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Inaugural Addresses, Framing Theory, and the Impact on American Perceptions of the Presidency

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Inaugural Addresses, Framing Theory, and the Impact on American Perceptions of the

Presidency

by

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Abstract

This study uses the inaugural addresses given by both Donald Trump and Joseph Biden as the source texts by which to examine the sentiment portrayed by particular framed messages. Framing theory stands as the central framework in which this study was conducted. The objective was to identify how political speeches like that of the presidential inaugural address frame messages to citizens and inform the audience on what their presidency may look like. This study utilizes a quantitative analysis using LIWC software followed by a qualitative discourse analysis. A thorough examination of the history of inaugural addresses, preceding presidencies, and each president-elect's campaign history were conducted in order to better understand the context surrounding the 2017 and 2021 inaugural addresses. This study sought to see which inaugural address utilizes more unifying language as well as positive emotional sentiment throughout their respective speeches. The results showed that the 2021 inaugural address utilized more unifying language rhetoric than that of the 2017 inaugural address, whereas the 2017 address utilized greater amounts of positively associated word choice to produce greater positive emotional sentiment.

Chapter One: Introduction

The 2021 United States presidential inauguration drew in 33.8 million viewers, 3.16 million more than the 2017 presidential inauguration (Stoll, 2021). This vast amount of viewership illustrates the significant power the beginning of a presidency holds over the American people. These numbers reflect the inaugural speech's importance in political opinion formation in mainstream American news. The inaugural address and its messages, reflect an increasingly important aspect of political communication. For many, this is the first they hear of what a new presidency and regime has to offer the nation. The tone, words, and inflection all reflect on what is to be expected in the upcoming four years. This research is integral not only for citizens to remain informed on these carefully crafted messages but also to understand how these speeches are indicative of the current political system (Chung & Park, 2010).

This study aims to inform both an academic audience and the general public on the intricacies of language usage in presidential speech. The 2017 and 2021 inaugural speeches are worth researching due to the high tensions between the two leading American parties and both the electoral processes that preceded them. The Democrats and Republicans have had boiling tensions over the years following major ideological differences and global affairs. An analysis of the inaugural addresses of Republican president Donald Trump and then Democratic president Joseph Biden will allow researchers to observe how these major political party leaders combat each other but also attempt to unify the public through framed messages for the sake of the nation. While also allowing the general public to garner a greater understanding of how message framing aims to impact their beliefs and ideas.

This research will use a between method triangulated approach as defined by other similar studies in order to determine the effects of these messages based on their structure and similarities/ differences. In order to understand the history behind the inaugural speech, how speeches have been analyzed in the past, and the importance of this research work, the literature review will provide an in-depth examination of past and current materials as they relate to this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Background

Inaugural addresses aim to evoke strong emotional reactions toward the new change in leadership within a country. Whether for good or for bad, these speeches serve as an initial piece of propaganda that, often, can set the tone for the presidency. Within the context of the United States, inaugural addresses have been present throughout its political history since the very first elected president (Chung & Park, 2010). The main focus of these addresses has shifted over the course of 200 years and each inaugural address represents a piece of American political culture within its time (Korzi, 2004). Newly elected presidents first began these speeches by commemorating their victory and espousing the values of their party and over time this translated directly into addressing national problems or the new vision within the oval office (Korzi, 2004). Once an election has been won, a president must then address the nation in a way that expresses his/her plans and policies as they come into power while also being packaged neatly in a speech that highlights their dreams, hopes, and ideologies (Chung & Park, 2010). The inaugural speech is also cited as a preserved portion of the historical record, one in which every president understands that his/her word will echo as a reflection of themselves throughout their presidency and beyond (Whissell & Sigelman, 2001).

It is because of this nature that we examine every facet of these speeches in order to understand what a president represents and how he presents himself. In the US, these speeches are published, recorded, and played back for all ears to hear. As time has passed, inaugural speeches have been recorded down in newspapers all the way to the modern age of social media.

With that in mind, inaugural speeches juggle responding to a variety of audiences, from the public, to politicians, to historians (Whissell & Sigelman, 2001).

