

University of Texas at Arlington

MavMatrix

2018 Spring Honors Capstone Projects

Honors College

5-1-2018

COMPARING NEWS COVERAGE OF RICHARD NIXON AND DONALD TRUMP IN THEIR FIRST HUNDRED DAYS

Chanel Sassoon

Follow this and additional works at: https://mavmatrix.uta.edu/honors_spring2018

Recommended Citation

Sassoon, Chanel, "COMPARING NEWS COVERAGE OF RICHARD NIXON AND DONALD TRUMP IN THEIR FIRST HUNDRED DAYS" (2018). *2018 Spring Honors Capstone Projects*. 27.
https://mavmatrix.uta.edu/honors_spring2018/27

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at MavMatrix. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2018 Spring Honors Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of MavMatrix. For more information, please contact leah.mccurdy@uta.edu, erica.rousseau@uta.edu, vanessa.garrett@uta.edu.

Copyright © by Chanel Sassoon 2018

All Rights Reserved

COMPARING NEWS COVERAGE OF
RICHARD NIXON AND DONALD
TRUMP IN THEIR FIRST
HUNDRED DAYS

by

CHANEL SASSOON

Presented to the Faculty of the Honors College of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

HONORS BACHELOR OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my mentor, Dr. Erika Pribanic-Smith, thank you. To say this would be impossible without you is an understatement. I have learned so much under your guidance this semester, and I am forever grateful for it. Thank you for all the late-night calls, the emails and the encouragement. You have taught me a lot in a very short amount of time, and I will take it all with me as I progress through life. Thanks for instilling confidence in me and allowing me to prove to myself that I can do a lot more than I ever thought. I never imagined, sitting in your Communication Theory class as a sophomore, that we would ever have such a wonderful relationship, but I am so happy that I can now say we do. You are a beautiful professor with so much to offer your students, and I am truly honored that I was not only your student, but your mentee. Thank you again. I hope I have made you proud.

To my mother, father and sister, Davina, thanks for all you have done to get me this far in life. I appreciate your love and support so much.

To my friends and *Shorthorn* family, thanks for always believing in me and for encouraging me every step of the way. Your friendship means the world to me.

April 20, 2018

ABSTRACT

COMPARING NEWS COVERAGE OF RICHARD NIXON AND DONALD TRUMP IN THEIR FIRST HUNDRED DAYS

Chanel Sassoon, B.A. Journalism

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2018

Faculty Mentor: Erika Pribanic-Smith

News values have remained the same since the inception of journalism; however, the ways we consume news and write stories have changed with the times. Print media, which used to be the main avenue of receiving news, has since been replaced with digital formats. Tumultuous times bring an influx of news stories, especially when they involve politics. Two of the most controversial presidents, Richard Nixon and Donald Trump, were the subjects of many news stories during their times in office. To further understand the way political news coverage has changed over the years, the author studied articles published within the first hundred days of each administration in *The Dallas Morning News* and *The New York Times*. A content analysis of 200 articles revealed several similarities in

the way the newspapers covered each president, but also some striking differences. The differences could be attributed to the changing political and technological environments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1 Journalism History	4
2.1.1 Origins and Development	4
2.1.2 Presidents and Press	5
2.1.3 McLuhan	6
2.2 Richard Nixon.....	11
2.2.1 Culture at Time of Presidency	11
2.2.2 Presidency Overview	12
2.2.3 First 100 Days	13
2.2.4 Relationship with Press.....	14
2.3 Donald Trump.....	16
2.3.1 Culture at Time of Presidency	16
2.3.2 Presidency Overview	16
2.3.3 First 100 Days	17
2.3.4 Relationship with Press.....	18

2.4 Media Framing Theory	19
3. METHODOLOGY	21
4. RESULTS	27
4.1 Richard Nixon.....	27
4.1.1 Unmanageable.....	27
4.1.2 Evil.....	28
4.1.3 Unworthy	29
4.1.4 Condescending.....	29
4.1.5 Negative Qualities.....	30
4.1.6 Comparisons	31
4.1.7 Melancholy	32
4.1.8 Enemies.....	33
4.1.9 Positive Coverage	33
4.1.10 Questioning.....	34
4.2 Donald Trump.....	35
4.2.1 Unmanageable.....	35
4.2.2 Evil.....	36
4.2.3 Unworthy	37
4.2.4 Condescending.....	38
4.2.5 Negative Qualities.....	39
4.2.6 Comparisons	40
4.2.7 Lurking Issues.....	41
4.2.8 Positive Coverage	42

4.3 Comparing Nixon and Trump	43
5. CONCLUSION	45
REFERENCES	49
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.....	54

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
4.1	Nixon vs. Trump Coverage	43

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“When the president does it, that means that it is not illegal.” The now infamous quote by former President Richard Nixon referred to national security and the president’s power to bend the rules, even if it did not seem quite ethical (Johnson, 2017). The public now knows how that tale ended—the process of impeachment ultimately leading the president to resign—but the U.S. is experiencing an administration with some noticeably similar traits to the aforementioned president (Johnson, 2017). Perhaps the most straightforward example of this parallel between the two presidents can be found when listening to President Donald Trump’s personal lawyer, John Dowd, especially in reference to allegations that Trump had knowledge of former White House national security adviser, Michael Flynn, lying to the FBI (Johnson, 2017). In a statement of defense, Dowd claimed the president in no way could obstruct justice, simply because he served as president. The “president cannot obstruct justice because he is the chief law enforcement officer under [the Constitution's Article II] and has every right to express his view of any case,” Dowd said (Johnson, 2017). While this and other issues remain unsolved, evaluating the course of similar events in history provides some valuable insights.

This study documents coverage in *The Dallas Morning News* and *The New York Times* during the first 100 days of Nixon’s and Trump’s presidencies. Marking key themes in articles remained imperative for the purpose of the study, showing both the similarities and differences between the portrayals of each president by the media. The media analyzes

the two men based largely on their comparable personalities and scandal-infested presidencies. After six months of holding office, the media already began referencing the “disgraced 37th president” when discussing Trump (Glasser et al., 2017). “Yes, Richard Nixon is already the inescapable analogy of the Trump era” (Glasser et al., 2017). Still, others recognize a correlation between the two but think they have their differences. A tweet composed by John Dean, former White House counsel and CNN contributor, says Nixon was “dishonest” but that he was not “incompetent” (Bowden, 2018). On the contrary, Trump retained both qualities, he said. “I never figured Trump would make Nixon look good,” his tweet continued (Bowden, 2018). Whether constituents believe the two are similar or not, the fact that their names are continually mentioned within the same thoughts speaks volumes.

To properly benchmark a succinct period of time, the researcher chose to pursue each president’s first 100 days in office. As this time is highly publicized in the media, the public tends to regard these days as the precedent for the rest of that president’s term (Millstein, 2017). The hundredth-day mark is the unofficial time period when the public evaluates the president based on his successes up to that point. The tradition dates back to Franklin Roosevelt’s tenure as president (Millstein, 2017). Following the crash of the stock market in 1929, Roosevelt enacted a series of legislation to boost the country’s economy. Since a large portion of “significant” laws passed within his first three months in office, it became the precedent to mark other presidents’ accomplishments following his tenure (Millstein, 2017). Although it is a small fraction of the time most presidents will serve, their first days in office set the tone for the remainder of their time overseeing the White House (Millstein, 2017). This study’s significance lies in its ability to reference two

separate presidencies and the journalistic coverage found under both. Through this study, the continuity of journalistic values is evident, depicting the news coverage of two highly publicized presidencies. Proper journalism documents history and allows for information to be spread. In both presidencies, journalists played a major role in uncovering truths. The Pentagon Papers, Watergate, Russian interference in the 2016 election, and a number of sexual misconduct allegations are issues Nixon and Trump faced as presidents. All the while, journalism was there to set the record straight and disperse the facts to the people. Just as history is said to repeat itself, so does journalism, in that the ultimate goal remains the same no matter the time period: uncover the truth. Although the values have been consistent, evolving technology and other cultural factors have led to differences both in the press and the way they covered the presidents.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Journalism History

2.1.1 Origins and Development

The press gained its political sense of importance during the latter part of the 18th century and the early portion of the 19th century. During this time, the newspaper industry grew, dominating the way Americans consumed their news, including politically charged articles. The newspaper boom during this time period is evident in the growth, accessibility, and frequency of new publications making their presence known across the nation (Sloan, 2005). In 1783, there were 35 publications in the U.S., all of which printed content on a weekly basis; however, in a matter of 50 years, that number grew to become 1,200 (Sloan, 2005). These publications included both weekly and daily papers. This represents an increase that is more than 33 times the original. Some contributing factors to this increased growth include expansion of populations moving West, an increase in the number of towns, and a postal service that provided information and accessibility to the citizens it served. Although distribution of newspapers rose during this time, it is harder to determine how readership was impacted (Sloan, 2005). The method of distribution and the cost of newspapers caused readership to remain low. Near the end of the 18th century, readers could only purchase newspapers by a yearly, weekly, or daily subscription, ranging from \$1 to \$8 (Sloan, 2005). With the median weekly income of Americans at \$5, newspapers seemed unfeasible for some. Still, a single copy of a newspaper could travel far. A piece

published in the *New York Journal* in 1795 documented a contributor who said copies of the journal traveled as far as 20 miles (Sloan, 2005). Shops, similar to today, had copies of newspapers for patrons, and friends and family often shared the same subscription (Sloan, 2005). These methods help spread the news even if someone could not pay for it.

