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THE ROLE OF BROADCASTING IN PRESIDENTIAL POPULARITY: AN EXPLORATION IN PRESIDENTIAL POWER.

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GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE ROLE OF BROADCASTING IN PRESIDENTIAL POPULARITY: AN EXPLORATION IN PRESIDENTIAL POWER

A DISSERTATION

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BY

DONALD LEON SINGLETON

Norman, Oklahoma

1977

THE ROLE OF BROADCASTING IN PRESIDENTIAL POPULARITY:

AN EXPLORATION IN PRESIDENTIAL POWER

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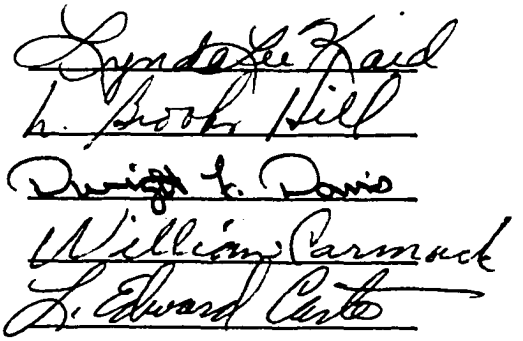

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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THE ROLE OF BROADCASTING IN PRESIDENTIAL POPULARITY: AN EXPLORATION IN PRESIDENTIAL POWER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Beginning with the initial use of radio by Woodrow Wilson, the role of the broadcast media has grown steadily in importance as a device for presidential communication with the public at large. Recent presidents have made ever increasing use of the broadcast media in the conduct of the office (Becker, 1961), and presidents have grown increasingly skillful at direct utilization of the media as well as at capitalizing on radio and television's journalistic function. Over a long period, no other single person in the country generates the intense press coverage that is afforded the president. The major wire services, major newspapers, major radio and television stations and networks employ reporters whose sole duty is to cover the activity at the White House. No doubt being the object of such unrelenting attention is somewhat disconcerting inasmuch as every public act is scrutinized, but it also offers great advantage in that the

president can, at will, focus the attention of a body of influential reporters on his words and be assured of an extensive audience.

In addition to the coverage afforded the president, he can command access to the media in a way that cannot be matched by any other single individual or political party. Important presidential addresses are routinely carried by the major networks, and given the near total penetration of television, he is assured the attention of much of the nation.

This intense focus on the president has prompted a number of writers to view presidential utilization of the broadcast media as a policy issue of prime importance to the American democratic form of government (Burns, 1965, pp. 67-76; Chester, 1969, p. 305; Finer, 1960, p. 118; Minow, Martin, and Mitchell, 1973, p. 11). The president's use of the media is assumed to be a significant source of influence and power.

There is a considerable body of literature dealing with the effect of the broadcast media in election campaigns and political socialization, but little has been done on the impact of utilization of the media by incumbents. Although conventional wisdom among communication scholars indicates that there should be little impact from presidential utilization of the media, Kraus (1974, p. 427) lays the argument that

much of the classical political research dealing with the media falls short due to its early date and lack of direct concentration on the broadcast media as variables. He argues that two of the more widely accepted conventions -- that mass media have little direct effect on political behavior and that the media act as reinforcers rather than formers of opinion -- are based on research inadequate to support them (pp. 428-429). He cites the substantial shift of public opinion concerning the Watergate affair and attributes that to the attention paid it by the mass media (p. 433). Preliminary evidence indicates that presidential addresses have a similar impact on public opinion. (Gilbert, 1972, p. 286; Minow, et al., 1973, p. 19). Haight and Brody (1976) also provide evidence of the impact of presidential broadcasts.

Although the president's utilization of the media has aroused concern among observers of the American political milieu, there has been little effort to explore the ramifications of this utilization in a systematic or empirical way. Only recently have empirical studies begun to appear which attempt to define and explain the role of the media in presidential popularity and power. The studies that are available make a valuable contribution to knowledge about this important phenomenon but leave many unanswered questions. This study attempts to add to the growing body of empirical studies that deal with the relationship of the president and the media. The focus of this study is on the network evening

news coverage of the president. The study attempts to provide an empirical examination of the claims and assumptions surrounding the president's ability to access this pervasive communication channel.

The Statement of the Problem

This study examines how the network evening news coverage of the President of the United States affects his popularity. The coverage of the president by the network evening news is analyzed through a systematic content analysis of the CBS evening news from January 1, 1972 through July 1, 1976. These findings are correlated utilizing multiple regression analysis with a general measurement of presidential popularity techniques. The treated data are analyzed and interpreted in order to draw conclusions about the relationship of the evening newscast coverage of the president to presidential popularity.

The categories from the content analysis are utilized as the independent variables for the multiple regression analysis. These categories include the intensity of presidential coverage, positive and negative valence categories, the prominence of coverage and a presidential spokesmen variable. The intensity variable is a measure of the coverage devoted to the president between each Gallup Poll. Positive and negative coverage of the president describe the kind of coverage the president receives. The prominence of coverage

represents the temporal location of presidential coverage in the newscasts and reflects the editorial judgement of the importance of presidential coverage in the newscasts. The spokesmen variable provides a measure of other sources who support the president's position. Extensive definitions of the valence categories are provided in Appendix B.

The importance of the study may be divided into two parts, a theoretical aspect and a policy aspect. From a theoretical perspective, the study attempts to test one portion of the theoretical presidential power schema developed by Peter Sperlich from Richard Neustadt's Presidential Power. From a policy perspective, the study provides a systematic, empirical examination of the relationship between the president's coverage by television news and his popularity. Understanding this relationship provides data which is helpful in assessing claims that the president's superior use of and coverage by the media is an advantage of major proportions in dealing with the other branches of government and has led to the domination of the other branches of the government by the executive branch. Additionally, the study provides data which bears on the controversial question of whether there is need to control or to balance the president's access to television beyond the control now exercised by the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and the Federal Communications Commission Rules and Regulations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Historical Overview

Inasmuch as this study draws upon the tradition of public opinion research, some recognition must be made of the large volume of work that might bear, however tangentially, on its central purpose. Summary, much less synthesis, of this large body of literature would be a futile if not impossible task, but a number of early works such as Walter Lippmann's Public Opinion (1922), which described basic governmental press relationships, are clearly recognizable as the wellsprings from which the body of public opinion research flowed.

Any research that deals with government-press relationships owes some debt of gratitude to Leo Rosten's The Washington Correspondents (1937). Rosten's examination of the men who report the news includes a wealth of insight into the symbiotic relationship that is the keystone of government-press relations. William L. Rivers' The Opinion Makers (1965) and Dan D. Nimmo's Newsgathering in Washington (1962) are similar studies of more recent vintage. Other works that represent major attempts to approach one facet of the public opinion-government-press interaction include James Pollard's

The President and the Press (1947); Douglas Cater's The Fourth Branch of Government (1959); and Doris Graber's Public Opinion, The President and Foreign Policy (1968). The first of these works is a study from the perspective of a participant-observer while the last two studies are historical reviews of various facets of the press-government relationship.

Television and Presidential Power

In the past few years, considerable attention has been focused on the role of the media in governmental, especially presidential, power. Power has traditionally been defined as the ability to exercise influence (Dahl, 1970, p. 222). Influence, in turn, has been described as the ability of one actor to induce another to act in some way he would not normally act (p. 222). The most effective form of influence is coercion, but in a democratic society with its allegiance to individual rights, power often is not, or cannot, be applied in a directly coercive way. In addition, our forbears made a conscious effort to balance the legitimate coercive powers of the state among the three major branches of government, hoping thereby to provide a system of checks and restraints, one on the other. What, then, are the wellsprings of power from which the chief executive in a democracy derives the will and the ability to govern?

Neustadt (1960, pp. 1-8); Burns (1965, pp. 67-76);

Finer (1960, p. 118); and Gilbert (1972, p. 304), among others, have argued that presidential power is on the rise at the expense of the powers of the other branches of government. Burns chronicled the fluctuation of presidential power from the era of Lincoln to the modern presidency, pointing out major forces that appear to have moved to expand the presidency. Finer developed a schema of items that contribute immensely to presidential power. Among the items listed were: 1) control of content in public appearances, 2) superior access to the media, 3) intense coverage by the media, and 4) the symbolic value of the highest office in the country (p.10). These four characteristics have been emphasized because they yield some notion of the role that the media are seen to play in presidential power. Becker (1961) suggests that the increased exposure of the president via broadcast media is a reasonable explanation for the growth of presidential power.

Gilbert (1972, p. 227-229) points to the pervasiveness of television and to poll indications that it is the major source of news for most Americans as well as the most credible. He notes the educational and agenda-setting function of television. "Not only does the medium inform great numbers of the population about candidates for public office, but it also familiarizes them with important issues of both national and international scope" (p. 279).

Gilbert sees television contributing to a nationalizing trend in American politics thus strengthening the president's position (p. 280). He also provides examples of the various means and techniques available to the president for generating and controlling news coverage, pointing to formal addresses, press conferences, appearances by the president and his family, and presidential travels as examples of presidential newsmaking (pp. 286-287). He cites preliminary evidence that presidential addresses have substantial impact on public opinion, noting a Gallup Poll that showed an increase of six percentage points (from 58 to 64) in the number of people approving the conduct of the Viet Nam War and a decrease of seven percentage points in the number of those disapproving after a presidential address on the subject on November 3, 1969 (p. 286). A similar poll by the Harris organization showed a gain of four percentage points (from 43 to 47) for President Nixon while his closest opponent, Senator Muskie, lost six points (from 41 to 35) after a presidential message on the economy (p. 286).

Minow, Martin and Mitchell (1973, p. 10-13) follow Neustadt's power paradigm in arguing that the president can use television to enormous advantage. They cite Neustadt's emphasis on persuasion as power and argue that the president's ability to command time on the three major networks simultaneously, thereby gaining access to emormous audiences,

gives the president a decided advantage over his competitors and detractors. The president completely controls the format, content and subject matter of a presidential address. It is delivered directly to the people, avoiding the interpretation and challenge of the press (p. 19).

The president also has the ability to use television in what the authors characterize as "less formal ways." News conferences, public appearances, and participation in events covered by television are only a few of the ways the president can achieve coverage. Television also offers opportunities to various members of his family, his cabinet or the bureaucracy to express the president's point of view (pp. 20-21).

Almost everything the president does is news. This allows a certain amount of control in terms of the coverage he wishes to achieve, and the opposition cannot hope to equal his news making ability (p.22). The chief executive also exercises control through threat of governmental regulation of broadcasting. TerHorst (1975) and Minow, et al. (p. 25) point to the fact that broadcast properties are licensed by the government and broadcasters see considerable potential harm in alienating the executive branch.

Dan D. Nimmo (1962, pp. 143-174) reinforces much of what Minow, Martin and Mitchell, and Gilbert posit, indicating that the president has all of the normal options of

a news source at his disposal in dealing with the press and making his case to the people. James Reston (1972, p. 412) sums the major thrust of the argument to a single sentence: "The press may report the news but the President makes it."

Thus, a number of observers see the presidency providing the occupant of the office with a powerful arsenal of media weapons which he can use at will to maintain his popularity. The president, to a much larger degree than is normally thought, commands the flow of information about his office and actions.

The Neustadt-Sperlich Model

One of the most prominent explanations of the nature of presidential power was developed by Richard E. Neustadt in his book on the presidency, Presidential Power (1960). In this seminal work, Neustadt states the basic argument quite bluntly. "'Power' means his influence" (p. 2). Influence is constructed from the president's power to persuade which rests on his professional reputation, bargaining relationships and public prestige (p. 107). Neustadt argues that the president protects the sources of power by his action and by controlling the flow of information about his activities (p. 107). The president's power, then, turns on a complex of actions and information about those actions. In order to govern effectively, he must be master of both.

Peter W. Sperlich (1969) developed a power schema based on Neustadt's work. The following discussion of Neustadt's model is heavily indebted to the Sperlich schema. Neustadt points out that the vantage points enjoyed by the president and the powers that derive from the "literary theory of the constitution," although formidable, are not sufficient bases of operation for a president who wishes to develop, maintain, and exercise power. Commands do not necessarily culminate in results, particularly in situations where there is substantial opposition to the president's desires and goals. The president must rely on persuasion in order to get things done. Neustadt's (1960) argument emerges from a series of interrelated statements:

1. Presidential power is the power to persuade (p. 10).
2. The power to persuade is the power to bargain (p. 36).
3. The power to bargain requires the president to guard his power prospects (p. 56).
4. The president guards his power prospects through his own choices (p. 57).
5. The president's choices are determined by his perception of power stakes in the bargaining encounter (p. 107).
6. The president's choices are determined by his professional reputation (p. 107).
7. The president's choices are determined by his popular prestige (p. 107).