As covered by Chung and Park (2010), the literary style of inaugural addresses reflects personal expression of the speaker and helps characterize the speaker to the audience. In the case of the two presidents analyzed within this current research, Donald Trump's literary expression stands out as full of gestures and changes in inflection, whereas Joseph Biden's is more reserved. This, too, can impact the reach of each president's speech as the nonverbal aspects of public speech can make a great deal of difference in perception. Literary style can also be affected through the selective use of a quote, text, or author (Chung & Park, 2010). By specifically selecting some outside form of expression, the speaker draws from it a greater image or amount of charisma that can thus be attributed to themselves.

Presidential inaugural speeches are often cited within political communication literature, but these studies tend to focus on how the political systems have evolved and where these addresses come into play (Korzi, 2004). This study will instead focus on the contents of two presidential inauguration addresses and the differences or similarities within each address to the nation.

In order to understand the importance of political speech, it is also important to examine the presidential speeches that have influenced our modern political landscape. During George W. Bush's first administration (2000-2004), a key speech was delivered following the announcement of the US going to war with Iraq on March 19, 2003 (Hickman, 2011). This speech was given during a key moment in American history following the acts of 9/11 and the announcement of the war on terror. Hickman's (2011) study on the importance of frames as utilized by the media pre-speech and post-speech, discusses how the use of these frames directly impacted public

perception of the war both before and after hearing the speech. This highlights the impact that a president's message can have on the public and people's perceptions.

Inaugural addresses especially, have been analyzed and examined in a variety of ways. Belisle et al. (2018) analyze each of the first inaugural addresses from 1993 to 2017 under the theoretical framework of relational frame theory, where verbal behavior involves responding to events in terms of their relationship to other events. In this study, the researchers analyzed a combined 10 minutes of each address under the relational frames of coordination, opposition, distinction, comparison, hierarchical, temporal, spatial, conditionality/causality, and deictic (Belisle et al., 2018). Their findings showed that presidential inaugural addresses differed most under coordinated and distinctive frames. Coordinated frames were indicative of drawing similarities between events or entities, while distinctive frames illustrated a clear distinction between groups or entities being addressed. Trump's address was found to most utilize the distinctive frame and corresponds with the idea of Trump's presidency being harrowed as isolationist (Belisle et al., 2018), while his predecessor, Barack Obama, was found to emphasize political change primarily through the lens of coordinated frames (Belisle et al., 2018). Hickman (2011) notes Elmer Cornwell Jr.'s statement that the president has an innate necessity for captivating the American public. Cornwell (1965) states:

> The president's prime weapon for influencing policymaking is his ability to command and influence a national audience. Since little is likely to be done constitutionally to strengthen the president's hand, his ability to lead and mold public opinion, for all its inherent limitations, remains his prime reliance.

This notion underscores the importance of the inaugural speech, and consequently framing theory, in assessing the president's relationship with the nation's citizens. If commanding the

national audience garners the president's influence and trust, then it serves a much greater purpose than many may realize.

Presidential Speech Research

The inaugural speech has been analyzed under various presidencies and across time. Korzi (2004) analyzes the inaugural address as belonging under one of three models throughout time- constitutional (before the 1830s), party (1830s-1890s), and plebiscitary (roughly 19000s). The idea of the "rhetorical president" persists across literature as a commonly explored aspect of presidential speech (Ceaser et al., 1981). The rhetoric surrounding the presidency allows the president to induce their "character" or "persona" onto the public, especially during times of crisis (Ceaser et al., 1981). Rhetoric becomes heavily utilized and displayed during such time, for example, in the mid-1960s amidst the government distrust and Vietnam war, President Nixon attempts to remain calm and employ effective rhetoric amid outcries against him (Ceaser et al., 1981). The rise of the rhetorical presidency stems from a modern doctrine of presidential leadership, modern mass media, and modern presidential campaign (Ceaser et al., 1981). These three factors can be seen similarly in the research conducted by Wattenberg (2004) who attributes the changes in presidential media to the changing of generations and the availability of broadcasts. Wattenberg (2004) concludes that the power the presidency contains to motivate and persuade the nation has dwindled over time however, the expansive of media networks allows for less of the narrative to be controlled by the few top outlets.