Political groups took notice of the rise of technology during the antebellum era and used it to spread their message across the nation. Newspapers played a major role in dispersing the messages of politically affiliated groups. The end of the Federalist Party started a new wave in the way newspapers promoted content. Beginning then, “newspapers based their political arguments on individuals’ characteristics, rather than policy issues” (Pribanic-Smith, 2018, p. 13). This new method resulted in political warfare that became extremely personal (Pribanic-Smith, 2018). Following that time, smaller newspapers formed around the country, following in the lead of national partisan newspapers, similar to the structure of today (Pribanic-Smith, 2018).

2.1.2 Presidents and Press

By the 20th century, those vying for the role of president knew the media held a lot of power. Politicians used different methods related to the media not only to occupy their desired position but also to keep it. President Franklin Roosevelt famously turned to radio airwaves to get his message regarding the New Deal across to the masses (Davies, 2005). Fireside chats became a well-known method for the president to articulate his thoughts and policy agendas to the public. President Harry Truman also had an open relationship with the press. Truman was the first president to use television as a medium to reach constituents. He even welcomed cameras into some cabinet meetings while serving as president. Dwight Eisenhower became the first president to have a televised inauguration,

which was historic, but his successors, John Kennedy and Richard Nixon, had some of the most memorable interactions with the media (Davies, 2005). Kennedy captivated audiences with his demeanor and charisma. Aside from his charm, the public appreciated and revered Kennedy for his transparency during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 (Davies, 2005). The media made it possible for him to share the sensitive information with the public and comfort them. Richard Nixon took a different approach, masking the turmoil the country faced during his presidency. Two examples of this are the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate scandal (Davies, 2005). In both instances, Nixon regarded the press as a group of people against him and his administration. Both incidents led to a great deal of suspicion coming from both government officials and members of the press (Davies, 2005).

2.1.3 McLuhan

The theory of Media Ecology comes from Marshall McLuhan, who formulated the theory to further describe the relationship between different media and the messages they carry as technology evolves (Griffin, 2012). McLuhan is famous for summing up this theory with the statement “the medium is the message.” This is to say that the manner one chooses to disperse information carries just as much weight as the message itself (Griffin, 2012). People tend to ignore the medium, only paying mind to the message delivered (Strate, 2008). However, the medium itself is just as important. The way information is delivered inherently affects the message being delivered (Strate, 2008). According to Strate (2008),

The code and the mode of information that is used will determine who has access to the data and who controls its dissemination, how much information will be distributed, how fast it will be transmitted, how far it will travel, how long the

information will be available, and the form in which it will be displayed. As these variables change, so does the message that is being communicated. (p. 131)

Therefore, it is imperative for the viewer to properly evaluate the information conveyed to them with an understanding of not only the message but the medium in which the message arrives, in order to have a well-rounded outlook on the content (Strate, 2008). Analyzing the difference between separate media serves as another way to convey McLuhan's theory. If someone watches a movie and reads a book depicting the same tale, replicating one in the other form would be impossible. Because a movie and a book are two separate media, the way a message is conveyed in one could never be translated in the other (Griffin, 2012).

Part of studying media ecology comes from studying media within the environment. This can be difficult as environments are all interconnected. Humans are also so immersed in their surroundings that it becomes difficult to study the nature of media within them. In addition, McLuhan emphasized the importance of paying attention to the normalcy of technology, rather than its irregularities, as those are far more evident (Griffin, 2012). Instead, McLuhan suggests it is important to pay mind to the monotonous nature of technology, as it becomes an extension of oneself. The technologies a person uses frequently affect the way they absorb information. "Because every medium emphasizes different senses and encourages different habits, engaging a medium day after day conditions the senses to take in some stimuli and not register others" (Griffin, 2012, p. 323). In relation with this concept is the notion that to see the effects a new medium has on a population, it must become commonplace. To fully comprehend its lasting influence on society, the medium must no longer be new. "It's only when it fades into the background

of our lives that we're truly subjected to its patterns—that is, its environmental influence” (Griffin, 2012, p. 323). Recognizing how technology influences the news absorption of the public can give good insight into how people process information. This insight can lead individuals into further understanding the way in which people consume their news. Now dominated by technology in the form of smartphones and smartwatches, along with the influence of social media, the news can be found at the tips of fingers and the tops of wrists. Whereas the public once had to dig for the news, it now comes to them in the form of notifications on their devices from a number of hand-selected publications. Within seconds, a glance at a phone or watch can tip people off in breaking news, spreading the accessibility of it to new, unprecedented heights.

Before this influx of technology, McLuhan outlined different time periods, each called an epoch, depicting the four divisions of human history. They are: the literate age, the tribal age, the print age, and the electronic age. “The world was wrenched from one era into the next because of new developments in media technology” (Griffin, 2012, p. 323). In the tribal epoch, the senses of “hearing, touch, taste, and smell were developed far beyond the ability to visualize” (Griffin, 2012, p. 324). People living in that age depended on the spoken word to communicate information. This method of communication promoted unity, providing a “deeper sense of community” that allowed for “more passion and spontaneity” (Griffin, 2012, p. 325).

Once the alphabet was created, humanity catapulted into the literate epoch (Griffin, 2012). People’s knack for hearing diminished in this epoch, as they had a new-found sense to rely upon when exchanging information. The ability to view information, as opposed to only hearing it, lessens the need for immediacy. If someone did not register the information,

they could simply reread the text. During this epoch, people had the ability to ponder information and truly analyze it, with the benefit of time on their side. “Hearing no longer becomes trustworthy. ‘Seeing it in writing’ becomes proof that it’s true” (Griffin, 2012, p. 325). The literacy age also created a divide among tribes. Members of tribes no longer needed to gather as they now had the ability to retain information through the written text. The literacy epoch automatically converted tribe members, who used to function as one, into individuals. “Even though the words may be the same, the act of reading a text is an individual one. It requires singular focus” (Griffin, 2012, p. 325).

The print age took the same elements from the literate age and spread them. “If the phonetic alphabet made visual dependence possible, the printing press made it widespread” (Griffin, 2012, p. 325). McLuhan argued the greatest benefit to movable type lay in the ability to reproduce the same text over and over. Since the print revolution mass produced the same product multiple times, McLuhan nicknamed it “forerunner of the industrial revolution” (Griffin, 2012, p. 326). During this time, a sense of unification brought the country together in the form of nationalism, but still “a countering sense of separation and aloneness” existed (Griffin, 2012, p.326).

Once the telegraph made its way to the scene, the electronic age began, reinforcing some qualities from previous epochs. “Instant communication has returned us to the pre-alphabetic oral tradition where sound and touch are more important than sight” (Griffin, 2012, p. 326). McLuhan said electronic media had a profound effect on the people, “retribalizing the human race” (Griffin, 2012). Electronic media give people the power to connect with anyone at any time. “Whereas the book extended the eye, electronic circuitry extends the central nervous system. Constant contact with the world becomes a daily

reality” (Griffin, 2012, p. 326). It is worth noting that President Nixon served under the electronic age. His presidency and its tumultuous times provided content for media outlets that were readily available to the public. Privacy was no longer a part of the norm once the electronic age began. Issues oceans away made their presence known in the States, and people were keenly aware of the events taking place in the world, even the ones a bit closer to home. As Nixon headed the White House, facing problems the public became aware of, citizens were no longer in the dark. “The new tribalism is one where everyone’s business is everyone else’s and where we all are somewhat testy” (Griffin, 2012, p. 326).

The last, and current, epoch the world is in today is the digital epoch. McLuhan did not study this epoch, but it is widely regarded as serving as an extension of the electronic epoch, except it is “wholly” electronic (Griffin, 2012). While the digital age rides on the heels of the electronic one, there are differences. Far more individuality occurs now in the digital age, as the media and technology tailors itself for its viewers. “The mass age of electronic media is becoming increasingly personalized” (Griffin, 2012, p. 327). Donald Trump’s presidency falls within the digital age, and the effects of the time are evident when looking at his tenure in office. Perhaps the best example of this comes with his use of social media, namely Twitter. Trump mainly operates by directly contacting his constituents about his opinions and policy through Twitter notifications. The president shared his viewpoints far before occupying office, while still on the campaign trail. It is worth noting that Trump operates on his personal Twitter account rather than the official POTUS one, something officials said would change once in office but did not (Jenkins, 2017). This sense of immediacy closely aligns with themes of the digital era. Aside from that, Trump has spoken about blocking certain individuals from his Twitter account, something the White

House defends, as he operates on a personal account (Jenkins, 2017). This level of personalization the president exhibits also supports the elements found in the digital epoch.