Propositions one through three are explicated through proposition four which, in turn, is amplified by propositions

five, six and seven. These last three propositions can obviously be further explicated. Sperlich provides a schema for executing this explication. As can be seen from this schema (see Figure 1), propositions six and seven are bound together and proposition five develops somewhat independently, although it is integrated in the total schema. Figure 2 represents the organization for additional statements that derive from propositions six and seven. These statements are formulated as follows:

1. Presidential actions (making the right choices) including the teaching of realism, influence the popular frustration level.

2. Events and conditions influence the popular frustration level.

3. The relative popular frustration level influences the president's popular prestige.

4. The president's personality (public image) influences the president's popular prestige.

Although these propositions outline the structure of presidential prestige and his professional reputation, they do not describe the dynamics of the process, leaving important unanswered questions. For example: How does the president teach realism? By what process does he inform the public of its realistic prospects, sacrifices to be made or hardships to be endured, and conversely, how does he insure that credit accrues to his administration for positive accomplishments? How does the public come to be aware of presidential actions? How does the public become aware of the president's public image or personality?

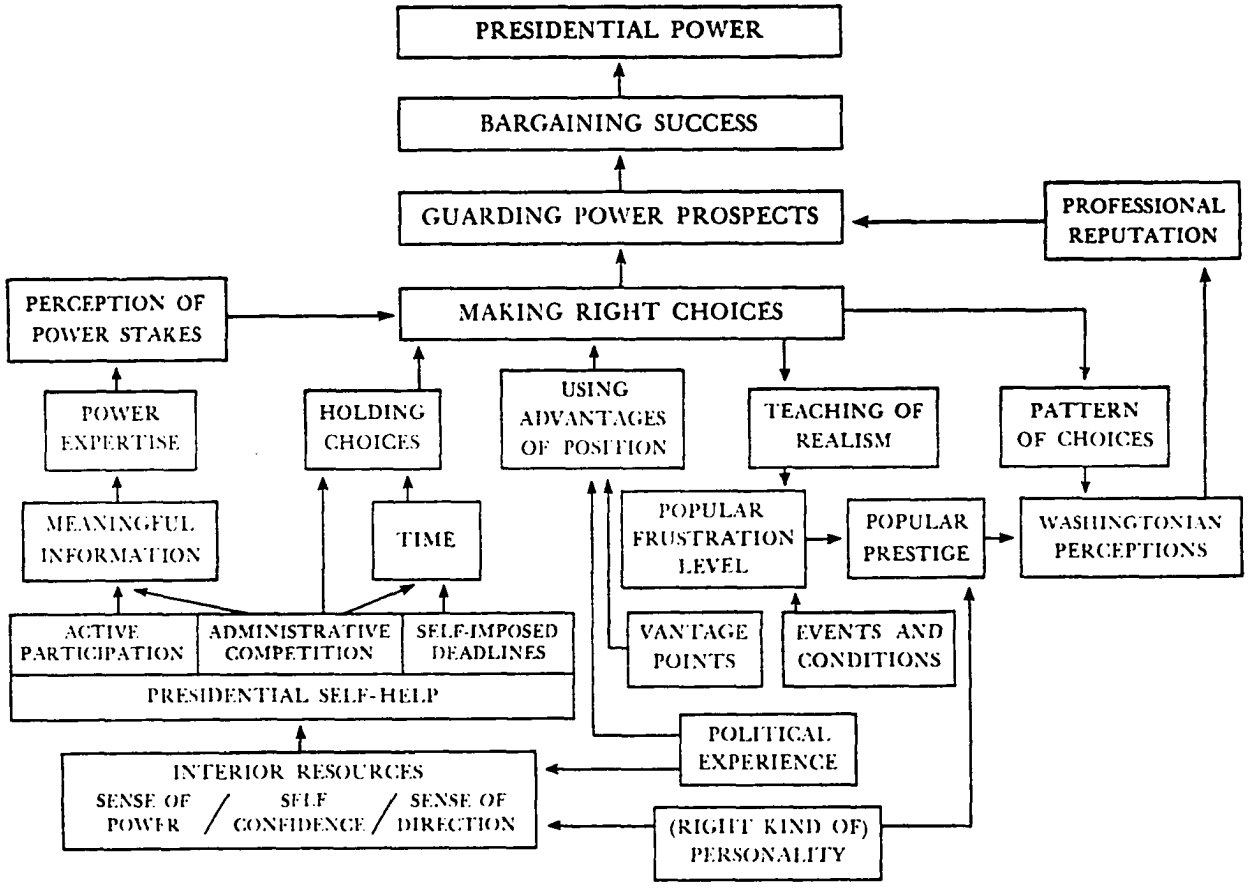

Figure 1. Sperlich's Schema Developed from Neustadt's Presidential Power Used by permission of the author.

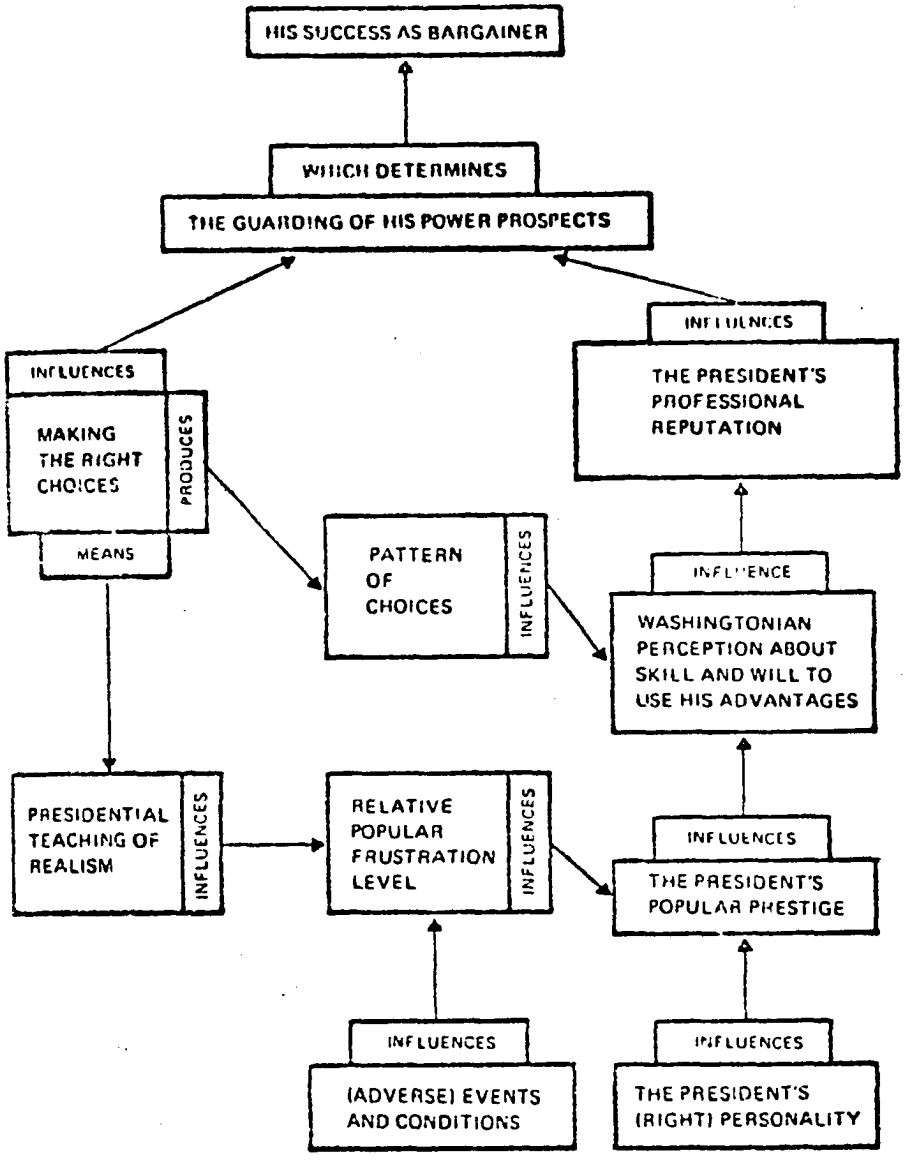

Figure 2. Sperlich's Explication of the Components of Presidential Popularity Used by permission of the author.

To answer these questions we must examine the communication links available between the president and the public. Clearly the president's single most effective communication link with the public at large is the mass media. The information dissemination function of the media provides the mediating link between members of the mass public and most experience beyond the immediate perception of their surroundings. The president must depend on the mass media to communicate with the public at large and the public at large must depend on the mass media for information about their president. The president's relationship with the media, i.e., the use he makes of the media and the coverage he receives by the media, determines in large measure his ability to maintain a base of support among the general public, which is a crucial element in his power to govern. The president's dependence on the media can be utilized to further explicate the schema developed by Sperlich. Only slight modification is required in order to recognize the central mediating role that the mass media play in transmitting information about the president's actions, about his personality or public image, and about his relation to events and conditions or the teaching of realism (see Figure 3). In this schema, the central role of the media is recognized and can be stated in the following proposition: The president's public prestige depends on the information disseminated about the president

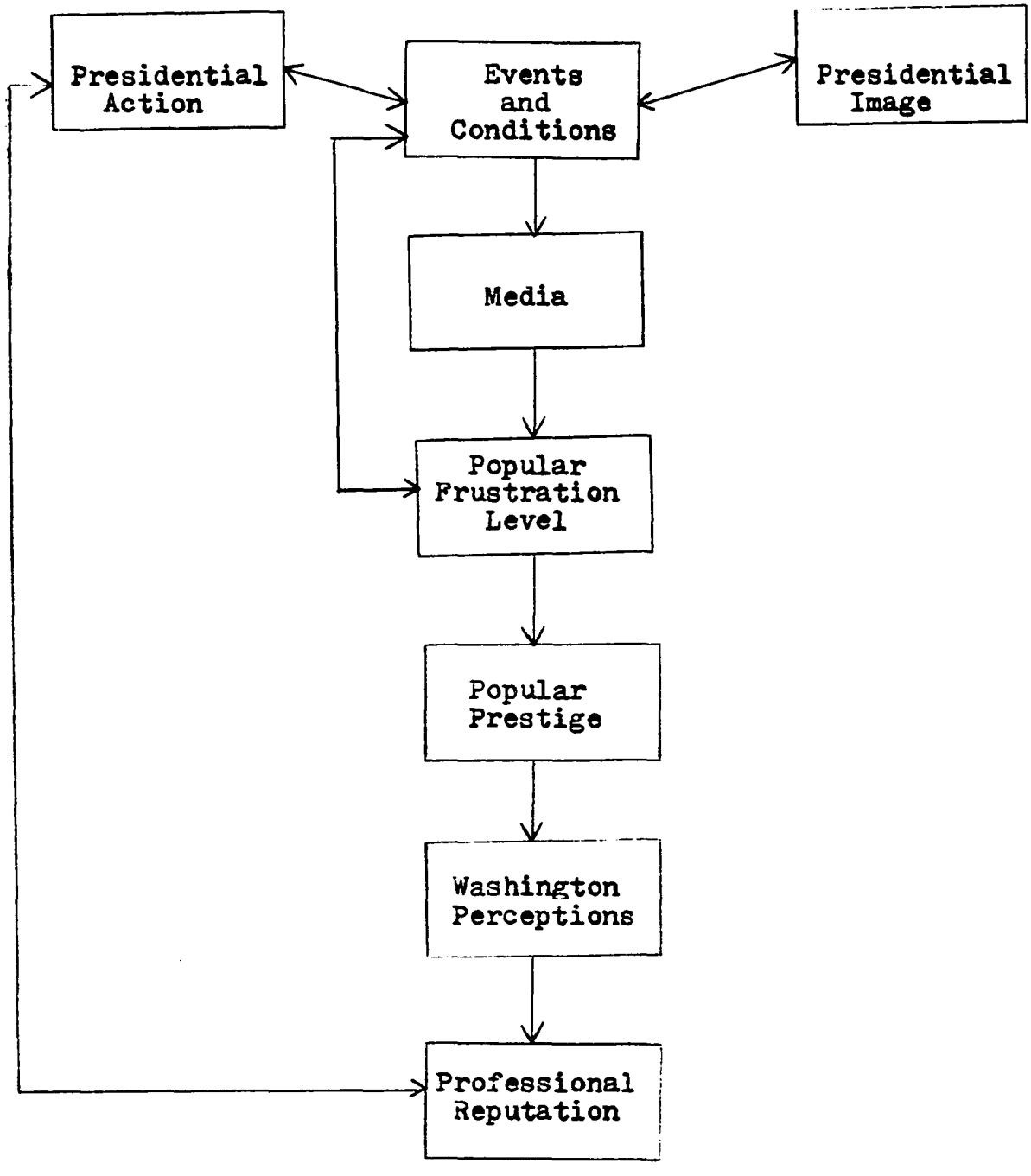

Figure 3. The Role of Media in Presidential Popularity

by the mass media. Arrival at this proposition brings us to the point where empirical data can be brought to bear.

