be willing to do. In addition, please CIRCLE any of the following activities that you have personally *done* in the past.

___ wear a button
___ place a bumper sticker on your car
___ attend a demonstration defending your view
___ pass out literature defending your view
___ allow yourself to be quoted by name in the mass media
___ allow yourself to be interviewed live on radio or TV

Please provide the following information so that we may properly classify your responses.

21) What is your age? _____

22) Please circle your gender: Female Male

23) What is your racial background? (You may select more than one answer.)

___White or Caucasian
___Black, African or African-American
___Hispanic or Latino
___Asian or Pacific Islander
___Native American
___Other (please identify):

24) What is your educational level?

___Some High School or less
___High School graduate
___Some College
___College graduate
___Some post-graduate study (M.A., Ph.D., etc.)
___Post-graduate degree

25) What do you consider your family's economic position to be?

___Upper class
___Professional
___Middle class
___Working class
___Economically challenged

Thank you for completing this survey. Please take a minute to ensure that you have answered every question to the best of your ability, and then return the survey in the enclosed post-paid envelope. Your input is very important.

Appendix B: Group Strictness Rating Form

Instructions for Expert Raters

[Excerpts from Cover Letter]

Note that each of the ratings ranges from 1 to 7, plus a response of "Don't know." Would you consider the list of denominations and spread them over the whole range from 1 to 7 when making ratings? Do not use merely 1 and 2, or 6 and 7. I am interested in actual variations, not variations relative to some ideal or possible condition.

In some cases you will not know. This is unavoidable. In those cases circle "Don't know." But I would like to ask that you do so no more than one-fourth of the time at most. In some instances I would prefer an estimate on your part, rather than a "Don't know."

(Reprinted from Hoge & Roozen, 1979b, p. E-1)

Expert Rating Form

DIMENSION #1: STRENGTH OF ETHNIC IDENTITY, 1966-75

no ethnic or nationality identity						strong ethnic or nationality identity	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Don't know

DIMENSION #2: THEOLOGICAL CONSERVATISM OR LIBERALISM, 1966-75

"Conservative" includes literal accuracy of Scriptures, literal heaven and hell, and suspicion of science or rationality as a source of truth or authority. "Liberal" includes less literal interpretation of Scriptures, philosophical view of heaven and hell, and openness to science and rationality.

most conservative						most liberal	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Don't know

DIMENSION #3: ATTITUDES TOWARD ECUMENISM, 1966-75

most positive to ecumenism						most negative to ecumenism	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Don't know

DIMENSION #4: CENTRALIZED OR CONGREGATIONAL POLITY, 1966-75

"Centralized" includes central or regional authority over appointments, finances, and programs. "Congregational" indicates local autonomy in these and other matters.

centralized polity						congregational polity	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Don't know

DIMENSION #5: EMPHASIS ON LOCAL AND COMMUNITY EVANGELISM, 1966-75

Do the churches in the denomination typically put a high, or a low, priority on efforts in community evangelism – such as canvassing, visitation, promoting Sunday school or Bible study groups in the community, or sponsoring revival services? The emphasis here is not on particular methods but overall priority.

low priority on community evangelism						**high priority on community evangelism**	
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Don't know**

DIMENSION #6: INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL ACTION, 1966-75

"Social action" refers to efforts directed to social, political, or economic change, such as programs in the areas of race relations, poverty, and community self-help. It does not refer to individual charity or relief.

not involved in social action						**heavily involved in social action**	
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Don't know**

DIMENSION #7: EMPHASIS ON DISTINCTIVE LIFE STYLE AND MORALITY, 1966-75

Does the denomination emphasize maintaining a separate and distinctive life style or morality in personal and family life, in such areas as dress, diet, drinking, entertainment, use of time, marriage, sex, child rearing, and the like? Or does it affirm the current American mainline life style in these respects?

maximal affirmation of American life style						**maximal distinctiveness from American life style**	
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Don't know**

DIMENSION #8: ATTITUDE TOWARD PLURALISM OF BELIEF AMONG MEMBERS, 1966-75

Does the denomination demand a single set of belief? Does it maintain strict standards of faith and doctrine? Or does it encourage pluralism and individuality in theological views among its congregations and its members? This dimension refers more to view of leadership than of lay members.

demands strict standards of beliefs				**affirms individuality and pluralism in beliefs**			
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Don't know**

(Reprinted from Hoge & Roozen, 1979b, pp. E-1 - E-3)

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