2.2 Richard Nixon

2.2.1 Culture at Time of Presidency

The 1960s encompassed a moment of great divide in American history. Prejudice and injustice were so prevalent during that time that John Kennedy ran his presidential campaign on the promise of the “New Frontier.” His plan included doing all within his power to eradicate social inequalities (History.com Staff, 2010). Kennedy’s campaign platform was the “most ambitious domestic agenda since the New Deal.” Although he served as president, Kennedy’s promise did not come to fruition due to a group of southerners who did not appreciate his plan of action. Instead of resolving the issues he hoped to eliminate, Kennedy was forced to do the best he could with those he worked alongside (History.com Staff, 2010). The problems lingered through Lyndon Johnson’s presidency, when he came up with a plan dubbed the “Great Society.” Johnson’s ideas included tending to social injustice, but he also included a portion addressing poverty (History.com Staff, 2010). While Johnson’s administration made some progress in helping the public, with programs like Medicare and Medicaid, problems still loomed. The threat of communism spreading from Vietnam to the West caused the administration to lead the U.S. further into the war effort, leaving Johnson’s cause of the War on Poverty an afterthought, as the country could not financially support both (History.com Staff, 2010). Now in a full-fledged war, Richard Nixon would soon assume office and inherit issues that would later result in his demise. While the early portion of the decade represented a more optimistic country, the latter portion defined a negative period for America. In contrast to

the early 1960s, which involved Kennedy's widely momentous inauguration and civil rights movements that caused change, negativity saturated the later years of the decade (History.com Staff, 2010). The assassination of both Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, two key leaders in the civil rights movement, and a raging war in Vietnam gave way to a mood of hopelessness for the nation and its citizens.

2.2.2 Presidency Overview

A cloud of negativity marred Nixon's time as president. The majority of his tenure dealt with the Vietnam War and other issues associated with his methods of foreign policy. The main issue surrounding the administration regarded the containment of communism. The struggle of containment showed itself through both Vietnam and the Soviet Union. It became a priority for the administration to nip anything in the bud, and although the war began before Nixon took office, so much happened in Vietnam during his tenure that many associated Nixon with the war, as opposed to Dwight Eisenhower, who was president when the war began in 1955, or Lyndon Johnson, who served as president when the U.S. officially entered it (De La Cruz, 2013). People who worked close to Nixon did not have the political savviness to protect the president through his different scandals; they were friends of his. This led to his ultimate legacy: his resignation following the Watergate scandal. The scandal effectively forced Nixon out of the presidency, although he was not impeached. It serves as a mark in history to which other questionable acts made by future presidents are compared (Payne, 2004). Whether it is Bill Clinton's infidelity while serving as president or Trump's Russia investigation, presidents following Nixon are constantly compared to him, in reference to Watergate especially, when committing questionable acts (Payne, 2004).

From 1969-1973, Spiro Agnew served as Nixon's vice president. Even though Nixon put a front on for the press, as they appreciated Agnew's speech style, behind closed doors, Nixon found Agnew to be an embarrassment. The press later asked Nixon why he did not choose Agnew to serve as his running mate in the next election, and his response belittled Agnew. Nixon said Agnew was his "insurance policy," because "no assassin in his right mind would kill me" knowing Agnew would succeed him (Clines, 1996). Agnew faced some direct backlash himself, resigning in 1973 as a result of charges he pleaded no contest to, outlining a series of bribes taken while serving as Governor of Maryland (Clines, 1996). The tumultuous presidency often concealed information from the public, lacked transparency, and ultimately resulted in failure, marking Nixon as perhaps one of the most infamous people to ever hold the position of president.

2.2.3 First 100 Days

A sense of triumph marked the first days of Nixon's presidency. Having lost the presidential election in 1960 and the governorship of California in 1962, Nixon finally could say the people chose him for office. The climate of the country remained pessimistic with a raging war, civil rights issues, and the lurking ideology of communism; however, Nixon did his best to bring the people together, referencing peace multiple times in his inaugural speech (Ahner, 2017). In his address, Nixon targeted the fearing public, reassuring them that ending the Vietnam War was a priority for him—something that the president did accomplish. "The greatest honor that history can bestow is the title of peacemaker" (Ahner, 2017). During those first days, Nixon emphasized the importance of environmental consciousness; he later created the Environmental Protection Agency (Ahner, 2017). Nixon also spoke at a luncheon within that time, celebrating the National

Association of Broadcasters. There he tipped off the journalists to peace talks he engaged in with Vietnam (Ahner, 2017). Dwight Eisenhower, who served as president with Nixon as his vice president, died on March 28, 1969. His relationship with Nixon was rocky, but still Nixon attended the funeral, proving he could be both professional and compassionate (Ahner, 2017). More subtle approaches as peacemaker also occurred when the president made a gesture to Coretta Scott King on the anniversary of her late husband's assassination. April 4, 1969 marks the day when Nixon instructed his Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert Finch to speak to Coretta Scott King (Ahner, 2017). The first 100 days of his presidency spotlights the range of issues that would ultimately carry on through the rest of his term—Vietnam and racial inequality, to name a couple.

2.2.4 Relationship with Press

Richard Nixon had a turbulent relationship with the press, to say the least. The president, knowingly concealed much vital information, possibly fearing the press could get to the bottom of his secrecy. The fear ultimately came to pass, as the press played a major role in both the Watergate scandal and the Pentagon Papers fiasco (Porter, 1976). His negative relationship with the media began far before his term as president. While running for governor of California against Edmond G. (Pat) Brown, Nixon made a statement foreshadowing the relationship he would later further develop with the press. Nixon lost the bid and told reporters, “You won’t have Nixon to kick around anymore, because ladies and gentlemen, this is my last press conference” (Porter, 1976). The incident occurred six years before Nixon began campaigning for his bid for the presidency in 1968. As president, Nixon lamented his treatment by the media. During the height of the Vietnam War, Nixon took to television sets to proclaim his personal vendetta for the press (Pach,

2010). “Our worst enemy seems to be the press,” Nixon stated (Pach, 2010). The statement speaks for itself, but considering the political climate of the time, recalling the war, along with efforts to contain communism and the general fear in the nation, Nixon’s stance speaks volumes (Pach, 2010).

Jeb Stuart Magruder, a Nixon aide, proposed a great deal of legislation to combat the press (Porter, 1976). Among his ideas for reform, Magruder suggested bringing the FCC and the IRS into affairs regarding the press to ensure the quality of their work. Another notion Magruder brought to the table included the concept to “begin to show favorites within the media” (Porter, 1976, p. 607). In a similar manner, Vice President Spiro Agnew pressured the press to portray Nixon as a compelling leader, pushing them to not publish content that discredited this view (Senter, Reynolds, & Gruenenfelder, 1986). Publications did not “readily bend to the pressure applied by the Nixon administration,” much to Nixon’s contempt (Senter et al., 1986). This ideology presumably began to affect the process through which publications or networks framed the news (Porter, 1976). The thought was those groups who shared information favorable for the administration would get more recognition and exposure, beginning from the White House and trickling down to others. This outlook is something the current administration seems to follow, as well. Nixon, too, had his own way of doing things, as seen by his personal method of gathering news. “Nixon’s solution to the problem of news consumption was noteworthy: he avoided direct exposure to newspaper, television or radio reports almost entirely. Instead, he instituted an elaborate system of media monitoring that substituted for almost all first-hand consumption of the news” (Karpowitz, 2009). Similar to the current president, Nixon relied on quick facts and synopses to understand the world (Karpowitz, 2009). While Nixon

depended on White House aides to filter the news for him, Trump does the same, going the further mile to celebrate some networks such as Fox News and humiliate others like CNN or MSNBC.

2.3 Donald Trump

2.3.1 Culture at Time of Presidency

During the time of Trump's presidency, issues reminiscent of the 1960s came to be. The Black Lives Matter movement, which according to blacklivesmatter.com began over Twitter after a viral hashtag, spearheaded the cause centering on achieving social justice for black citizens, especially in regards to police brutality. Another women's rights movement began, calling attention to social inequality affecting women. Two of the main issues revolved around pay inequality and sexual misconduct. Peaceful protests broke out for both the Black Lives Matter movement and the Women's marches; more than a million people came together to protest Trump's inauguration in January in an effort to combat regulations regarding women's rights, such as abortion (Stein, Hendrix, & Hauslohner, 2017). The time of his presidency marked another poignant time in history when people came together to fight for what they believed in, making their grievances known.