If we operationalize the "teaching of realism" as the president's use of the media and coverage of the president by the media, which, in turn, controls the popular frustration level and popular prestige, both of which can be operationalized as the president's popularity in the polls, then we have an empirically testable proposition, i.e., that a portion of the president's power depends on the coverage he receives in the media. Presidential actions and the president's image are transmitted via the media. In addition, the president's relationship to events and conditions that may affect the popular frustration level is transmitted by the media. A systematic examination of the direct coverage of the president by the media and a determination of the relationship of that coverage to presidential popularity should provide a measure of the importance of the media in the president's power to govern.

The Empirical Studies of Presidential Popularity

Although the relationship of the president and the press has troubled a number of scholars and researchers, few scholars have attempted to provide empirical support for their arguments. Elmer Cornwell (1965) provided one of the first attempts to examine the amount of coverage devoted to items high on the list of presidential priorities. Cornwell argued

the central importance of the presidency to the American form of government and the centrality of the relationship between the president and the public in the growth and development of the office (p. 3). Further, the president exercises his considerable legislative influence through persuasion which, in turn, depends in no small part on his level of popular support (p. 3-4). The president exercises leadership and maintains contact with the populace through the mass media, either by utilizing these media as channels of communication or by coverage by the newsgathering apparatus inherent in the media. Cornwell argued that the development of these channels of mass communication has contributed substantially to the growing stature and importance of the presidency (p. 5).

Cornwell utilized a content analysis of the New York Times and the Providence Journal to demonstrate the effectiveness with which Roosevelt was able to create news about the social security program during the campaign for passage in 1934 and 1935. Of eighteen selected communications which were, in whole or in part, concerned with the program, all but two were reported on the front page of the New York Times and received comparable coverage in the Providence Journal (pp. 136-138).

Cornwell also describes the development of major presidential communications channels including the modern press conference, the increasing public relations role of the

White House staff, and the electronic media. Again using a content analysis technique, Cornwell demonstrated the effectiveness of presidential press conferences and press releases at capturing news space in a major organ, the New York Times (p. 205, 235).

Mueller (1973) developed four variables in an attempt to predict presidential popularity, which he operationalized as the president's approval rating on the Gallup Poll question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way _____ is handling his job as President?" As the author points out, the Gallup organization has collected responses to this question on a more or less regular basis since 1945. In examining the poll responses from various sources Mueller demonstrates a number of consistencies and peculiarities. First, the Gallup organization suspends the question on presidential popularity during presidential election campaigns (p. 202). For example, during the 1976 campaign the question was asked last during June, 1976, and was not asked again until December 1976. In periods when the poll was taken, results have indicated that, as a general rule, the percent disapproving is a mirror image of the percent approving with the number evincing no opinion holding steady around 14 percent (p. 203). This fortuitous turn of events indicates that presidential popularity can be rendered by one number, the percentage approving the way the president is handling his job.

The four variables developed by Mueller were "the length of time the incumbent has been in office as well as variables that attempt(ed) to estimate the influence on his rating of major international events, economic slump, and war" (p. 197). He argues that the time variable or "coalition of minorities" represents those who are alienated by presidential action on any given issue, reasoning that as a minority was alienated on each issue that those alienated would accumulate over time. The numerical value of the variable ranges from zero to almost four since he confined the elapsed time to each presidential term.

The "rally round the flag" variable is defined as crises in international politics which tend to promote solid support for the president. Mueller writes: "In general, a rally point must be associated with an event which (1) is international and (2) involves the United States and particularly the president directly; and it must be (3) specific, dramatic, and sharply focused" (p. 209). Mueller found 34 such incidents in the Truman through Johnson time period. In addition, he designated the beginning of each presidential term as a rally point (p. 212). This variable, too, is operationalized as time, i.e., "the length of time, in years, since the last rally point" (p. 212). Mueller argues that the combination of the coalition of minorities variable and the rally variable will create a long, rather steady decline

in popularity, interrupted by surges of popularity created by international crises.

The third variable, the economic slump variable is a measure of unemployment. The rationale is that unemployment is a good barometer of the general state of the economy. Mueller, forced by the fact that unemployment correlated positively, $r = .39$, with popularity, performed a series of manipulations on the unemployment measure, finally settling on an unemployment score that represented the difference between the unemployment level at the beginning of a president's term and the unemployment level at the time of the poll. Further, when the level was lower at the time of the survey the unemployment level was set at zero (pp. 213-216).

The final variable, war, was included in the analysis through the use of a dummy variable. The value of 1 was used during periods of war and 0 during periods of peace.

Mueller conducted a multiple regression analysis using the first three variables and explained 23 percent of the variance, $R^2 = .23$, but the only variable that achieved significance was the coalition of minorities variable (p. 220). By allowing the regression equation to take into account the varying initial popularity levels and the differential rates of popularity decline and including the war variable, the author managed to explain 86 percent of the variance, $R^2 = .86$ (p. 224).

There are a number of problems with Mueller's approach that indicate the need for a different design for the explanation of presidential popularity. First, the "coalition of minorities" variable is only a measure of time. Any causal agent that occurred over time would be masked by this variable. Mueller is accurate when he characterizes the variable as inspecific (p. 218). The variance explained by the "coalition of minorities" is left unexplained unless we are to believe that presidential popularity, like an atomic element, has some sort of fixed, inherent deterioration rate. This is not the case since Eisenhower's popularity remained consistently high during his first administration, an indication that the correlation with time is, at best, a sporadic predictor and, at worst and more likely, masking other sources of variability. The same criticism applies equally to the "rally round the flag" variable which is also measured in time.

The economic slump rate, on the face of it, seems to be the most imaginative as well as the most logical predictor. However, it is correlated in the wrong direction until three substantial manipulations are performed which make the variable, in the words of the author, "come out right" (p. 215).

The war variable provides contradictory results. According to Mueller: "The Korean war had a large, significant, independent negative impact on President Truman's popularity

of some 18 percentage points, but the Vietnam War had no independent impact on President Johnson's popularity at all" (p. 227).

In sum, Mueller's coalition variable lacks concrete formulation, the rally variable suffers from the same formulation, and the economy and war variables behave erratically and illogically. Mueller must be given credit, however, for formulating a systematic approach to the study of presidential popularity.

James Stimson (1976), utilizing opinion poll data obtained from Mueller and adding additional data on Johnson and Nixon, attempted to improve the predictive power of time as the central independent variable. He found that presidential popularity as a function of time was best modeled as a quadratic equation which was significantly better, $p \leq .001$, than a linear fit. The quadratic equation produced a correlation of .48 with approval over the seven presidential terms examined and higher order equations did not improve the fit in any substantial or significant way.

Stimson recognized that to posit the fluctuation of presidential popularity with the passage of time does not yield a causal explanation (p. 7). He suggests that unrealistic early expectations of presidents coupled with a low level of information among large segments of the public contribute heavily to the sharp early decline of presidential

popularity in each term, that re-election bids account for the recovery of some popularity near the end of first presidential terms, and that removal from the political fray accounts for the recovery of popularity for president's who are eligible, yet do not seek re-election. When Stimson modeled individual presidential terms, he found three of the seven terms were "anomalies." Both Eisenhower terms, as noted by Mueller, and the single abbreviated Kennedy term failed to fit the quadratic model.

Stimson also attempted to replicate the use of Mueller's other variables, i.e., economic slump, rally points and war, to improve the fit of his model. He found the addition of these variables provided little additional explanatory power.

Stone and Brody (1970) utilized a content analysis of the news to explain fluctuations in presidential popularity during the Johnson administration. They employed four trend models as possible explanations of the data. The first of these models was similar to the Mueller (1973) approach since it assumed a long-term linear decline in popularity with short-term shifts attributed to news in the media. The second model assumed that popularity for any given point was a function of the previous popularity rating plus the intervening news. The third model assumed that a given popularity rating depended on both the accumulation of news and a short-term reaction to immediate news. Popularity ratings were expressed as the average of the two previous popularity ratings

plus the impact of the intervening news. The fourth model requires the establishment of a popularity baseline and comparison of fluctuations to that line as a function of the proportion of good news to bad news. Stone and Brody settled on the third or "moving average model" as the preferred model.

The content analysis for the study required a fairly complex decision making process. One story was chosen from the front page of each issue of the New York Times for the period, June 1, 1965 to April 10, 1968. Stories were first coded into three subject areas: domestic, foreign (Viet Nam) and foreign (other). Finally, stories were coded as to whether or not they related to administration action. Those that dealt with the results of administration action were coded "good", "neutral", or "bad". Stories that did not contain results were coded "action taken", "promise", and "promise/defense", the latter two categories representing action without results and the formulation and defense of administration policy, respectively.

Stone and Brody noted several difficulties with the content analysis. First the New York Times, although perhaps the publication closest to a national newspaper, may not duplicate the coverage of other newspapers and does not reach the diverse audience that television news reaches. The authors indicated that they originally intended to use

television news scripts but utilized the Times on the basis of accessibility. Second, the authors located two periods where they felt their "top story" approach was inadequate. The stories chosen from the front page of the Times did not appear to duplicate major news stories breaking on television.

Since the major thrust of the Stone and Brody article was a discussion of computer usage, the findings from the study are only partially presented. Among the central findings was a strong negative correlation between approval percentages and lapsed time and a strong positive correlation between disapproval and lapsed time. The overall positive correlation for this latter relationship was .87.

Brody and Page (1972) offered an explanation of presidential popularity based on what they termed a news discrepancy theory of opinion change. Their approach argued that presidential popularity rises, falls or remains constant according to the balance of "good" news and "bad" news. Presidential popularity should rise with good news and fall with bad news. Thus the authors hoped to subsume the variables offered by Mueller, i.e., the coalition of minorities, war, economic slump and rally points, under one encompassing variable. In order to test this notion, the authors modified a model of opinion change developed by Anderson (1959) and applied the resulting equation to a data set which consisted of the data gathered by Stone and

Brody (1970) and additional data drawn from the first Nixon administration during the period January, 1969 through October, 1971. The authors attempted to gather this additional data in a manner which replicated the original data. They found that their model explained 24 percent of the variance of changes in Johnson's popularity and 84 percent of the absolute popularity level. The results for the Nixon administration were weaker, explaining 8 percent of the variance of changes in Nixon's popularity and 55 percent of the variance in the absolute level of popularity.

The work by Brody and Page contributes substantially to the theoretical understanding of presidential popularity, but there are problems in the work that need to be addressed. First, the representativeness of the data used in the content analysis is open to question. Stone and Brody (1970, p. 119) noted that there were periods when the top story approach did not reflect major occurrences that were prominent in the televised news of the time. Brody and Page (1972, p. 11 and Note 38) recognized that the New York Times was not a typical national medium, and attempted to control for this fact by comparing ten percent of their top stories from the New York Times against files from the CBS and NBC network evening news. The NBC files were used for the Johnson data and CBS files were used for the Nixon data. The sample from the Johnson data contained 100 stories, 31 of which were from weekend editions of the Times for which there were no

corresponding broadcasts. The remaining 69 stories produced a rate of agreement of 84 percent. The sample from the Nixon data contained 97 stories, and the agreement rate was 86 percent. The best agreement rate indicates 14 percent of the Times stories did not appear nationally and does not speak to the issue raised by Stone and Brody (1970) of the number of prominent stories appearing on nationally televised news which did not appear in the first story position in the Times and which clearly could have affected the presidential popularity.