Framing Theory

Chung and Park (2010) are among many researchers who utilize rhetoric as the grounding framework for their research in examining inaugural speeches of presidential candidates, but fewer have explored the use of other related theoretical frameworks such as

framing. Framing theory is a long-standing mass communication theory that presents the media as creating frames of reality that audiences can then accept as reality (Scheufele, 1999). This theory seeks to understand how the presentation of issues guides public opinion on a subject matter and predicts frames to exert a strong influence on preferences (Shulman & Sweitzer, 2018). It has established itself as an integral theoretical framework within the mass communications field and related disciplines. William Gamson (1989) describes a frame as a central organizing idea that makes sense of relevant events and suggests what is the issue at hand. In other words, taking an event and choosing what emphasis (or lack thereof) should be utilized to convey a message to a specific public (Gamson, 1989).

Frames induce the public to filter their own perspectives and accept the information fed to them (Kuypers, 2009). Kuypers (2009) notes that we rarely notice the omission of information and instead rely upon and readily accept information that is easily accessible to us.

There are two types of frames present in communication: emphasis and equivalency frames (Shulman & Sweitzer, 2018). Emphasis frames emphasize potentially relevant considerations that speakers -in this context politicians, lead individuals to focus on when forming opinions (Druckman, 2004). Emphasis framing within political communication thus evaluates the content that is being communicated (Shulman & Sweitzer, 2018). This method of framing varies from equivalency framing. Druckman (2004) states that emphasis frames qualitatively frame potentially relevant considerations, whereas equivalency frames involve using logically equivalent frames in order to encourage a specific consideration. The current study falls under the emphasis frame of communication, as it explores the content of two American inaugural addresses.

Within political communication, framing operates on individuals through three different routes: active, reflective, and selective (Scheufele, 1999). The active route entails an individual willingly seeking out additional sources to supplement the information given to them (Scheufele, 1999). Scheufele refers to this type of individual as perceiving the mass-mediated information as incomplete or not sharing the full scope of the story. The active route requires higher levels of processing than the subsequent routes. The reflective route then has individuals who think about the information presented to them or talk to others about it in order to understand the material (Scheufele, 1999). Finally, the selective route includes those who scan mass media for only the information relevant to them and ignore any irrelevant content presented to them (Scheufele, 1999). Thus, a major political speaker such as the president, should frame their message in a way to appease the three routes the public operates under in order to maximize the effectiveness of these framed messages. They may then frame their speeches to define problems, diagnose causes, make judgments, or suggest solutions for the American public to digest and accept (Kuypers, 2009).

Cheng (2015) addresses how framing theory settles itself between media effects and rhetorical strategy. Framing theory has embedded itself within political discourse on both ends, both from the perspective of the speaker and from the lens of the citizens trying to make sense of what they are being told (Cheng, 2015). This theory thus becomes integral to creating the imagery and tone set forth by inaugural speeches into the American public's mind. At its very core, inaugural addresses and events are setting forth a curated image and branding of new leadership to its country's citizens.

Throughout the years long campaign trails of each candidate there were many promises made on stage, in interviews, and through social media. Once the election had been won, both

President Biden and Trump were set to address these promises to the American people on inauguration day. The precedent set forth by what is addressed in this first address will also help illustrate to the American public whether or not the president has lived up to the expectations they have set up for themselves throughout their campaign.

Previous Presidencies

Prior to Trump or Biden's presidency was the impactful presidency of Barack Obama, the first Black President. Obama's administration dealt with many national crises and issues of its own. This administration, and the backlash it received, also directly led to Trump's campaign trail, and has immensely influenced the current political landscape.