2.3.2 Presidency Overview

In the nearly 15 months Trump has served as president, he has experienced a level of controversy that some two-term presidents have not faced. Russian collusion in the 2016 election, looming FBI investigations, attacks on Syria, and controversy over "the big, beautiful wall" Trump plans to build separating America's southern border with Mexico are just a few examples of what the administration has endured thus far (Minian, 2018). Trump has vivaciously faced much opposition as well as unwavering support from the

public. For a man who once said he was “one hundred percent sure” he did not want to be president and that he would only serve if he saw the U.S. “continue to go down the tubes,” Trump has emerged as a determined leader (Sulima, 2017). Trump has made good on some campaign promises by partially repealing Obamacare, cutting taxes, and limiting immigration from “terror-prone” countries; others, such as the wall, still loom (Politico, 2018). Trump’s initial six months in office proved to be “dazzling,” with the press covering his every move and outlandish tweet (Dombrowski & Reich, 2017). He managed some historic successes as well, most notably confirming Neil Gorsuch as the newest Supreme Court Justice.

2.3.3 First 100 Days

During his first 100 days in office, Trump—in Trump fashion—had his high highs and his low lows. Trump ranks third in history with 28 laws passed during his first 100 days. He follows only Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, who signed 76 and 55 laws, respectively (Pruitt, 2017). Still, some are unimpressed with Trump’s performance. “Aside from a failed attempt at health care reform and an FBI investigation into his alleged ties to Russia, Trump has little to show for his first 100 days in office” (Millstein, 2017). While Trump stirred up the press by scheduling speeches across the country and traveling multiple times to his estate in Mar-a-Lago, he resorted to tweeting foreign world leaders as opposed to making any international visits within the benchmark of 100 days (Pruitt, 2017). Trump’s approval rating in office wavered in the 40 percent range, with some outlets reporting it was as high as 45 percent. Either way, that is the lowest approval rating for a president following his first 100 days in office from FDR’s tenure to present (Pruitt, 2017).

2.3.4 Relationship with Press

In every presidency, the media is in some way involved. People argue about the role of the media in politics, but many agree that the press serves as “the fourth estate,” giving rise to the importance of sharing information and serving the public (Azari, 2016). Because the media is its own “political institution,” any president naturally becomes involved in its rhetoric (Azari, 2016). Trump has never been shy about voicing his opinions and even tweeting them. Trump has adamantly gone after the media during his time as president, far surpassing some predecessors while alluding to thoughts comparable to those who came before him. Nixon infamously said that the press “seemed” to be America’s “worst enemy” during the time of the Vietnam War (Pach, 2010). With a similar statement, Trump once took to Twitter, sharing his views on the press. In his tweet, Trump tagged *The New York Times*, NBC News, ABC News, CBS News, and CNN, saying that “the fake news media” was not his enemy, but that they were the “enemy of the American people” (Shalby, 2017). Soon after that tweet, Trump barred the media from certain press briefings where they usually would have been welcome. Trump also declined to attend the White House Correspondents’ Association Dinner in 2017, an event featuring the press in all its glory. Some speculate that Trump will not attend the upcoming dinner on April 28, 2018 (Kenny, 2018). While it has been reported that Trump will hold a campaign rally in Washington, Michigan, it has also been said that White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders will represent the president instead, an ironic twist, as Trump is avoiding the press by enlisting the help of one of its members (Moran, 2018).

2.4 Media Framing Theory

Media framing can be defined as “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” of specific news attributes (Weaver, 2007, p. 143). Framing is closely related to the concept of agenda setting. Agenda setting can be summarized by the media emphasizing certain stories but not dictating how what the people think about them (Weaver, 2007). Agenda setting is largely discussed because there is so much news happening, and while there is bountiful coverage, it is impossible to report on it all. Ultimately, in agenda setting, the media tells us what to think about, but not what to think. Going a step further, the manner in which the media frames the news is the basis of framing theory (University of Twente, 2018). “In essence, framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called ‘the frame’) influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning” (University of Twente, 2018). Instead of simply telling the audience what to think about, framing aims to influence what audience’s think (University of Twente, 2018). “Framing is a quality of communication that leads others to accept one meaning over another. It is a skill with profound effects on how organizational members understand and respond to the world in which they live” (University of Twente, 2018).

Considering the prior literature on journalism history, Nixon and Trump’s administrations, and the theories of Media Ecology and Media Framing, this research aims to answer the following questions: What attributes do the media emphasize about each president to frame coverage? How do the attributes emphasized about Nixon compare to

the attributes emphasized about Trump? What environmental factors account for the differences in the way the media framed coverage of Nixon and Trump?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In documenting the two presidencies, the researcher decided to look at two publications: *The Dallas Morning News* and *The New York Times*. The researcher chose these two newspapers because they are established and reputable publications.

The Dallas Morning News is a local paper that gives perspective closer to the researcher's home. It was important to the researcher to have a local angle in the research to compare with a national publication. *The New York Times* is a publication of great political influence. Its widely established reputation led the researcher to choose it as the second reference. Together these two different types of papers showed a range that helped balance the research in documenting the two presidencies, allowing for a well-supported study.

To make sure the coverage of each of the two presidents was fair and balanced, the researcher took certain methods to ensure the two could be compared properly. The first step in the process included limiting the time that would be studied. The researcher chose to document the research based on articles published during the president's first 100 days in office. This is because the president's first 100 days in office are generally highly publicized in the media and because it is a succinct period of time. Because presidents are inaugurated on January 20, the date range remained consistent for both Richard Nixon and Donald Trump: January 20 to April 29, 1969, and 2017, respectively.

To locate articles about Richard Nixon from *The Dallas Morning News*, the researcher searched Archive Americana (Readex, a division of Newsbank, The Historical

Dallas Morning News, 1885-1984), a database available through UTA Libraries. The researcher searched the publication for any article pertaining to Richard Nixon by typing “Richard Nixon” in the search category. The researcher customized the date range to reflect the first one hundred days of the president’s tenure to ensure that the articles shown were published within the designated timespan. The researcher aimed to review 50 articles. To make sure the 50 articles reflected the entirety of the president’s first 100 days, the researcher divided the articles among the date-sorted pages displayed, carefully choosing between two and three articles per page. The researcher repeated the process for *New York Times* articles in the ProQuest Historical Newspapers database.

The researcher began with a sample pool of 12 articles from each newspaper to establish the coding scheme used for analyzing coverage of the Nixon presidency. The researcher read through the articles, documenting common themes. These different thoughts were later organized and brought down to one word which summarized the previous ideas and connotations. The coding scheme consisted of the following categories for the Richard Nixon articles:

1. *Unmanageable*: Articles categorized here displayed Nixon’s presidency as an overwhelming one for the president due to, for example, the current climate of the country at the time of his presidency.
2. *Evil*: This category showed Nixon as a mean character who is selfish and self-absorbed.
3. *Unworthy*: This showed the president as someone who is not deserving of the position or unable to perform as a proper president should.
4. *Condescending*: This regarded articles that added a dose of negativity to an otherwise positive event or trait, such as “shrewd veteran.”

5. *Negative qualities*: This category covered any content that did not fit into any other negative adjective already mentioned, yet still painted the president in a bad light.
6. *Comparisons*: Here is content related to past presidents such as Kennedy or Johnson. These articles referred back to a previous administration and compared Nixon to those who served before him.
7. *Melancholy*: This will cover content that tainted any otherwise happy occasions/times with Nixon's presidency, such as the inauguration, which was described negatively.
8. *Enemies*: Here articles covered any characters that are against the president, including groups and countries; Nixon's presidency largely revolved around the Vietnam War.
9. *Positive coverage*: Any content with a positive connotation is set under this category, whether it is Nixon as a person or his policy decisions.
10. *Questioning*: Any time the public questioned the president's political choices, the article would be marked as having a questioning trait to it.

After documenting these ten categories on an Excel spreadsheet, the researcher continued to read through the rest of the articles selected for each newspaper and marked an "X" under each category as it was represented in the article being read. The level of analysis was the full article.

Documenting Donald Trump's first 100 days was the next step in the process. The researcher first looked at 12 articles each from *The Dallas Morning News* and *The New York Times*, totaling 24 articles. The researcher then kept up with common themes found in the articles and narrowed down the ideas to eight total categories:

1. *Unmanageable*: This showed the presidency to be one of immense issues that remained unable to be solved.
2. *Evil*: This category documented the president as mean and selfish.
3. *Unworthy*: The category showed the president to be unqualified to run the country as a president should.
4. *Condescending*: Any article that belittled the president or showed any sort of backhanded remarks would be shown here.
5. *Negative qualities*: Other negative qualities that are not already depicted within other categories would be documented here.
6. *Comparisons*: Anytime the president is compared to his predecessors, such as Barack Obama or George W. Bush, it was marked under this category.
7. *Lurking issues*: Suspicious activity or issues such as the Russia investigation can be seen here, or any other time that the president is dealing with an on-going sensitive problem.
8. *Positive qualities*: Articles marked here show any positive qualities the president has, such as good leadership skills or connectivity and understanding with his constituents and supporters.