Brody and Page (Note 38) conclude: "On the whole, it seems very unlikely that the restricted circulation of the Times is a major source of error variance for stories as prominent as those meeting our criteria for 'most important news story of the day.'" This conclusion does not seem warranted without a cross check of all the prominent top stories from the network evening news against the sample from the Times. Stone and Brody in discussing the two periods in the Johnson data set where the top story procedure seemed to fail noted that: "Without the necessary data available in the content analysis, there is, of course, little that any model can do" (p. 119). To be meaningful the rate of agreement should apply to all prominent stories in both media, which is not the case with the Brody and Page study. In sum, it is apparent that the top story procedure runs a high risk of missing a number of items that receive national distribution.

In addition, Frank (1973, p. 59) found substantial differences in emphases between the New York Times and the three networks when he compared all first-section news stories from the Times which dealt with other than issues relating directly to the local metropolitan area. On a proportional basis the Times devoted more coverage to foreign news and to certain issues of high saliency to large urban areas.

A second central problem with the Brody and Page approach is the treatment of the data. They present the rather unsettling finding that news falling into the "foreign, bad" category correlated positively with Nixon's popularity and negatively with Johnson's popularity. They attribute the contradictory finding to the fact that the public rallied to Nixon's side in the face of news emanating from actions initiated by foreign governments or counter-government groups but failed to do so for President Johnson. Apparently the researchers did not question their coding methods. Clearly such contradictory findings cannot be treated within the confines of a single theory by treating the news in a single coding category as negative for one administration and positive for the next, which is what the researchers in this case opted to do, as the following paragraph clearly indicates:

> But our analysis proceeded simply by modelling the foreign news area differently for the two administrations, and allowing the empirical determination of what

> was "good" and "bad" to take precedence over our original coding. In the domestic and Vietnam news areas, for both administrations, the ratio of POSITIVE to TOTAL news was computed by including only GOOD news as POSITIVE, and GOOD + BAD + AMBIGUOUS as TOTAL. In the foreign news area, for the Johnson period GOOD and AMBIGUOUS news were taken as POSITIVE, but for the Nixon period GOOD and BAD were taken as POSITIVE (p. 16).

The valence or so-called empirical determination of the valence for each category was arrived at by calculating partial correlations between the categories in question and the level of popularity. In short the criterion variable was utilized to determine the valence shape of the predictor variables. This is indeed an odd procedure.

Starting with the news data from the Nixon administration from Brody and Page (1972), Haight and Brody (1977) added a presidential broadcast appearance variable and performed a multiple regression analysis including the news discrepancy variable and prior level of popularity. They found that the analysis for the national sample accounted for 60 percent of the variance in the level of approval. The broadcasting variable did not contribute significantly to variation explained. The authors then deleted 18 of the 67 appearances on the following bases. Those daytime broadcasts which were likely to have small audiences were deleted. All appearances which the authors felt were not relevant to making a decision about the way the president was performing were deleted. All paid political broadcasts by the president were deleted. When the regression was repeated, the broadcasting variable

proved significant and the level of the variance explained rose to 64 percent.

The authors ran similar regression analyses for the party subgroups identified by Gallup in his survey. They hypothesized that membership in the president's party would be positively related to increased support for the president. This hypothesis was not supported. None of the three predictor variables were significantly related to presidential approval. All of the variables were significantly related for the Democrat subgroup and one variable, prior level of popularity, was significant for the Independent subgroup.

Haight and Brody's work bears the burden of the earlier Brody and Page data collection procedure, inasmuch as Haight and Brody utilized data collected for the earlier study. In addition, the presidential broadcasting variable suffers, since the authors removed 18 of the presidential broadcasts. This variable was, in effect, redefined in midstream after it was found to have no significant explanatory power. Although audience size and political broadcasts are clear as decisional criteria, the authors do not state criteria for making decisions as to what is relevant to assessing the way the president is handling his job. The study, in a limited way, does try to assess the impact of presidential use of television, which is the single most important national means of information dissemination.

Edwards (1976) attempted to relate presidential popularity to presidential power. He utilized presidential support scores calculated on a yearly basis for each member of Congress by Congressional Quarterly as a dependent variable and correlated these scores with a yearly presidential popularity score arrived at by averaging the Gallup Poll scores for the same year.

Edwards depended heavily on the Neustadt model for the theoretical foundations of his study. He followed Neustadt's reasoning in establishing the basic rationale for what he calls an incentive model of Congressional voting. The Edwards study supports both the soundness of the Neustadt model and its empirical verifiability.

Agenda-Setting

In addition to the studies which bear directly on the question of presidential popularity the agenda-setting studies bear on the question, although obliquely. The agenda-setting literature is suggestive inasmuch as it points to a direct link between the agenda set by the media and the concurrent agenda prevalent among media consumers. Since the agenda-setting literature has been well summarized (McCombs, 1976), no attempt will be made to repeat that task here beyond pointing out a few of the studies that are most germane.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrated that a sample population's report of what issues are important correlates

highly with the agenda of issues given most play by the media. In reporting on data gathered during the 1968 presidential campaign, the authors found correlations of .976 for major issues and .979 for minor issues. The authors suggested that voters pay attention to all of the issues raised by various candidates and that the salience of the various issues among voters is a kind of composite of the mass media coverage. The media, then, appear to be the primary sources of national political information, the best and only readily available approximation of an ever-changing political reality.

In a 1975 paper, Bowers notes the strategy adopted by candidates is one of getting their agendas to the voters directly through advertising and indirectly through media coverage. The author found very low correlations between candidate agendas and media agendas, indicating that candidates were unsuccessful in getting their agendas into the media. This finding does not speak to the issue of the ability of an officeholder, especially the president, to get his agenda into the news. Political campaigns tend to develop particular kinds of coverage (Graber, 1971[a], 1971[b], 1972, 1976), and there is good evidence that the president can place his agenda in the news with a high degree of success (Cornwell, 1965, pp. 138, 205, 235).

Weaver and Wilhoit (1975) examined a number of variables as predictors of coverage by major media of U. S. Senators.

Of all variable factors analyzed, a senator's support in the form of staff size and state size was the best predictor of media exposure, a finding which suggests that the president's command of the federal bureaucracy is a potent means of generating media coverage.

The Hypotheses

If one assumes that the Neustadt-Sperlich schema is a sound theoretical statement of the dynamics of presidential power and that further explication of the schema reveals the central role of the media, a number of hypotheses may be logically derived to test a portion of the schema.

Intensity of Coverage

The amount of coverage received by the president should be highest at moments of greatest presidential visibility. Clearly this is the case for the early or "honeymoon" days of an administration. The president, recently anointed, is the focus of inaugural pageantry and the natural intense curiosity of the press and the Washington community as both attempt to discern some hint of the nature of the new administration. The process of staffing the new administration, the president's inaugural address, and first press conferences, are only a few of the early points of intense press coverage. The intense press coverage in times of pageantry should be reflected in high popularity ratings for the president. Along with the pageantry of inauguration, presidential travel

and similar occasions when the president acts as Chief of State create an unmistakeable focus on the presidency.

There also should be a focus on the presidency in times of crises, both domestic and foreign. However, since Mueller (1973, p. 209) posits that the valence of domestic issues is as likely to deepen division as heal it, and Brody and Page (1972) found that the valence of news about the results of foreign policy had opposite valences for different administrations, it is prudent to assume that the valence of crises depends on the circumstances surrounding the individual crisis and cannot be dichotomized into positive and negative along domestic and foreign policy dimensions.

The intense focus on the presidency in times of pageantry, in times of peril and in times of controversy should yield a curvilinear relationship between the intensity of coverage received by the president and his popularity. Simple inspection of a number of presidential terms indicates the likelihood that a quadratic equation is a more likely fit than a linear model. Singleton (1976), in a pilot for this study, found the amount of coverage to be significantly curvilinear in its relationship to popularity. Stimson (1976) found presidential popularity to be significantly curvilinear when he modeled it over time. The first hypothesis is as follows:

> H_1: There will be a quadratic curvilinear relationship between the president's popularity and the amount

of press coverage he receives. Coverage intensity will be high when his popularity is high and low.

Prominence of Presidential Coverage

When coverage of the president is most intense, the prominence of items about the president should be greatest. This relationship should also be curvilinear, following the logic of intensity of coverage. The second hypothesis is as follows:

> H_2: There will be a quadratic curvilinear relationship between the president's popularity and the prominance of items about the president. These items will be more prominent when the president's popularity is high and low.

Presidential Spokesmen

Since World War II the president has routinely played a central role in controlling and coordinating the flow of information about crucial administration policies. Administration spokesmen are available to the president for the presentation of the president's position and are important sources of news for the media. These sources include at least 12 major cabinet-level departments and 68 major independent agencies associated with the administration in power (AIPC, 1972, p. 45). Within the White House is a large and well organized staff that also serves to disseminate the president's position to the press. The number of appearances of administration spokesmen appearing within news stories relating directly to the president or his policies should

increase or decrease in the same manner as intensity of coverage.

> H_3: There will be a quadratic curvilinear relationship between the incidence of presidential-spokesmen items and the president's popularity. The number of presidential-spokesmen items will be high when the president's popularity is high and low.

Coverage Valence

The theoretical model posits the centrality of the media in presidential popularity. If presidential popularity is controlled by the amount and valence of media coverage of the president, the relationship should be evinced by a substantial positive correlation between high presidential popularity and positive coverage, and by a substantial negative correlation between presidential popularity and high negative coverage.

> H_4: High presidential popularity will be accompanied by high positive coverage and low negative coverage.
>
> H_5: Low presidential popularity will be accompanied by high negative coverage and low positive coverage.

Testing these hypotheses will provide an empirical examination of the relationship between important dimensions of presidential coverage and presidential popularity. Extrapolation of these findings should provide additional insight into the Neustadt-Sperlich model, suggest a subsequent research agenda and provide data which apply to the policy questions raised by a number of observers who view the president's utilization of television with some concern.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

The data employed in this study are of two kinds: primary data and secondary data. The CBS Evening News constitutes the primary data used in this study. The results of the Gallup Poll surveys on presidential popularity as published in the "Gallup Opinion Index" constitute one kind of secondary data; the published literature which deals with presidential popularity, presidential power, and the relationship between them constitute another kind of secondary data.

The Criteria for Admissibility of the Data

The data utilized covers the time span from January 1, 1972, to July 1, 1976. This period was chosen for the following reasons. First, the time span is sufficiently long to allow for adequate testing of the hypotheses. Second, it effectively utilizes most of the issues of "Television News Index and Abstracts", a major source of data for the study, which began publication in January of 1972. Third, the study is not confined to a single

presidency which might exhibit unusual characteristics. Under the theoretical approach taken, no particular presidency, nor any particular period within a presidency, should affect the ability of the variables to predict popularity. However, certain presidencies, such as the Eisenhower terms, presented monolithic popularity characteristics. Fourth, the Gallup organization suspends the presidential popularity survey during presidential election years, reducing the number of data points available. The longer span is required to meet the requirements of the statistical technique used to analyze the data. Fifth, after resumption of the Gallup survey in 1972, the Nixon administration became embroiled in the Watergate scandal, creating an extraordinary focus on the presidency from January of 1973 to August of 1975. Since the Watergate scandal was faithfully and thoroughly reported in the evening news, this period should provide an especially fertile period for the testing of the various hypotheses.

It was assumed that any news of import about the President of the United States would be reported in the evening newscasts of the three major television networks. Further, it was assumed that the three major television network evening newscasts would so closely mirror each other in content that a content analysis performed on any one of the three networks would be a fair representation of all three. There is substantial support for this

assumption. In a pilot study conducted by the author, an analysis of the two days previous to the beginning of the Gallup polling period over the span of a year showed remarkably close mean coverage scores across the three networks for total coverage of the president, positive coverage of the president and negative coverage of the president. Frank (1973, pp. 55-60) found that the three networks tended to provide very close to the same percentages of coverage for highly visible news topics such as the Viet Nam War and for political news items. The presidency is such a highly visible news source and the tendency should obtain on a continuing basis. Hofstetter (1976, p. 39) concluded that the overall patterns of political coverage of the three networks were almost identical except for slight variations in the number of political stories and total time devoted to them.

The Pilot Study

The author conducted a pilot study during early 1976 in order to test and refine the procedures utilized for the gathering and treatment of the data. The hypotheses to be tested in the present study were developed in the pilot project and tested over a limited time span.

A sample of the evening news broadcasts from the three major networks formed the data base for this exploratory study. Network newscasts were chosen on the basis of the

following criteria: 1) mass "circulation", 2) uniform geographic distribution, and 3) confidence rating as a source of information (Bower, p. 14). Print organs with a "national" circulation did not meet all of these criteria and, thus, were not included.

The criterion variable for this study was President Gerald Ford's popularity as measured in the national opinion polls conducted by the Gallup organization. The polls from August 1974 to September 1975 were utilized. This represented the entire population of polls available on the Ford presidency at the time of the pilot study design. Each of the polls is conducted over a four-day span and is expressed in a percentage of agreement, disagreement or no opinion as to how well the president is doing his job. The percentage of agreement was used in all cases as the criterion variable.

The two days prior to the beginning of each poll were selected for content analysis. The content analysis was conducted in two stages utilizing "The Television News Index and Abstracts" from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive at Vanderbilt University. In the first stage the abstracts were used to identify all presidential stories from August, 1974 to September, 1975 and to code those stories that were clearly presidential-positive or negative. Stories that were questionable or which contained a mixture of positive and negative material were reduced to an audio compilation

tape by the Vanderbilt Library for further analysis. In the first stage coding was done by students at the University of Oklahoma in a graduate seminar in mass media research methods with an intercoder reliability of over .84. In the second stage the six hours of compilation material were coded by two coders with intercoder reliability of .92. All differences in the final coding were adjudicated to provide the final base.

Since all measures were interval level, Pearson product moment coefficients were used to examine hypotheses 4 and 5. Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 were analyzed using curvilinear regression techniques. A multiple regression equation was utilized to determine the contribution of each variable. Confidence levels were set at .05.

All stories from the three major network evening newscasts which mentioned the president, the president's immediate family, the White House, or which readily identified the president were noted and analyzed according to a priori categories. Each story or item was analyzed for positive and negative coverage based on source and internal logic. Stories were coded as follows. It was assumed that the president and his spokesmen would attempt to present the administration in the best possible light. Therefore, direct quotations of presidential statements or statements by his family or spokesmen for his positions were coded as presidential-positive. Coders were specifically instructed not

to anticipate audience reaction. Statements opposing presidential positions or policies were considered presidential-negative. Statements that merely reported the activities of the president were considered presidential-positive. Stories were also categorized as to quantity with a time count utilized to determine the total amount of coverage and the amount of positive and negative coverage the president received in any given day. Each two-day period was assigned a prominence score by scoring the first network story concerning the president for each day according to its location in the newscast and then taking the mean prominence for all three networks across the two days. Spokesman items were scored by total number for each two-day period.

The execution of the pilot study aided in the construction and revision of coding instructions, and the various forms used for recording data and ordering compilation tapes. The findings from the study indicated the feasibility of the study and provided limited support for hypotheses 1 and 4. Data for the remaining three hypotheses was inconclusive, and some consideration was given to recasting the variables. In light of the small data base, it appeared prudent to test the variables over a longer time span including a much larger number of newscasts. The present study is designed to broaden and intensify the pilot study in order to provide a reasonable test of the five original hypotheses.

Treatment of the Data

In the present study, the coverage of the president by the network evening news was analyzed through a systematic content analysis of the CBS Evening News from January 1, 1972 to July 1, 1973.

The data required were the "Television News Index and Abstracts" issues for the period of the study and tapes of selected CBS Evening News broadcasts for the period of the study. The evening newscasts of the commercial television networks are video-taped off the air by Vanderbilt University, Vanderbilt, Tennessee. In addition the university publishes "The Television News Index and Abstracts" which indexes the newscasts by subject and abstracts each story. Running times for each story are recorded and published in the abstracts.

A copy of the entire published "Television News Index and Abstracts" was obtained from the Vanderbilt University library with the exception of three volumes which are out of print. Copies of these out-of-print volumes were housed in the North Texas State University Library. After it was determined which news stories required analysis beyond the information available in the "Television News Index and Abstracts", these stories were compiled onto audio cassetes by the staff of the Vanderbilt Library and mailed to the researcher.

Each CBS Evening News program for the period specified was content-analyzed. The content analysis proceeded as follows. The unit of analysis was the amount of coverage, expressed in time. This unit was selected inasmuch as many stories contain both positive and negative information about the president. Often the story can be divided along the positive and negative dimensions which renders the sentence as too small a unit of analysis and the story as too large a unit of analysis. The categories for the content analysis were operationalized as follows:

1. Intensity of coverage was operationalized as the amount of coverage in minutes the president received each day in the CBS evening newscast, summing these across the period between the polls and taking the mean intensity.

2. Prominence of coverage was operationalized by taking the placement in elapsed minutes of the first story dealing with the president each day, summing these across the period between the polls and taking the mean prominence.

3. Presidential spokesmen was operationalized as any identifiable member of the executive branch, the president's party, the president's family, Congress or any other readily identifiable individual who appears in the news and clearly supports the president's position on any given issue. The number of spokesmen were summed across the poll period and the mean number of spokesmen taken.

4. Positive coverage was operationalized as statements or direct quotations of statements made by the president, his family, the official family (cabinet, staff, bureaucracy), Congressmen, or others favoring the president's position or actions on any given matter. In addition, news items that merely reported the activities of the president were considered presidential positive. Presidential positive

coverage was measured as the amount of time in minutes of positive coverage the president received each day. Positive coverage was summed across the period of the poll and the mean taken.

5. Negative coverage was operationalized as statements or news from any source which opposed the president's position or was critical of the president's position or actions. Negative coverage was summed across the period of the poll and the mean taken.

The first three categories are expressed in units of time. The fourth is expressed as a mean prominence score of all days between polls, and the fifth category is expressed by the mean number of spokesmen. All measurements are interval level data.

In the first stage of the content analysis, the abstracts located in the "Television News Index and Abstracts" were used to identify all presidential stories and to code those whole stories that were clearly presidential-positive or presidential-negative. Running times for these stories and the number of presidential spokesmen who appeared were recorded. Stories that were split between presidential-positive and presidential-negative coverage or that were questionable, i.e., not clearly codeable from the abstracts, were identified for purposes of reduction to compilation tapes by the Vanderbilt Library staff for further analysis. The compliation tapes consisted of verbatim recordings of the newscasts. Stories recorded on these tapes were analyzed by listening to the tapes and recording the information needed.

The data from analysis of the abstracts and the compilation tapes were recorded directly onto IBM data sheets for ease of handling and transfer to punched cards.

Coders were trained by the researcher in individual training sessions. Reliability checks were performed on the coding procedure following Holsti's procedure in Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (1969, pp. 134-142). Intercoder reliability checks were performed on one week of sampled material from the abstracts, and intracoder reliability checks were performed by having a set of coders code the same sample of newscasts after the passage of two weeks. The formula for computing reliability is given in Holsti (1969, p. 140). The formula is:

$$C.R. = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

where C.R. is reliability

M is the number of agreed upon items

N_1 is the number of observations of the first coding

N_2 is the number of observations of the second coding.

Reliability was calculated for each possibility, and after the various coder permutations, i.e., A + B, A + C, and B + C were calculated, an average intercoder reliability factor of .88 was established. Intracoder reliability averaged better than .94. Intercoder reliability between the two coders in the second stage of coding was better

than .92. Again, all differences were adjudicated to provide the final data base.

The findings from the content analysis were correlated with the national surveys conducted by the Gallup Poll organization in which the question "Do you approve or disapprove of the way _____ is handling his job as President?" is asked. This survey is based on a sample of 1500 adults and is accurate within 3 percent, 95 percent of the time (GOI, January, 1977). These data are published in the monthly publication "The Gallup Opinion Index" which is published by the Gallup Poll organization, Princeton, New Jersey. The data were obtained from the publication cited which was available in the North Texas State University Library.

The data from the Gallup polls were utilized as the criterion variable in a multiple regression analysis. The percentage approving the president's handling of the job was utilized since Mueller has shown that the percentage approving and disapproving is almost an exact mirror image with the percentage voicing no opinion holding fairly steady around 14 percent (Mueller, p. 203). All regression analyses were standard (stepwise) regression analyses and were computed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences by Norman H. Nie, et al (1975). The multiple regression formula utilized by this routine is as follows:

$$Y' = A + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \cdots B_kX_k \quad .$$

Curvilinear analysis was performed in order to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. The formula for polynomial regression is as follows:

$$Y' = A + B^1X^1 + B^2X^2 + \cdots B^kX^k \quad .$$

The treated data were analyzed in order to draw conclusions about the relationship of the content of the evening newscasts to presidential popularity. The data needed were: 1) the computations from the multiple regression analyses and the curvilinear regression analyses, and 2) relevant data or findings from the literature.

The print-outs were studied to determine: 1) which of the variables, if any, contributed significantly to the fluctuations in presidential popularity, 2) which of the variables contributed the most to explanation of the fluctuation in presidential popularity, 3) which of the hypotheses, if any, were supported by the data and its treatment, 4) what non-predicted anomalies appeared and whether the literature provided some explanation for the anomalies, and 5) what support for policy decisions concerning presidential access to the media appeared to be present and in what direction that support lay.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The present study runs from January 1, 1972 to July 1, 1976 and covers portions of two presidencies. It covers the last year of the Nixon first term (excluding the reelection campaign), the nineteen months of the abbreviated Nixon second term, and the two and one-half years served by President Ford. The Gallup Poll Organization conducted 78 presidential approval surveys during the period of the study. (See Appendix A.) President Nixon enjoyed relatively high approval during the last year of his first term and embarked on his second term with his popularity on the rise. From a high point of 68% in January, 1973, his popularity slid to a low of 24% in August, 1974, immediately prior to his resignation. President Ford's popularity fluctuated from his post-inauguration high of 71% to a low of 37% which occurred twice in the early months of 1975.

The content analysis of the CBS Evening News for the period produced 4700 minutes of presidential coverage. Coverage amounts by minutes are displayed in Table 1. This coverage broke down into 2617 minutes of positive coverage and 2083 minutes of negative coverage. President Nixon received 772 minutes of positive coverage

TABLE 1

Presidential Coverage by CBS Evening News: January 1972 to July 1976[a]

President	Coverage in Minutes				
	Positive	Percentage of Total	Negative	Percentage of Total	Total
Nixon	772	39	1200	61	1972
Ford	1845	68	883	32	2728
Total	2617	56	2083	44	4700

[a]Excludes June 1972 to December 1973.

and 1200 minutes of negative coverage, while President Ford received 1845 minutes of positive coverage and 883 minutes of negative coverage. As a proportion of total coverage, positive coverage was 56% of total coverage while negative coverage was 44% of total coverage. For the individual presidents, Nixon's positive coverage was 39% of his total coverage and his negative was 61% of his total coverage. Ford's positive coverage was 68% of his total coverage, while his negative coverage was 32% of his total coverage. As can be seen, President Ford fared considerably better on a proportional basis than did President Nixon.

Analysis of the Nixon Period

A multiple regression analysis was conducted utilizing the five independent variables and Nixon popularity as the criterion variable. The Pearson product moment coefficients of correlation for all independent variables with the criterion variable are displayed in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Pearson Product Moment Coefficients Among Independent Variables and Nixon Popularity (N = 42)

Variable	Prom	Inten	Pos	Neg	Spoke	Poll
Prominence		-.50	-.28	-.42	-.36	.42[c]
Intensity			.15	.81	.42	-.36[d]
Positive				-.23	.24	-.03
Negative					.35	-.31[d]
Spokesmen						-.30[d]
Poll						

$b_p \leq .001$ $c_p \leq .01$ $d_p \leq .05$

Intensity of Coverage

The Pearson r for the intensity of coverage is significant, $r = -.36$, $p \leq .05$. However, this zero order correlation was unexpectedly negative. Inspection of the scattergram for this variable did not indicate the clear presence of the hypothesized quadratic curvilinear relationship. Curvilinear analysis with second and third degree equations indicated little improvement in the predictive power of the independent variable. Table 3 displays the results of the curvilinear analysis. Adding terms to a polynomial regression equation will always improve the fit somewhat, but the required criteria of significant improvement with the addition of the second term and lack of significant improvement with terms thereafter were not met. The hypothesis that the relationship between the president's popularity and the intensity of coverage is curvilinear was not supported.

TABLE 3

Nixon Approval as a Quadratic Function of Intensity, Prominence and Spokesmen (N = 42)

Variable	Multiple R	R Square Change
Intensity		
Linear	.36	.12
Quadratic	.40	.03
Cubic	.45	.04
Prominence		
Linear	.42	.18
Quadratic	.44	.01
Cubic	.44	.00
Spokesmen		
Linear	.30	.09
Quadratic	.33	.01
Cubic	.33	.00

$b_p \leq .001$ $c_p \leq .01$ $d_p \leq .05$

Prominence of Presidential Coverage

The prominence of coverage was significantly correlated with the criterion variable, $r = .42$, $p \leq .01$. The prominence of presidential items tended to be uniformly high, and inspection of the scattergram indicated that the expected curvilinear relationship was not present. Curvilinear analysis did not significantly improve the explanatory power of the variable. The hypothesis that the relationship between the prominence of items about the president and presidential popularity was not supported.