Aside from the categories chosen for both Nixon and Trump, the spreadsheets had columns to document the name of the article, the publication it was from, the date it was published, the author who wrote it, and the section it came from.

Because Donald Trump's presidency was recent, instead of looking at a database, the researcher found content via Google News and nytimes.com. For the 50 articles coming from *The Dallas Morning News*, the researcher created an advanced Google search. With the advanced search, the researcher could limit results to the site "dallasnews.com," along

with restricting the date range again from January 20 to April 29. The researcher used Google instead of searching *The Dallas Morning News* site directly because of the ability to restrict the search to the selected dates.

A total of 200 articles were found, so the researcher once again split the content among the 20 pages to ensure content researched was evenly distributed among the president's first 100 days.

The researcher began by reading three articles from the first two pages of the Google search. Once those were completed, the researcher divided the remaining 46 articles by the 18 pages left to get 2.4. She then alternated between two and three articles for the remaining pages to end up with 50 total articles spanning all 20 pages.

After analyzing the first 50 articles from *The Dallas Morning News*, the researcher moved on to documentation of the 50 articles from *The New York Times* from nytimes.com. The search criteria remained the same, searching the president's name and restricting the articles to the date range selected, January 20 to April 29, 2017.

Even after limiting the scope of the articles by the date range, 3,581 articles were found. To narrow down the amount to a more manageable number, the researcher focused only on articles that were categorized with the term "politics." These articles automatically published under the news section of *The New York Times*, so no articles under the opinion section were featured in Donald Trump's portion of the research, as opposed to Richard Nixon's.

Since the publication's website did not have a system to display the number of pages articles take up, the researcher divided the timespan into weeks to make sure the entirety of the first 100 was captured throughout the 50 articles allotted. The math deduced

the researcher would alternate between three and four articles per week throughout the 100 days.

The researcher marked articles on the spreadsheet as they displayed the discussed categories. The level of analysis was the article.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Richard Nixon

4.1.1 Unmanageable

In the January 21, 1969 *Dallas Morning News*, Nixon's inauguration seemed like the start of a daunting next few years. Out of a total of 15 articles depicting unmanageability from *The Dallas Morning News*, one specifically mentioned Johnson's thoughts on his successor: "Flying home, Lyndon Baines Johnson said Monday he felt 'different within four seconds' after Richard Nixon took the oath of office as President. 'First,' he said, 'there was the feeling for Mr. Nixon and what he'll be facing up to.'" *The New York Times* also published articles referencing the unmanageable nature of Nixon's presidency, a total of 23 to be exact. On January 21, 1969, they referred to the state of the country at the time of Nixon's presidency:

Mr. Nixon and his principal advisers have been talking a great deal in these last few weeks, not about their policies—it is too early for that—but about how to approach their problems, and particularly about how to keep things from getting even worse than they are now. Here it seems like the issues are far beyond Nixon's ability to fix them.

4.1.2 Evil

The Dallas Morning News published two articles citing Nixon as “evil.” One article, published February 25, 1969, depicted Nixon as a mean character:

Typical of the venomous propaganda that embarrasses even the Indian government was a story in *Blitz* shortly after the election of President Richard M. Nixon. It said: “...Richard Nixon, who now walks into the Presidency over the foully murdered corpses of his two great rivals—John Kennedy in the 1960 elections, and Robert Kennedy in the present fight—owes his office and power to J. Edgar Hoover, the executioner of his rivals.”

While the article does not charge Nixon with the crime of murder, it does paint a picture that he is okay with how he assumed his role. *The New York Times* had content of a similar nature, publishing three articles depicting Nixon as evil. One of them, a column, called Nixon out for his apathetic nature toward the war:

Back in March, 1968, during the New Hampshire primary, Richard Nixon told the voters of that state that he had a peace plan to end the war and killing in Vietnam. What happened to that peace plan? The war still goes on, and 44 days since Nixon took office over one thousand American boys have been killed on the battlefields of Vietnam.

4.1.3 Unworthy

Both publications also had content depicting Nixon as an unworthy president. In *The Dallas Morning News*, a total of six were published. For the March 7, 1969 edition, the newspaper shed light on promises made by Nixon that were left unfulfilled:

The conservatives who sent Nixon to the White House expected all these things, [a better deal, a relief from our heavy tax burden, a rescue of the troubled American dollar, a return of our prestige abroad, and freedom of choice for their schoolchildren] and rightfully so, for without them he would never have made it to the highest office in the land, and in so many words he promised them. But it now appears that Nixon has sidetracked the very people who sent him up there.

The New York Times published five articles noting Nixon's unworthiness. Sentiments claiming the president was unworthy were published on March 9, 1969:

Nowhere in his announced programs to date is there any evidence of dynamic leadership in solving the nation's basic ills: the Vietnamese war, the massive inflation, the urban crisis, the racial injustices, etc. Where is the 'new leadership' of which he spoke in his campaign? One sees altogether too clear evidence of the manipulator, the role player, the image maker, and the opportunist.

4.1.4 Condescending

While the Nixon administration dealt with some serious issues, *The Dallas Morning News* also poked fun at the president and his party. From a total of 14 articles, in its April 24, 1969 edition, lighter problems were discussed:

The Republicans, for the occasion dubbed "knights in quest of a name," didn't do so well in their assigned task of pinning a name on the Nixon administration, in

the tradition of Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society, John F. Kennedy's New Frontier and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. But their efforts to do so were, in short, hilarious. Ever since reserved Richard Nixon moved into the White House and started putting his organized, all-business-no-play men—and a very few women—in top government jobs, the critics have been charging that Republicans are dull and lack a sense of humor.

The New York Times delivered on condescending content, too, by way of its March 30, 1969 issue. Out of 24 articles condescending the president, the March article specifically depicted Nixon as incompetent:

Mr. Trudeau says he wants to decide Canada's attitude toward the ABM Spartans and Sprints, not on the danger to "a few Canadian cities" but on their effect on world peace. Will Mr. Nixon's Safeguard program deter nuclear war, or hasten it? Mr. Trudeau returned with much technical data about how the missiles operate, but still unsure of their value to world peace.

4.1.5 Negative Qualities

The Dallas Morning News showed Nixon negatively in nine of its articles. In one published on January 21, 1969, Nixon is depicted as somewhat entitled:

Nixon, although he almost forgot to let Agnew speak, didn't forget to heap some praise upon the much-criticized former Maryland governor. The new president reached back into history to quote Thomas Jefferson as saying the vice-presidency is "an easy and honorable position and the presidency is the splendid misery."

Similarly, *The New York Times* published a piece on January 20, 1969 showing Nixon as a hopeless character. Among 16 articles illustrating negative qualities, this one questions Nixon's leadership skills:

There was Richard Nixon--himself the kind of Horatio Alger story America has glorified, as well as a long-familiar practitioner of the most traditional kind of politics--being prayed over by five different ministers (one of whom produced the paradox of praising the Lord for creating the world while hoping that Mr. Nixon would not slip up and destroy it).

4.1.6 Comparisons

As president, Nixon was often compared to those who came before him. Fifteen articles from *The Dallas Morning News* did just that. An example can be seen in the April 24, 1969 edition:

So Richard Nixon criticized the Johnson administration upon the loss of the *Pueblo*. Today the United States is faced with another loss which, in terms of human life, is 31 times as serious as was the loss of the *Pueblo*. Are we to infer from Nixon's past statement that he would now advocate his own impeachment? Or could it be that the enlightening presidency has tempered Nixon's Asian policies?

The New York Times also compared Nixon to someone in its January 27, 1969 edition, this time his former opponent John Kennedy. Out of 26 of these articles, this one focuses on both Kennedy and Johnson and their debate styles as compared to Nixon:

The more likely danger was that he simply would not come across as an effective or attractive leader to the millions watching—particularly since they would

measure him not only against Lyndon Johnson, who was not comfortable on television and came to avoid it, but against Kennedy, who was the first Presidential master of the medium. Mr. Nixon emerged unscathed on the first count, although it seemed hardly useful for him to emphasize his no doubt justified fears of nuclear confrontation in the Middle East; on the second, the American television-watcher will render the ultimate judgement.

4.1.7 Melancholy

Articles published in the January 20, 1969 *Dallas Morning News* and *New York Times* offered somber coverage of Nixon's inauguration. This article makes for a total of six when it comes to its melancholy nature. From Dallas:

Richard M. Nixon took the office of president Monday on a gray wintry day and pledged himself to a role as an international peacemaker and one who would try to cool off the passions of a divided and troubled nation. In a speech in which he appealed for a new sense of national unity, Nixon said that his administration would be conscious of the fact that "the simple things are the ones most needed today if we are to surmount what divides us, and cement what unites us."