Presidential Spokesmen

The correlation of spokesmen items with presidential popularity was negatively and significantly correlated with

the criterion variable, $r = -.30$, $p \leq .05$. Inspection of the scattergram indicated that the expected curvilinear relationship was not present. Curvilinear analysis did not significantly improve the explanatory power of the variable. The hypothesis that the relationship between presidential spokesmen items and presidential popularity is curvilinear was not supported.

Positive Coverage

The positive coverage of the president was very weakly and negatively correlated with persidential popularity, $r = -.03$. The hypothesis that presidential popularity is significantly and positively related to positive coverage was not supported.

Multiple Regression for the Nixon Period

A multiple regression was performed using the stepwise regression technique. This technique indicates the unique contribution of each variable while controlling for the other independent variables. Table 4 presents the standardized regression coefficients (Beta weights) for the regression. Of the five independent variables entered into the regression equation, prominence contributed most to the variance explained, accounting for about 18 percent of the variance. Entering the intensity variable accounted for an additional three percent of the variance. Spokesmen, positive coverage and negative coverage, entered in that order,

accounted for an additional one percent each. The equation with all variables entered accounted for 24 percent of the total variance.

TABLE 4

Summary of Step-Wise Multiple Regression, Nixon Period (N = 42)

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	R Square Change	Simple R	B	Beta
Prominence	.42	.18	.18	.42	0.02	.34[d]
Intensity	.45	.21	.02	-.36	-0.02	-.25
Spokesmen	.47	.22	.01	-.30	-2.81	-.16
Positive	.48	.23	.01	-.03	0.03	.17
Negative	.49	.24	.00	-.31	0.01	.13
(Constant)					38.95	

$b_p \leq .001$ $c_p \leq .01$ $d_p \leq .05$

The intercorrelation between the amount of coverage and the negative coverage was high enough, r = .81, to establish extreme collinearity which indicates that both variables are accounting for essentially the same variance. Nie, et al. (1975, p. 340) give two alternative solutions for this problem. The two variables may be recast as a composite variable or one of the variables may be dropped from the equation. Since the negative coverage is a subset of intensity of coverage and the greater interest for the Nixon period is in the effect of negative coverage, the intensity variable was eliminated to determine the predictive power of the negative variable without the confounding influence of the total intensity of coverage variable. This procedure

did not effect the order in which the variables were entered into the equation nor the predictive power of the negative coverage variable. Table 5 displays the results of this equation.

TABLE 5

Summary of Step-Wise Multiple Regression Eliminating Intensity, Nixon Period (N = 42)

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	R Square Change	Simple R	B	Beta
Prominence	.42	.18	.18	.42	0.02	.35[d]
Spokesmen	.45	.20	.02	-.30	-2.85	-.16
Positive	.47	.22	.01	-.03	0.01	.09
Negative	.47	.22	.00	-.31	-0.00	-.08
(Constant)					37.61	

b $\leq$ .01 c $\leq$ .01 d $\leq$ .05

Analysis of the Ford Administration

A similar multiple regression analysis was conducted for the twenty-three month period from the Ford administration. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficients for all independent variables with presidential popularity are displayed in Table 6.

TABLE 6

Pearson Product Moment Coefficients Among Independent Variables and Ford Popularity (N = 36)

Variable	Prom	Inten	Pos	Neg	Spoke	Poll
Prominence		-.30	-.22	-.14	-.04	-.29
Intensity			.73	.47	.54	.53[c]
Positive				-.24	.50	.78[b]
Negative					.12	-.25
Spokesmen						.38[d]
Poll						

b $\leq$ .001 c $\leq$ .01 d $\leq$ .05

Intensity of Coverage

The Pearson r for the intensity of coverage was substantial and significant, $r = .53$, $p \leq .01$. Inspection of the scattergram indicated some curvilinearity in the relaticnship between this variable and presidential popularity. Curvilinear analysis showed some improvement in fit with the second term but the improvement did not achieve significance. Table 7 displays the results of the curvilinear analysis for the Ford administration. The hypothesis that the relationship between the president's popularity and the intensity of coverage is curvilinear was not supported for the Ford term.

TABLE 7

Ford Approval as a Quadratic Function of of Intensity, Prominence and Spokesmen (N = 36)

Variable	Multiple R	R Square Change
Intensity		
Linear	.53	.28
Quadratic	.57	.04
Cubic	.58	.01
Prominence		
Linear	.29	.08
Quadratic	.34	.02
Cubic	.36	.01
Spokesmen		
Linear	.38	.14
Quadratic	.54	.14[d]
Cubic	.59	.06

$b_p \leq .001$ $c_p \leq .01$ $d_p \leq .05$

Prominence of Presidential Coverage

The prominence of coverage was not significantly related to presidential popularity, $r = -.29$. Inspection of the scattergram did not indicate a strong curvilinear relationship. Curvilinear analysis did not significantly improve the obtained fit. The hypothesis that the relationship between the prominence of presidential coverage and presidential popularity is curvilinear was not supported.

Presidential Spokesmen

The correlation of spokesmen items with the criterion variable was significant, $r = .38$, $p \leq .05$. Examination of the scattergram indicated evidence of the hypothesized curvilinear relationship. Curvilinear analysis with second and third degree equations indicated the second degree equation was the equation of best fit. The increase in the obtained R^2 between steps one and two was significant, $F = 6.7$, $p \leq .05$, but the increase in the obtained R^2 in step three was minimal. The hypothesis that the relationship between spokesmen items and presidential popularity is curvilinear was supported for the Ford administration.

Positive Coverage

The positive coverage of the president was strongly and significantly correlated with presidential popularity, $r = .78$, $p \leq .001$. The hypothesis that positive coverage

of the president is positively related to presidential popularity was supported.

Negative Coverage

Negative coverage of the president was correlated in the direction expected. The correlation was inverse but did not reach significance, $r = -.25$. The hypothesis that negative presidential coverage is negatively related to presidential coverage was not supported in the Ford term.

Multiple Regression for the Ford Administration

The multiple regression analysis performed on the Nixon term was duplicated for the Ford term. Table 8 displays the results of the multiple regression equation. Of the five independent variables utilized in the equation, positive coverage contributed most to the variance explained accounting for 61 percent of the variance. Prominence, amount and spokesmen accounted for an additional two percent of the variance. Negative coverage did not contribute enough independently to meet the cutoff criteria and was eliminated from the equation.

The intercorrelation between the intensity of coverage and the positive coverage was high ($r = .73$), but not quite high enough to establish extreme collinearity. Since the intercorrelation approached the extreme and the intercorrelation between the intensity and the negative variable was

TABLE 8

Summary of Step-Wise Multiple Regression, Ford Period (N = 36)

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	R Square Change	Simple R	B	Beta
Positive	.78	.61	.61	.78	0.06	.84[b]
Prominence	.79	.63	.01	-.29	-0.00	-.15
Intensity	.79	.63	.00	.53	-0.01	-.14
Spokesmen	.79	.63	.00	.38	0.36	.03
(Constant)					35.73	

$b_p \leq .001$ $c_p \leq .01$ $d_p \leq .05$

substantial, r = .47, the intensity variable was removed and the equation computed with the positive and negative variables allowed to predict independently of any masking effect of the intensity variable. The results from this equation are displayed in Table 9. As can be seen from the table, this manipulation allows inclusion of the negative amount variable but does not alter the equation in any substantial way.

TABLE 9

Summary of Step-Wise Multiple Regression Eliminating Intensity, Ford Period (N = 36)

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	R Square Change	Simple R	B	Beta
Positive	.78	.61	.61	.78	0.05	.70[b]
Prominence	.79	.63	.01	-.29	-0.00	-.15
Negative	.79	.63	.00	-.25	-0.01	-.10
Spokesmen	.79	.63	.00	.38	0.36	.03
(Constant)					35.71	

$b_p \leq .001$ $c_p \leq .01$ $d_p \leq .05$

Summary

The descriptive data gathered for the period of the study indicates that the preponderance of news coverage during the Nixon period was negative while the preponderance of coverage during the Ford period was positive. A combination of zero order correlations and multiple regression analyses were utilized to examine the relationships between presidential popularity and five independent variables. Four of the variables, prominence, intensity, negative and spokesmen, correlated significantly with presidential popularity during the Nixon term. The hypothesized curvilinear relationship between presidential popularity and three of these independent variables, prominence, intensity, and spokesmen, was not found during the Nixon period. For the Ford period, three of the five variables, intensity, positive, and spokesmen, were significantly correlated with presidential popularity. The hypothesized curvilinear relationship was found only for the spokesmen variable.

Multiple regression analyses were performed for both periods independently in an attempt to predict presidential popularity. The best predictor of presidential popularity during the Nixon term was the prominence of coverage, followed by intensity, spokesmen, positive, and negative. Only the prominence variable reached significance. The best single predictor for the Ford period was positive coverage,

followed by prominence, intensity, and spokesmen. Only positive coverage reached significance. The tolerance levels for the equation excluded the negative coverage variable for the Ford period. The multiple regression analysis for the Nixon period explained 24 percent of the variance. The equation for the Ford period explained 63 percent of the variance.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In assessing support for the underlying notion that there is a strong relationship between the coverage a president receives in the evening news and his standing in the Gallup Poll of presidential popularity, the results are mixed. The predictor variables for the Nixon period do not conform to expectations based on the pilot study nor does the multiple regression equation predict strongly for the Nixon period. The results from the Ford period follow the pilot study quite closely, and the multiple regression equation predicts well for Ford popularity. The hypothesized curvilinear relationships do not occur consistently or with great strength. Examination of the data and the events surrounding the periods studied suggest several explanations for the findings and a number of strategies for modification of the research approach and reanalysis of the present data base.

The variable which correlated most highly with presidential popularity for the Nixon period was prominence of coverage. It was expected that the most important variable

for both presidential periods would be the valence variables, either positive or negative coverage. An explanation for the relatively strong predictive power of the prominence variable may be found in the nature of the period studied. The Nixon period, unlike the Ford period, does not have a single general valence tendency. The pilot study and the present study confirm the general tendency toward positive coverage of the Ford period. However, the Nixon data can be divided into two distinct valence periods with January, 1973 used as a convenient dividing point for separation of the two valence periods. The first of these valence periods is heavily positive, the second heavily negative. The positive period is accounted for by the Nixon reelection campaign, his landslide win, and inauguration pageantry. These three factors produced positive coverage and high Nixon popularity. Hard on the heels of this success came the devastating Watergate scandal and Nixon's popularity began fading. Negative coverage overtook positive coverage in early 1973 and for the remainder of the Nixon period, negative coverage dominated the valence of all coverage. When the Nixon period is taken as a whole the two valence variables tend to cancel, since the coverage was primarily positive in the first part and primarily negative in the second part. Under these circumstances it is understandable that intensity of coverage and the two subsets, positive and negative coverage, did not effectively predict popularity. The fact that the

positive coverage correlation with popularity is extremely small and in the wrong direction is further indication of the mixed nature of the Nixon period. The dominant negative coverage variable is in the right direction, but it also fails to correlate strongly.

The data and results from the Ford period are readily accounted for in terms of the underlying theoretical notions. As in the pilot study, the best predictor for the Ford period is positive coverage which is consistent with the hypothesized relationship between coverage and popularity. The Ford period is primarily positive in nature and positive coverage is the best predictor. The substantial predictive power of the multiple regression equation is based primarily on the efficacy of this one variable.

The absence of the hypothesized quadratic relationships raises the issue of the sensitivity of the data collection procedure. Although the findings from the pilot study and the findings from the larger study agree closely for the Ford term, there is still room for concern that the averaging technique used to represent the variables leads to a considerable loss of sensitivity. In the pilot study, only the two days immediately prior to the polls were content analyzed, and the relationship between the intensity variable and presidential popularity was significantly curvilinear. However, neither the spokesmen variable nor the prominence variable achieved significance. This was attributed to lack

of variation in the prominence variable and the small number of spokesmen items. In the absence of sufficient change in the variables, the hypothesized relationships could not emerge. The impulse to omit the prominence variable after the pilot study was deferred in favor of examination of the results from the present study. The results of the pilot study were replicated in this study, at least for the Ford period. Prominence was, with minor exceptions, consistently high and again failed to add significantly to the predictive power of the equation. The finding from the Nixon period where the prominence variable is the best predictor is probably best viewed in the light of the weakness of the remainder of the variables in the Nixon equation and the unusual nature of the Nixon period. However, the impulse to discard the prominence variable has been further checked. In the present study, the only variable to achieve significant curvilinearity was the spokesmen variable in the Ford period. There was marked curvilinearity in the intensity variable in the Ford period, but it did not achieve significance.