The melancholy atmosphere continues through a total of 20 articles in *The New York Times*. In New York, Kennedy's assassination was somehow still mentioned in coverage regarding Nixon's inauguration:

Lyndon Baines Johnson, after five years of one of the most turbulent Presidencies in the country's history, turned over authority to his successor today with civility and ceremony. He flew home to Texas this afternoon on the same Presidential

Boeing 707 jet—No. 26000—on which he had taken the oath of office on Nov. 22, 1963, about two hours after President John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas.

4.1.8 Enemies

With problems regarding communism in Vietnam and Russia and a divided Germany, it is no surprise the media covered enemies the U.S. faced. Ten articles from *The Dallas Morning News* depicted these enemies. The April 3, 1969 *Dallas Morning News* discussed Vietnam:

More than a year ago, Richard Nixon wrote an article in Foreign Affairs quarterly in which he declared that the best counter to the expansionism of Asian communism would be development of a collective defense led by nations within the threatened region. He pointed out that after Vietnam it would no longer be politically nor militarily sound for the U.S. to act alone as policeman to the world.

The February 16, 1969 edition of *The New York Times* mentioned another American enemy. Among 25 articles discussing them, this one focuses on communist Germany: “Tension over the status of Berlin, a permanent sore spot in East-West relations, built up last week following threats and ‘hold-fast’ declarations by the powers involved.”

4.1.9 Positive Coverage

The February 27, 1969 *Dallas Morning News* portrayed Nixon as a president making improvements in his foreign affairs when visiting Europe. This is one example from a sum of 17 articles pointing out Nixon’s better qualities:

As he did so, it was becoming evident that a new appreciation of the American chief executive is beginning to take hold in the minds of Europeans, who in the past have

been less than enthusiastic about him. There are still no manifestations of great enthusiasm for Nixon, but what is beginning to appear is a respectful and appreciative attitude for the goals he has stated repeatedly since arriving in Europe last Sunday.

The New York Times mentioned Nixon's good traits in 25 articles. On February 7, 1969, Nixon was depicted as a good speaker:

Nevertheless, there was a sense of authority apparent today, not only in the carefully controlled syntax and the brisk responses (24 in 30 minutes, which may not be a record but is some distance from President Eisenhower or President Johnson) but in the substance as well.

4.1.10 Questioning

The Nixon administration had its fair share of questionable times, namely the Vietnam War. Six articles from the publication questioned Nixon's motives and/or policy. The February 7, 1969 *Dallas Morning News* discussed Nixon's war efforts:

Schoenbrun (former CBS newscaster) had strong criticism for the present Vietnam policy, calling it a policy that has divided the nation "more than at any time since the civil war." There is talk that we aren't winning in Vietnam, but it's even worse, the former Paris correspondent for CBS said. "We are in worse shape in Asia today than we were 10 years ago."

The April 25, 1969 *New York Times* questioned Nixon's policies at home, in one out of 16 articles:

The exchange, which Mr. Agnew later called "not nice but frank," pointed up a growing disagreement between the Nixon Administration, which wants more state involvement, and the Mayors, who have a deep distrust of state governments and want Federal assistance to flow directly to cities.

4.2 Donald Trump

4.2.1 Unmanageable

The April 13, 2017 *Dallas Morning News* sheds light on the issue of Trump's infamous wall, posing it as an unmanageable task for the president. This makes 28 articles from the publication that address the unmanageability of the administration:

As bids to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border come in, and fears of mass deportations in the U.S. grow, some Mexicans and the American expatriates among them are growing uneasy about the possibility of nationalism on both sides of the border, harming what's long been a strong relationship. Many Mexicans have left here to look for jobs in the U.S., often following the path to North Texas. Those who remain quietly contrast the anti-immigrant rhetoric in the U.S. to the welcome Americans have received here.

Among 33 articles from *The New York Times* which depicted the presidency as unmanageable, an article published on February 17, 2017, regarding border security, shows how daunting the logistics would actually be if a border wall were to be built:

President Trump's efforts to secure the nation's borders and get tough on illegal

immigrants, announced just days after he took office, now face serious logistical problems along with the legal challenges that threaten his ability to make good on a central campaign promise. The crackdown requires a vast commitment of resources, including hiring 15,000 new border patrol and immigration enforcement agents, which officials say will take at least two years to accomplish.

4.2.2 Evil

Trump's harsh personality is something often depicted in the media, but the March 30, 2017 *Dallas Morning News* went further, describing him as a mean and selfish character—one of nine articles that represented the president as evil:

President Donald Trump declared war Thursday on House conservatives who helped derail his health care plan last week, threatening to unseat them in 2018—and lumping them with Democrats as the cause of his troubles. Many pushed back. They called Trump a bully who has already lost his political soul to the Washington establishment, and an unreliable, ungrateful ally who has quickly forgotten their help in the election. The threat and backlash mark a major escalation in a brewing Republican civil war. It reflected deep frustrations from a president whose first major legislative foray ended in defeat, and an unusual willingness to turn against fellow Republicans.

The New York Times published sixteen articles showing a sense of negativity when portraying Trump. After Trump's then-White House press secretary Sean Spicer drew parallels between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Hitler, an April 11, 2017 article

made the president and his administration look evil and out of touch:

But in misconstruing the facts of the Holocaust—Nazi Germany’s brutally efficient, carefully orchestrated extermination of six million Jews and others—Mr. Spicer instead drew a torrent of criticism and added to the perception that the Trump White House lacks sensitivity and has a tenuous grasp of history. “We didn’t use chemical weapons in World War II,” Mr. Spicer said. “You know, you had someone as despicable as Hitler who didn’t even sink to using chemical weapons.” He continued, “So you have to, if you are Russia, ask yourself: Is this a country and a regime that you want to align yourself with?”

4.2.3 Unworthy

A total of eight articles published in *The Dallas Morning News* showed Trump to be unworthy of the presidency. Following his inauguration, *The Dallas Morning News* published a piece discussing protests occurring on January 20, 2017, representing Trump as an already unworthy president, “Only hours after Donald Trump's inauguration Friday, protesters in North Texas were already on the move to oppose his presidency.” *The New York Times* also published content painting Trump as an unworthy president in a total of 11 articles. An article in the April 18, 2017 paper targets Trump’s lack of achievements in his first days in office:

The announcement came at a jittery time for the White House, as Mr. Trump faces the 100th day of his presidency without much to show for it in the way of legislative accomplishment, after the defeat of his health care overhaul. And his two high-profile executive orders cracking down on immigration from predominately Muslim nations have been stymied by the courts.

4.2.4 Condescending

Close to half of the articles from *The Dallas Morning News* painted the president in a condescending manner. After an unprecedented number of trips to his estate in Mar-a-Lago while on the job, the newspaper published a story on March 25, 2017 that was quite condescending towards Trump:

Although Trump did not fly to his Florida resort on Saturday, as he's done for the last several weekends, he still enjoyed time at one of his properties—the Trump National Golf Club in Potomac Falls. The president's spokesman told reporters that Trump was taking meetings at the club but declined to say with whom Trump was meeting or what topics Trump hoped to discuss. Meanwhile, several photos circulated on social media showing the president wearing his normal golf attire. The White House would not confirm whether the president had played a round of golf. This is the president's 12th trip to a golf course since he took office nine weeks ago, according to NBC news editor Bradd Jaffy, who has been keeping a record of those visits.

The majority of *The New York Times* articles published condescending content on the president, 37 to be exact. In regard to his presence on social media, an article from April 28, 2017 mocks the president:

The rulers of the social media and search worlds have run their high-powered analytics to give us incisive new insight into President Trump's first 100 days in office. And the results, are ... well, basically what you'd expect. We now have data to support the claim that, yes, our commander in chief posts often on Twitter

about the media and making America great; we also now know that people spent his first few months in office searching mostly for information about immigration and other related topics.

4.2.5 Negative Qualities

The Dallas Morning News published a story on April 23, 2017 depicting Trump as petty and childlike when defending himself in relation to the results of the popular vote in the 2016 presidential election. This article brought the total to 27 articles from the publication shedding light on Trump's more negative qualities:

With six days to go before hitting his 100th day as president, Donald Trump awoke to a torrent of embarrassingly bad polls. He dismissed these as fake news even as he boasted that if the election were held today he would “still beat Hillary ... in [the] popular vote”— which, of course, he lost by 3 million ballots. And, despite the boss's bristling at the frenzy to pass judgment at the 100-day mark, the White House rolled out a vigorous PR plan pegged to that milepost.

The New York Times exceeded the aforementioned publication with 41 out of 50 articles showing Trump in a negative light. A February 28, 2017 article in *The New York Times* depicts Trump as both hasty and impulsive when it published a piece discussing an announcement abruptly made by the president, with his close officials unaware of it:

When Mr. Trump sat down with television anchors at the White House for an off-the-record lunch on Tuesday, he was supposed to preview his first address to Congress. Instead, he suddenly opened the door to an immigration bill that would potentially let millions of undocumented immigrants stay in the country legally.

Once again, the unlikeliest of presidents had torn up the script and thrown his young administration into upheaval. Once again, Washington was left trying to fathom what his strategy was. Was it mad genius, an improvisational leader proposing a Nixon-goes-to-China move to overhaul immigration after making a point of deporting “bad hombres”? Or was it simply madness, an undisciplined political amateur unable to resist telling guests what he thinks they want to hear even at the expense of his own political base?

4.2.6 Comparisons

Locally, 24 articles established comparisons among Trump and others. In a January 29, 2017 article in *The Dallas Morning News*, comparisons are drawn between Trump’s highly-debated travel ban and former-President Barack Obama’s policy regarding the some of the same countries in question:

President Donald Trump again rejected the idea that his executive order limiting travel from citizens of seven countries is a ban on Muslims, issuing a statement Sunday citing actions by President Barack Obama and saying that America “will continue to show compassion to those fleeing oppression.” “My policy is similar to what President Obama did in 2011 when he banned visas for refugees from Iraq for six months,” the statement says. “The seven countries named in the Executive Order are the same countries previously identified by the Obama administration as sources of terror.”

The New York Times had a similar result, with 29 articles comparing the president to others. After Trump notoriously attacked former-President Barack Obama for his golf

trips, *The New York Times* published an article on April 10, 2017 calling attention to Trump's own habits:

After years of criticizing former President Barack Obama for playing golf and going on private getaways, President Trump has already done more of both in his first 99 days than Mr. Obama, as well as former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Mr. Trump can be found at a Trump golf course on most weekends. Administration officials rarely confirm whether he actually played golf, forcing reporters to glean clues from photos posted on social media.

4.2.7 Lurking Issues

Half of the fifty articles from *The Dallas Morning News* mentioned lurking problems for the president. On April 27, 2017, the news regarded an investigation and Trump's tax returns:

Meanwhile, new reporting emerged that Michael Flynn, Trump's first national security adviser, is under formal investigation for failing to get permission before receiving payments from foreign governments. And Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin walked back a statement he made earlier this week implying that Trump would never release his tax returns.

Again, *The New York Times* had similar results to the previous publication, with a total of 33 articles addressing lurking issues in the administration. A March 6, 2017 article refers to a lawsuit the president was dealing with:

President Trump's postelection agreement to pay \$25 million appeared to settle the fraud claims arising from his defunct for-profit education venture, Trump University. But a former student is now asking to opt out of the settlement, a

move that, if permitted, could put the deal in jeopardy. Lawyers for the student, Sherri Simpson of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on Monday asked a federal judge in San Diego to reject the settlement unless former students are given an opportunity to be excluded from the deal so they can sue Mr. Trump individually. If the judge, Gonzalo Curiel, decides that Ms. Simpson and potentially others should have that chance, legal experts say it could disrupt the settlement because Mr. Trump and his lawyers saw the deal as a way to resolve all of the claims, once and for all, to avoid a trial and distractions to his presidency.

4.2.8 Positive Coverage

One of Trump's most worthy accomplishments as president has been the appointment of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch. Other positive traits are depicted in the results, with 24 articles in total from *The Dallas Morning News*. The local paper published an article April 10, 2017 discussing the achievement: "At the sunny ceremony, President Donald Trump celebrated his most significant win since taking office in January—the appointment of a Supreme Court justice. Gorsuch is 49, and a seat on the Supreme Court is a lifetime appointment." Aside from his achievement of appointing Gorsuch, *The New York Times* explores other positive qualities of the president with 30 articles discussing them. While Trump has received opposition from the public, he has also had a substantial amount of support from the people, including record-breaking financial contributions, as *The New York Times* reports in its April 19, 2017 issue:

Documents released this week by Mr. Trump's inaugural organizers provide a glimpse of the big-dollar frenzy of influence-seeking and peacemaking surrounding Mr. Trump's swearing-in, which raised \$107 million, twice as much

money as any other inauguration. The stream of money is a striking contrast to the way Mr. Trump funded his campaign, chiefly with small donations and his own fortune. While some big checks for the inauguration came from longtime Trump friends and associates, much of the money came from the industries that have traditionally excelled at wielding Washington influence: telecommunications, tobacco and pharmaceutical giants, which have bankrolled presidential inaugurations for Republicans and Democrats alike. And a generous amount came from people who had been hostile to his candidacy.

4.3 Comparing Trump and Nixon

In coding these 200 articles, a majority of the categories for both presidents were the same. Having read an initial 24 articles about each president from the two publications, the researcher found common threads between the news coverage of the two administrations. Of the ten categories for Nixon and the eight for Trump, both included: Unmanageable, Evil, Unworthy, Condescending, Negative qualities, Comparison, and Positive Coverage.

Category	The Dallas Morning News		The New York Times	
	Nixon (n=50)	Trump (n=50)	Nixon (n=50)	Trump(n=50)
Unmanageable	15	28	23	33
Evil	2	9	3	16
Unworthy	6	8	5	11
Condescending	14	24	24	37
Negative qualities	9	27	16	41
Comparisons	15	24	26	29
Melancholy	6	--	20	--
Enemies	10	--	25	--
Positive Coverage	17	24	25	30
Questioning	6	--	16	--
Lurking issues	--	25	--	23

Table 4.1 Nixon vs. Trump Coverage

Among the common categories, the number results were similar (less than a 10-article difference or less) for Unworthy, Comparisons, and Positive Coverage (see Table 4.1, above). Ten or more articles from each newspaper separate the two presidents in the categories of Unmanageable, Evil, Condescending, and Negative Qualities, with the latter having the largest difference. These differences are discussed further in the conclusion.

Nixon's coding included the additional themes of: Melancholy, Enemies, and Questioning. Essentially, because the administration was dealing with a major war, these extra three themes seemed to be more prevalent in Nixon coverage, than in Trump coverage. Along with the seven themes in the Trump category that mirrored Nixon's coverage, Trump had the additional theme of lurking issues. Because so much of Trump's coverage dealt with the Russia probe and his secretive practices as president, the researcher felt it fitting to record news coverage regarding these unresolved issues. Although Nixon's administration suffered through its own controversies, time has answered many of the nation's questions, while Trump's problems await results.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, this research documented the coverage of two highly publicized presidencies and determined the impact both framing and media ecology served. The following discussion describes how the results answered each of the research questions guiding the research.

RQ1: What attributes do the media emphasize about each president to frame coverage? The media tended to emphasize the attributes that the people were talking about. For example, more than half of the Nixon coverage in *The New York Times* discussed some level of comparison between himself and others, be it Kennedy or Johnson. This trend continued a trend of comparisons that began with the first-ever televised debate between Nixon and Kennedy. The debate ended with an indisputable victory for Kennedy (Webley, 2010). “But beyond securing his presidential career, the 60-minute duel between the handsome Irish-American senator and Vice President Richard Nixon fundamentally altered political campaigns, television media and America's political history” (Webley, 2010). The public constantly analyzed the similarities and differences between Nixon and his predecessors, leaving the media to presumably feed the public in news coverage they knew would interest them. Again, the concept can be seen with Trump’s news coverage. The media framed content to match the preconceived notions of the public. In Trump’s inaugural address, he quickly mentions the need to “rebuild our country” and to “restore its promise for all of our people.” The speech surprised many with its overtly negative tone

and pessimistic outlook on the times (NPR, 2017). Following his news coverage from his first days in office, over half of the articles, from both *The Dallas Morning News* and *The New York Times*, categorized the Trump administration as unmanageable. While the level to which the articles depicted this quality fluctuates, each addressed the quality nonetheless.

RQ2: How do the attributes emphasized about Nixon compare to the attributes emphasized about Trump? While both presidents had their fair share of criticism, reference to all negative qualities and specifically the categories of “evil” and “unworthy” showed up noticeably more frequently when assessing Trump’s presidency as opposed to Nixon. The “evil” category depicted any nuance of selfish or mean traits, while unworthiness could be marked if articles belittled the president’s rise on the political ladder. While Trump’s coverage carried more articles showing both of these traits, it is important to note that Nixon had higher levels of unworthiness creep in his coverage, as opposed to evilness. Constantly, Nixon articles belittled his attempt at becoming commander-in-chief. Multiple times articles mentioned the assassination of Kennedy as a major contributing factor in making Nixon president. Political analysts say comparing Trump to Nixon is an insult to Nixon (Glasser et al., 2017), claiming that Nixon was bad, but Trump is far worse (Bowden, 2018). The data from this study back up that claim.