What little data there is available indicates that recall of news items is a highly transient phenomenon and impact would be most likely temporally proximate to exposure to the broadcast of such items. The averaging technique utilized in the operationalizing of the predictor variables would tend to include information in the predictor variables, which would not bear on the criterion variable due to attrition of

the effect over time. If the proximate impact notion is correct, relatively large fluctuations that occur near the polls in time would be absorbed into the average for the variable over the entire polling period, with the result of desensitizing the predictor variables.

An alternative explanation of the performance of the predictor variables depends on the concept of inertia and the notion of time lags in the impact of exogeneous events on public opinion. McCombs (1976) presents a summary of evidence that some items require time lags from two to six months in duration to move from the media agenda to the public agenda. Given the positivity bias (Sears and Whitney, 1973), public perception of presidential popularity should respond more readily to positive information. Presidential travel, pageantry, press conferences, and speeches should produce immediate positive responses in presidential popularity. The heavily covered foreign travel of presidents serves as the prime example of this kind of positive coverage and normally produces the expected popularity surge. Inertial resistance in the movement of presidential popularity should be minimized when the direction of movement is positive. The president receives the benefit of the inclination of the population to support their chief leader.

Clearly, any movement in the opposite direction would, under normal circumstances, have to overcome the inertial component of the positivity bias. In order to drive the

president's popularity downward, negative coverage would have to be massive, cumulative, unchallenged, or a combination of all three. Massive negative coverage ought to provide some immediate negative deflection due to the size of the impetus and should be immediately observable. Cumulative negative coverage might or might not produce readily observable results, but should provide a long-term gradual decline in popularity. Unchallenged negative coverage should provide impact as a function of both quantity and duration. This latter notion is not central inasmuch as negative coverage of the president does not long remain unchallenged even in the worst of circumstances.

The second half of the Nixon period is characterized by massive and sustained negative coverage. The time lag notion suggests that observation of the predictor variables would not be synchronized with their impact on presidential popularity. This would be especially true of the period immediately following the Nixon reelection. The negative coverage eminating from the Watergate scandal had to overcome the high level of Nixon popularity growing out of inauguration pageantry. This coverage accumulated beginning with a smattering of Watergate stories which were vigorously contested by responses from the White House. It continued interspersed with a series of highly damaging revelations from the Ervin Committee, and the major news organs. The combined impact of continuing negative coverage and massive negative

"bombshells" is apparently not well accounted for by the predictor variables. Examination of the coverage levels immediately after the second Nixon inauguration tends to lend credence to the time lag notion. Negative coverage begins to dominate immediately after the inauguration but decline in Nixon popularity is minimal until April and is less precipitous than Ford's early popularity loss. However, Ford's popularity stabilized and recovered, whereas Nixon's continued to slide downward.

At first blush, it would seem that the two time related concerns with the results of the study are antithetical. Close examination will show them to be compatible. In the sensitivity issue we are concerned with attrition of recall of transient phenomena. For example, information from a common reportorial device, coverage of the president's day, provides intense yet ephemeral images on the video screen. However, proximity to a popularity poll might add considerable weight to the impact of such a report. The impact should fade as the report grows temporally distant from the poll. Information about a recurring presidential activity such as a presidential trip, a sustained presidential policy, or scandal should accumulate over time. This suggests a model that would account for both proximation and cumulation effects. One might, for example, utilize the average coverage between polls, the coverage immediately prior to the polls and an additional variable that would represent the accumulation

of news. This latter variable could specify an accumulation agenda that would be followed across time much as in the agenda-setting research. In sum, the present explanation of presidential popularity operating on a poll-to-poll basis appears adequate for short-term fluctuations in presidential popularity and is probably sufficient for most circumstances, but the predictive power of such a scheme is likely to be inadequate for ferreting out lagged effects or long-term unidirectional trends.

The Nixon period offers an additional problem in the form of the televised Watergate Hearings which began on May 17, 1973. These hearings received considerable live coverage by the commercial networks and were taped for rebroadcast in prime time by the Public Broaccasting Service. Although the Watergate Hearings were heavily reflected in the evening newscasts of the three networks, one must, in retrospect, assume that the two impacted conjointly, an assumption that would indicate damage to the predictive power of variables based only on the evening newscasts. It is perhaps impossible to parcel out the impact of these extraordinary hearings on presidential popularity without the creation of an additional variable or variables and close analysis of the content of the hearings, a task clearly beyond the scope of the present investigation.

The inability of the regression equation to predict Nixon popularity with the strength found for the Ford period

may also be accounted for by merely labeling the entire Nixon period an anomaly, which clearly is the case. A set of predictors which normally accounts for presidential popularity might not necessarily predict for a period which exhibits exceedingly unusual characteristics. Although this thought is comforting for the researcher whose cherished scheme has failed to materialize as neatly as was expected, it does not eliminate the weakness of the equation in the face of a set of circumstances that might have considerably strengthened its viability.

The theoretic thrust of the present study suggests an underlying causal relationship between news coverage of the president and his popularity. This causal relationship is similar in nature to the causal relationship that undergirds the agenda-setting literature which asserts that, within certain limitations and conditions, the agenda of items stressed by the media become those perceived as most important by the public. The present study follows that same line of reasoning with the added assertion that the valence of media coverage should predict the valence of public perceptions at least for an object that is constantly high on the media agenda.

Although the rationale underlying the present study is causal, the design and intent of the present study was to describe the relationship between presidential popularity and a set of predictor variables drawn from the network news coverage of the president. It was the intent of the study

to provide empirical data that would bear on whether the relationship did, in fact, exist. Future examination of the relationship between popularity figures and the predictor variables might be analyzed in light of cross-lagged correlations to better support the underlying causal contentions and establish the direction of causality.

Implications for Future Research

The original impetus for this study was the Neustadt-Sperlich presidential power schema. This schema laid considerable stress on the communication or persuasive aspect of presidential power. The model was further explicated in order to include the central role of the media, and the present study attempted to examine the relationship between presidential coverage and presidential popularity. The mechanism of the impact of the media on presidential popularity at the individual level was not of central concern to this study but the complex intervening interpersonal and intrapersonal processes as well as other intervening mechanisms deserve some examination in light of the model, since they will become a part of future research on presidential popularity and power. In addition, the present study has raised questions of a conceptual nature, and these can now be addressed briefly.

The present schema's failure to account for intervening processes is mitigated by two factors. One is the underlying

consensus required for a society to function and remain viable. There must be agreement among the population on basic values in order to maintain an orderly, vigorous society. Examples of such consensual attitudes include attitudes toward war (which may be viewed as a necessity but must ultimately be viewed as undesirable), scandal, economic hardship and so on. The viability of the present schema depends on these shared values, and over time, the simple approval-disapproval response reflects a high level of presidential approval. However, the impact of any single set of communications operates through well documented mediating factors. Psychological factors, situational factors, group affiliation, and political affiliation all play important roles in determining the efficacy of a given communication. Much of what is reported in the news may not be viewed consensually, and although this does not negate the usefulness of correlations between aggregate measures of approval and the content of the news, it leaves the full explanation of presidential popularity hidden within the complex constellation of intervening variables.

Some unravelling of this complexity may be derived from the demographic and socio-economic data collected by the Gallup organization in its surveys. Sex, race, education, region, age, income, political affiliation, religion, occupation, city size, and labor union affiliation are used to cagegorize the respondents. Additional hypotheses can be

constructed utilizing comparative knowledge of these categories. Kernell, Sperlich and Wildavsky (1975) utilized categories similar to the Gallup categories and Haight and Brody (1976) utilized some of the Gallup categories for comparisons of popularity levels among specific groups.

The categories help deal with the question of the role of socio-economic classifications and, to some extent, the role of group affiliation in presidential popularity. The categories do not address the question of presidential perception at an individual level, an admittedly difficult but not insoluble problem. What is required is a substantial panel study to trace changes in presidential popularity at the individual level over time. A study employing measures of respondent personality attributes and group and political affiliations as well as the more complex measures of the dependent variable which will be suggested below and which subjected the data to available multivariate techniques would move much closer to construction of the presidential popularity mosaic.

The data from this study indicates a need for a more sophisticated conceptualization of the dependent variable. In retrospect it seems that the Gallup measure of simple approval-disapproval has both advantages and disadvantages. In spite of its crudness, it accumulates the various components of the respondent's knowledge and feeling about the president into one response. In many cases the response

may be the result of a complex of predispositions, attitudes, beliefs and information, but the respondent must reduce or simplify all of these factors into an unqualified response. The economy of data collection that results is considerable. On the other hand, the range of response is limited and the reduction of complexity is obtained at the expense of a more complete understanding of the nature of presidential popularity.

The slow response of Nixon's popularity to negative coverage suggests that presidential popularity is probably not a simple phenomenon reducible to a dichotomous response. Kernell, Sperlich and Wildavsky (1975) surveyed 800 respondents utilizing a multiple dependent variable approach to the measure of general presidential support, tapping levels of blind support, support in crises, and general affect toward presidents. In addition, they added a Likert scale evaluation of the approval of President Johnson to their version of the approval-disapproval question. Similar appropriate measures taken from national samples and applied to the purposes of the present study would more clearly characterize presidential popularity and provide a more sensitive measure of change in popularity levels.

Additional measures of presidential approval need to be sought on specific issues and actions. Mueller (1973) found that the public was likely to rally to the president's support in times of foreign crises but less likely to do so

for domestic crises. Measurement of presidential popularity needs to include specific policy items directly connected to the president, yielding not only a direct comparison between domestic and foreign issues, but a further means of sorting out differential impact of predictor variables.

A second problem lies with the concept of presidential power. Sperlich (1969) in schematizing Neustadt's original argument pointed out that persuasion is emphasized almost to the exclusion of other kinds of power. Sperlich noted the difficulties with this approach and argued that the power to command had been unnecessarily restricted and that referent power -- power based on attraction or identification -- had been largely ignored. The present schema accounts for the transmission of the presidential image through the media but it does not directly address the question of the charismatic leader. Eisenhower's popularity was more resistent to the vicissitudes of political life, remaining high in the face of recession, scandal, and civil unrest. His popularity did not go unaffected, it simply was not affected as much as similar incidents affected the popularity of other presidents. Eisenhower may have been wiser at presenting his case to the public, but the emphasis laid on the media by his successors both in terms of staff and organization belies that explanation. It is more plausible that the war-hero aura which Eisenhower brought to the office helped maintain his high popularity throughout both terms.

Although Sperlich and Neustadt speak of loyalty or identification in terms of a president's staff or cabinet, they do not stress concern with identification of the general public with the president as a source of power. Popular writing about President Kennedy is filled with references to his power of personal attraction, and some indication of the potential power of the public's identification with the president of the moment emerged from the massive emotional reaction of the nation to his tragic death and the resultant public funeral. Not only do we need to ask why presidents are supported and what variables in the audience predispose support or opposition to the president, we also need to assess individual presidents in terms of image or charisma. As Neustadt (1960, p. 94) noted, the image of an individual as president develops after he becomes president and the candidate image is not sustained once the candidate is elected. A new presidential image is formed. Measures of image have been developed for candidates and systematically applied during election campaigns. Similar measures can be applied to incumbents. The construction and analysis of semantic differential scales utilizing standard factor analysis procedures and following the extensive literature on candidate evaluation would contribute substantially to describing the impact of personal attributes on the dimensions of presidential popularity and power. Tentative steps have been taken in this direction (Singleton, 1977).

In addition to the conceptualization of presidential power, there are difficulties with measurement of presidential power. A direct measure of presidential power needs to be devised in order to test the notion that presidential popularity results in presidential power. Edwards' (1976) assessment of the impact of presidential popularity on Congress provides a first step in this direction, but additional measures and considerably more study are required to firmly establish the power linkages among the components of the schema.