RQ3: What environmental factors account for the differences in the way the media framed coverage of Nixon and Trump? Between the two presidencies of Nixon and Trump, the media environment has changed significantly. With the electronic age dominating Nixon’s tenure, privacy was out the window. The media infiltrated citizen’s private lives with the ability to now publish content more readily than ever before (Griffin, 2012). It is

fitting to consider the issues surrounding Nixon's presidency, namely the Vietnam War and the Pentagon Papers, and notice the lack of privacy he and his administration had. Media outlets were on top of the news, reporting new findings and informing the public on the issues that perpetually lacked transparency. Trump's administration falls within the digital epoch. Although McLuhan did not observe this epoch himself, it is largely categorized with a sense of newfound individuality (Griffin, 2012). As Trump occupied office, he has created a new approach to making the headlines. For one, the president primarily addresses the public with the help of Twitter. When making major announcements to the masses, Trump tends to look to his followers and compose his own tweet, rather than having others do it for him. This method of reaching the people directly proved to be successful during Trump's campaign in 2016, possibly making him a more compelling character in the race and leading to his victory (Keith, 2016). The president is known to tag other world leaders and even the press in his tweets, too (Keith, 2016). Trump even coined some of his most famous phrases over the social media platform, be it terms like "fake news" and "lock her up" or nicknames like "Crooked Hillary" and "Lyin' Ted." This digital epoch is also characterized with an added sense of personalized information (Griffin, 2012). Technology now allows for the constant and instant gratification of consuming news. With so many outlets out there now, ranging from the ultra-liberal to the far right, it is easy to see the impact of the digital age in the news coverage following Trump's historic presidency.

This study has revealed that the practices of journalism, including in relation to presidential coverage, have become inherently more descriptive in nature as time has gone on. This can be seen when comparing the different categories marked for Trump as opposed

to Nixon in the news coverage following their first 100 days in office. There is an evident increase in the number of articles that fulfilled the categorical requirements measured in Trump's coverage compared to Nixon's. The progression of media ecology, and its current state of the digital age, can be thought to be partly responsible for this evolution.

REFERENCES

- Ahner, L. (2017, May 6). The first 100 days: Richard Nixon. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://potus-geeks.livejournal.com/843549.html>
- Azari, J. R. (2016). How the news media helped to nominate Trump. *Political Communication*, 33(4), 677-680. doi:10.1080/10584609.2016.1224417
- Bowden, J. (2018, January 05). John Dean: Trump makes Nixon look good by comparison. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/367576-john-dean-trump-makes-nixon-look-good-by-comparison>
- Clines, F. X. (1996, September 19). Spiro T. Agnew, point man for Nixon who resigned vice presidency, dies at 77. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/09/19/us/spiro-t-agnew-point-man-for-nixon-who-resigned-vice-presidency-dies-at-77.html>
- Davies, D. R. (2005). The media in transition 1945-1974. In W. Sloan (Ed.), *The media in America, a history* (6th ed., pp. 441-464). Northport, AL: Vision Press.
- De La Cruz, R. (2013, March 08). Few will remember U.S. entered Vietnam War 48 years ago today. Retrieved from <https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/opinion/2013/03/08/few-will-remember-u-s-entered-vietnam-war-48-years-ago-today>
- Dombrowski, P., & Reich, S. (2017). Does Donald Trump have a grand strategy? *International Affairs*, 93(5), 1013-1037. doi:10.1093/ia/iix161

- Framing Theory. (2014, February 18). Retrieved April 18, 2018, from
<https://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/framing-theory/>
- Glasser, S. B., Pesek, W., Preston, J., Gershenfeld, N., Gershenfeld, A., & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, J. (2017, July 17). Don't compare Trump to Nixon. It's unfair to Nixon. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from
<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/07/17/dont-compare-trump-to-nixon-its-unfair-to-nixon-215384>
- Griffin, E. (2012). *A first look at communication theory*, 8th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- History.com Staff. (2010). The 1960s. Retrieved April 15, 2018, from
<https://www.history.com/topics/1960s>
- Jenkins, J. (2017, October 14). White House claims Trump's Twitter account is personal, so he can block whoever he likes. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from
<https://thinkprogress.org/white-house-twitter-personal-eaa2346371e2/>
- Johnson, J. (2017, December 04). Channeling Nixon, Trump lawyer argues it's not obstruction when president does it. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from
<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2017/12/04/channeling-nixon-trump-lawyer-argues-its-not-obstruction-when-president-does-it>
- Karpowitz, C. F. (2009). What can a president learn from the news media? The instructive case of Richard Nixon. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(04), 755. doi:10.1017/s0007123409990135

- Keith, T. (2016, November 18). Commander-In-Tweet: Trump's social media use and presidential media avoidance. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://www.npr.org/2016/11/18/502306687/commander-in-tweet-trumps-social-media-use-and-presidential-media-avoidance>
- Kenny, C. (2018, April 17). Trump to rally in Michigan during White House Correspondents' Dinner. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/17/politics/donald-trump-rally-whcd/index.html>
- Millstein, S. (2017, March 20). Here's why a president's first 100 days are viewed as being so crucial. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://www.bustle.com/p/why-are-the-first-100-days-of-a-presidency-important-it-goes-back-to-franklin-d-roosevelt-52938>
- Minian, A. R. (2018, February 05). Perspective | We already have a big, beautiful wall. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/02/05/we-already-have-a-big-beautiful-wall/?utm_term=.60c8d2d92067
- Moran, L. (2018, April 17). White House Correspondents Dinner host mocks Trump for expected no-show. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/white-house-correspondents-dinner-donald-trump-michelle-wolf_us_5ad5d9d4e4b0edca2cbdd1a1
- NPR. (2017, January 20). President Trump's inaugural address, annotated. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://www.npr.org/2017/01/20/510629447/watch-live-president-trumps-inauguration-ceremony>

- Pach, C. (2010). "Our worst enemy seems to be the press": TV news, the Nixon administration, and U.S. troop withdrawal from Vietnam, 1969-1973. *Diplomatic History*, 34(3), 555-565. doi:10.1111/j.1467-7709.2010.00869.x
- Payne, P. (2004). Instant history and the legacy of scandal: The tangled memory of Warren G. Harding, Richard Nixon, and William Jefferson Clinton. *Prospects*, 28, 597-625. doi:10.1017/s0361233300001629
- Porter, W. E. (1976). *Assault on the media: The Nixon years*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Pribanic-Smith, E. J. (2018). Religious newspapers and presidential politics, 1840-1848. *Journalism History*, 44(1), 12-24.
- Pruitt, S. (2017, April 27). Fast facts on the "first 100 days." Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://www.history.com/news/fast-facts-on-the-first-100-days>
- Senter, R., Reynolds, L. T., & Gruenenfelder, D. (1986). The presidency and the print media: Who controls the news? *The Sociological Quarterly*, 27(1), 91-105. doi:10.1111/j.1533-8525.1986.tb00251.x
- Shalby, C. (2017, February 17). Trump called "fake news" media an enemy of the American people. Here's what else has made the public enemies list. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <http://www.latimes.com/politics/washington/la-na-essential-washington-updates-donald-trump-called-fake-news-media-1487377442-htmlstory.html>
- Sloan, W. D. (2005). *The media in America, a history* (6th ed.). Northport, AL: Vision Press.

- Stein, P., Hendrix, S., & Hauslohner, A. (2017, January 22). Women's marches: More than one million protesters vow to resist President Trump. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/womens-march-on-washington-a-sea-of-pink-hatted-protesters-vow-to-resist-donald-trump/2017/01/21/ae4def62-dfdf-11e6-acdf-14da832ae861_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.226234ebf3ed
- Strate, L. (2008). Studying media as media: McLuhan and the media ecology approach. *Media Tropes, 1*, 127-142.
- Sulima, Y. (2017). Tricky Dick avenged: Donald Trump's politics through the prism of Richard Nixon's presidency. *International Affairs, 63*(3), 101-110.
doi:10.21557/iaf.48992141
- Trump-O-Meter: Tracking Trump's campaign promises. (2018). Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/trumpometer/>
- University of Twente. (n.d.). Mass Media | Framing. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <https://www.utwente.nl/en/bms/communication-theories/sorted-by-cluster/Mass Media/Framing/>
- Weaver, D. H. (2007). Thoughts on agenda setting, framing, and priming. *Journal of Communication, 57*(1), 142-147. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00333.x
- Webley, K. (2010, September 23). How the Nixon-Kennedy debate changed the world. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2021078,00.html>

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Chanel Sassoon graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) with an Honors Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Broadcasting and a minor in English. While at UTA, Chanel has participated in a number of groups. She has worked for *The Shorthorn* for a total of six semesters, having served as a news reporter, life reporter and copy editor. For two years, Chanel served as a Supplemental Instruction Leader for Political Science courses, and she helped broadcast UTA News, serving as a reporter, anchor, and producer. Chanel hopes to pursue a career in entertainment journalism and apply the skills she has learned through her thesis and her time at UTA to all of her future endeavors.