To this point we have restricted the discussion to Figure 3. The larger model also provides a number of additional concerns. Operationalizing portions of the model would require the continuing observation of the president in situ. However, some additional portions of the schema can be tested from publicly observable data. One of the components of the wider schema (see Figure 1, p. 14) that lends itself to further examination is the presidential teaching of realism.

Presidential teaching of realism is a combination of word and deed. Public support cannot be won by rhetorical flourishes offered in the face of contradictory actions. Recent president's, most notably Johnson and Nixon, developed "credibility gaps" as a result of the failure of their words to remain consonant with their actions or promises. President Johnson continued to urge an optimistic appraisal of a deteriorating military position in Southeast Asia. President Nixon developed a pattern of saying one thing and doing

the opposite. He declared his innocence in the Watergate scandal, but his actions belied his words. He promised full disclosure but blocked testimony from his staff. His promise of a full and independent investigation was followed by the "Saturday Night Massacre", and the dismissal of the man who symbolized that investigation. His stance on executive privilege, the withholding of the tapes and the ill-advised firings, in conjunction with continued assertions from former members of his staff that he was involved in a cover-up of the scandal, eroded his popularity and finally forced his abdication.

Measuring consonance of word and action is difficult given the complexity of both foreign and domestic policy and the utilization of such techniques as "jawboning" for the purpose of establishing public positions as leverage in private negotiations. However, a content analysis of the public pronouncements of the president compared to the reports of his actions would provide the basis for the construction of a measure, perhaps a credibility index, of the consonance of presidential promise and performance.

The wider schema offers additional difficulties in the form of individual presidential personality attributes. Much of the ability of the president to make proper decisions depends on matters that involve individual temperament, personality and experience. The president's interior resources, selfhelp mechanisms, and power orientation derive from the

president's prior political life and personal resources. Barber (1972) explored the ramifications of personality attributes on the performance of presidents, viewing performance as a function of personal style and world view. Although such attributes are, to some degree, observable and measureable, the impact of individual personality on the exercise of power is the portion of the schema least amenable to empirical test. This portion of the schema may have to be evaluated retrospectively as the required data become available for historical analysis. However, the close historical analysis performed by Barber with its prescient judgement of Nixon's performance augurs well for alternative evaluations of this portion of the schema.

In summation what has been suggested is conceptual clarification of a number of the components of the schema including presidential power and presidential popularity. This reconceptualization leads in turn to the need for the development of more sophisticated measures for the components. In addition, there is a need to systematically apply many of the research techniques and procedures developed for the study of candidates to the study of incumbents.

Implications for Policy

The findings from the study add to a growing body of empirical data that points to a direct media coverage popularity linkage. The import of this literature for policymakers should be clear, particularly since this linkage

seems to be recognized by politicians, as President Nixon's widely documented attempt to control media coverage attests. Although Section 315 of the Communications Act of 1934 provides safeguards for politicians competing in campaigns, and the Fairness Doctrine assures that most controversial issues receive reasonably balanced treatment, there is little to prevent the president from dominating the media during his tenure. Presidential proclamations are not normally treated as controversial issues for the purposes of the Fairness Doctrine, and there is no legal mechanism which allows the party out of power to respond directly to the president on controversial policy matters. Minow, Martin and Mitchell (1973) argue for a modification of existing regulations in favor of a system that would effectively balance the president's domination of the media. They suggest that Section 315 should be expanded to provide response time for the major out-party representatives to offset presidential broadcasts that occur within ten months of presidential elections and ninety days of congressional elections. In addition, they urge increased congressional exposure including live coverage of the most important deliberations of that body. They argue that additional steps should be taken to provide increased coverage of the Supreme Court. None of these modifications argue for reduced access for the president. The president must have access to the media, including television, in order to function effectively. The modifications of the present regulations would only insure broader

access to all major political interests, a condition that can only be viewed as desirable for a democratic form of government. The present study in conjunction with the findings from Brody and Page (1972) and Haight and Brody (1976) and Edwards (1976) lend credence to the Minow, Martin and Mitchell position.

The import of political events, including presidential activity is translated to the public through the media, especially through television. The present study adds a tentative step toward the understanding of the relationship between coverage of the president and the impact of that coverage. In spite of the small data base the predictor variables perform well for the Ford term and with some success for the more complex Nixon term. The findings offer encouragement for the continuation of this line of research, continued examination of the Neustadt-Sperlich schema and implications for policy formation in relation to the president's usage of the media.

The question about the sensitivity of the procedure needs resolving. Further research needs to be done to determine the proper approach to modeling the impact of presidential coverage. Whether the content is transient, cumulative or a combination of these and other characteristics deserves further attention. The data base needs to be broadened. Clearly great care must be exercised when conclusions are drawn from a data base as small as the present study.

Experience has shown that what seem to be substantial findings often melt away when examined over longer time spans. This fact, coupled with the mixed findings from this study, demands further investigation. As additional data become available, the scope of the investigation can be broadened with procedures that have been refined with application.

Given President Carter's meteoric rise and his sophisticated and skillful utilization of the media, the questions examined in this study become more poignant than ever. The need to study the news coverage-presidential popularity link and the general role of the media in political power increases as the electronic media continue to dominate as the primary information channel for most Americans.

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APPENDIX A

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL FROM JANUARY 1, 1972 TO JULY 1, 1976

APPENDIX A

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL FROM JANUARY 1, 1972 TO JULY 1, 1976

Nixon Approval

	Interview Dates	Percentage Approval
	1972	
1.	January 7-10	49
2.	February 4-7	53
3.	March 3-5	56
4.	March 24-27	53
5.	May 26-29	61
6.	June 16-19	60
7.	June 23-26	56
8.	December 8-11	59
	1973	
9.	January 12-15	51
10.	January 26-29	68
11.	February 16-19	65
12.	March 30 - April 2	59
13.	April 6-9	54
14.	April 27-30	48
15.	May 4-7	45
16.	May 11-14	44
17.	June 1-4	44
18.	June 22-25	45
19.	July 6-9	40
20.	August 3-6	31
21.	August 17-19	38
22.	September 7-10	35
23.	September 21-24	32
24.	October 6-8	30
25.	October 19-22	27
26.	November 2-5	27
27.	November 30 - December 3	31
28.	December 7-10	29

Nixon Approval

	Interview Dates	Percentage Approval
	1974	
29.	January 4-7	27
30.	January 18-21	26
31.	February 1-4	28
32.	February 8-11	27
33.	February 15-18	27
34.	February 22-25	25
35.	March 1-4	25
36.	March 8-11	26
37.	March 15-18	26
38.	March 29 - April 1	26
39.	April 12-15	25
40.	May 31 - June 3	28
41.	June 21-24	26
42.	August 2-5	24

Ford Approval

	1974	
43.	August 16-19	71
44.	September 6-9	66
45.	September 27-30	50
46.	October 11-14	52
47.	October 18-21	55
48.	November 8-11	47
49.	November 15-18	48
50.	December 6-9	42
	1975	
51.	January 10-13	37
52.	January 31 - February 3	39
53.	February 28 - March 3	39
54.	March 7-10	38
55.	March 28-31	37
56.	April 4-7	44
57.	April 18-21	39
58.	May 2-5	40
59.	May 30 - June 2	51
60.	June 27-30	52
61.	August 1-4	45
62.	August 15-18	46
63.	September 5-8	47
64.	September 12-15	47

Ford Approval

	Interview Dates	Percentage Approval
65.	October 3-6	47
66.	October 17-20	47
67.	October 31 - November 3	44
68.	November 21-24	41
69.	December 5-8	46
70.	December 12-15	39
	1976	
71.	January 2-5	46
72.	January 23-26	45
73.	January 30 - February 2	46
74.	February 27 - March 1	48
75.	March 19-21	50
76.	April 9-12	48
77.	May 21-24	47
78.	June 11-14	45

APPENDIX B

CODING INSTRUCTIONS

PRESIDENTIAL POWER STUDY

APPENDIX B

CODING INSTRUCTIONS

PRESIDENTIAL POWER STUDY

Coding for the Presidential Power study will be a relatively easy and straightforward task. There are only eight categories to code. The categories are: Date, Network, Prominence, Amount, Compilation, Presidential Positive, Presidential Negative, and Spokesmen. The decisions will require two judgements on the part of the coders. One is whether to code the story; the other is Presidential Positive (or Negative). The Compilation category will be checked when it is impossible to determine from the data whether (or how much of) the story under consideration is positive or negative. A Compilation tape will be requested from the Vanderbilt Library for further analysis of these stories.

The Data

The data for this study will come from the "Television News Index and Abstracts" published by Vanderbilt University. The abstracts have proven sufficient for the coding of most stories. The abstracts yield the following information:

Date, Network, Time, Amount, Spokesmen, and a description of content which is, in most cases, sufficient to determine whether the story is positive or negative.

Procedure

The basic unit of analysis is the amount of coverage expressed in seconds. This unit was chosen because news stories often contain some Positive and some Negative material. Each news amount is defined by topic and source. It is the unit of news pertaining to a single topic originating from a single spokesman. Some examples will prove helpful. If the topic of a story is the annual meeting of the NAACP and the first two sentences of the story state that the meeting was held and that President Ford attended, these two statements would comprise one amount and be coded Presidential Positive. If the next two sentences report a negative response by Wilson, this is amount two and is Presidential negative. NUMBER EACH ITEM ON THE ABSTRACT AND ON THE CODE SHEET. (1. Ford attends NAACP. 2. Negative response by Wilson) and so on. This will allow efficient encoding of the comp tapes. If the entire story is a general description of Ford's day, i.e., a round of meetings, etc., that entire story will be coded as one amount, Presidential Positive.

CODE ONLY THOSE STORIES THAT MENTION FORD BY NAME, MENTION HIS FAMILY BY NAME, OR MENTION SOME WORD THAT IS DIRECTLY

EQUATABLE TO FORD. TWO SUCH WORDS WOULD BE THE WHITE HOUSE (AS IN THE WHITE HOUSE SAID TODAY...) AND THE FORD ADMINISTRATION (AS IN THE FORD ADMINISTRATION SAID TODAY...). DO NOT CODE SPOKESMAN OUTSIDE OF STORIES IN WHICH FORD IS NAMED.

CATEGORY INSTRUCTIONS

Date

Enter the network in the second column.

Prominence

Enter the beginning and ending time of each story in the third column. A representative entry would be: 5:30:30 to 5:32:20.

Amount

Subtract the ending time from the beginning time and enter the difference IN SECONDS. For example, 1 minute 20 seconds will be entered as 80. Enter in the fourth column.

Spokesman

Enter the Spokesman's name. Enter in the fifth column. Count the number of spokesmen in each story and enter that number to the right of the story on the line of the last item coded. For example:

Vets praise Ford
Ford Awards medal
Simon says administration super
Zarb says don't be fuelish 2

This number represents the spokesman score of that story. If there are no spokesmen, no number need be added.

Compilation

Evaluate the story for positiveness or negativeness. If no determination can be made enter check in sixth column.

Presidential Positive

Enter the amount of time in seconds in the seventh column.

Presidential Negative

Enter the amount in seconds in the eighth column.

PRESIDENTIAL POSITIVE

As a general statement of the category, all stories that report the president or his administration in a favorable light will be classified as presidential positive. Stories that mention Ford and originate with the president, his family, his staff, administration members, cabinet members, and political advisers will normally be considered presidential positive since these stories are for the most part under presidential control. Code only the story! Do not anticipate reaction! For example: Betty Ford's remarks about her daughter's sex life would be coded presidential positive since it originated with a member of the family. Negative reaction to the statement would be coded presidential negative.

Common sources for presidential positive stories would be:

the president
president's family
presidential staff
cabinet
administration officers
Senate
House of Representatives
political campaign staff
party members
ambassadors, etc.

PRESIDENTIAL NEGATIVE

As a general statement of the category, all stories that oppose the president, his administration (when he is directly named) or his policies (when he is directly named) will be classified as presidential negative. The stories may originate anywhere but common sources would be:

the cabinet
administration officers (especially those disaffected or quitting)
Senate
House of Representatives
opposing party members
political opponents

The following are common examples of presidential negative stories. 1) a congressman opposes Ford's refusal to bail out New York City. 2) Negative reaction to Ford speech and so on.

1. Judge the tenor of the story. Leads will help here.

2. Some stories originating within the administration will be negative, e.g., Schlesinger's opposition to detente.

3. Two questions are helpful to ask. Did the president control the content of this story? Does it oppose his views?

4. Again, do not anticipate reaction. Judge the content and the source.

5. Read the coding instructions each time before you work on the coding.

6. Thank you very much.

DLS