Obama's administration began in 2008 at the time of The Great Recession and spanned over a multitude of monumental events in American history. Throughout Obama's terms he had initiated multiple executive actions that have received criticism from the use of killing strikes via drone warfare, the Affordable Care Act (commonly referred to as Obamacare), and the use of American armed forces in nations like Libya (Rudalevige, 2016). Although Obama issued far fewer executive actions than his predecessors, Obama's presidency had a significant impact on the American people and the subsequent landscape his successor would inherit (Rudalevige, 2016). Throughout his presidency, the US saw everything from the federal legalization of gay marriage to the increase in domestic terrorism. One event that sticks out in particular was the Charleston church shooting that occurred in June of 2015 (*Dylan Roof's Confession,* 2019). This mass shooting was racially charged and took place at this location due to its long-standing history within the Black community. The assailant intended for this event to incite a race war as detailed in a racist manifesto he had left behind (*Dylan Roof's Confession,* 2019).

America's racial tensions have been boiling for years now, the largest stemming from the politicization of the Black Lives Matter movement. As time led into the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, the public was met with a variety of opinions and campaigns that centered on racial injustice and white privilege and individual opinions on each.

Donald Trump

Donald Trump has made a large name for himself in politics as well as in Hollywood. After taking over his father's organization, Trump began taking on many real estate and construction projects from resorts to golf courses to residential buildings (*Donald J. Trump,* 2021). In 2004, Trump launched the television show Apprentice which aired for 11 years (*Donald J. Trump,* 2021). Trump's show ended shortly after he announced his presidential run. His life has been in the public eye for decades as he married and divorced women, faced multiple allegations and bankruptcy, and voiced opinions on a multitude of topics from pop culture to 9/11 (*Donald J. Trump,* 2021). Throughout the decades, Trump has managed to retain public interest in his many ventures. In June of 2015, Donald Trump announced his bid for the presidency in a long speech that infamously included the following statement:

> When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you, they're not sending you. They're sending people who have lots of problems and they're bringing their problems with us. They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists, and some, I assume, are good people (Armstrong, 2015).

These statements, coinciding with the timing of the Charleston church shooting, reflected a different perspective of race and ethnicity in the US. While many found these statements to be brazen, many also related to them. Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again" which promised a return to the days of American glory also made great waves in the political

atmosphere. Trump has claimed that he produced the term and was the first politician to use it. However, the campaign slogan that suggests America has been going downhill, actually originated from fellow Republican Ronald Reagan, who used the term throughout speeches and on merchandise (Margolin, 2017). Reagan's rise to the presidency and American politic strikes glaring similarities to Trump's path as both come from outside of the realm of politics and from the world of Hollywood or television. The use of this statement, set the tone for the approaching election, as Trump had successfully created an impressive branding surrounding his campaign and ideals. As the midterm and final elections sped forward, many of Trump's supporters would take this phrase and use it online, on merchandise, and anywhere else possible.

As the 2016 presidential race continued, the Trump campaign centered on quite a few major promises, most notably focusing on immigration and the economy. Trump's 2016 campaign promised to build a border wall between the United States and Mexico, and to have that project funded by Mexico, this was also followed by a call to ban Muslims from entering the USA, "until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on" (Qiu, 2016). Trump also sought to overturn many Obama-era initiatives such as DACA and Obamacare (The Poynter Institute). In terms of the economy, Trump also promised to increase manufacturing jobs within the US, lower the business tax rate, and grow the economy by 4% a year (The Poynter Institute).

In his inauguration speech, Trump lumped together many of his promises in vague dog whistles. Trump remarked,

> Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs will be made to benefit American workers and American families. We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs (Staff, 2017).

Thus, he reiterated his stance on these matters as being his key focus to be addressed explicitly within his presidency. Many of Trump's campaign promises were brought up multiple times, some through allusion, and others direct callbacks, for example,

> We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth, and we will bring back our dreams. We will build new roads and highways and bridges and airports and tunnels, and railways, all across our wonderful nation. We will get our people off of welfare and back to work, rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor (Staff, 2017).

This statement, given later into Trump's inaugural speech, touches on a variety of issues important to the base he had built in his run, including immigration, the economy, and the American workforce while also specifying other aspects of his campaign promises, such as his promise to invest in American infrastructure (The Poynter Institute). In his inaugural address, Trump also claimed, "We will follow two simple rules: buy American, and hire American" (Staff, 2017). This statement directly reflecting one of his key campaign promises to create more American manufacturing jobs and improve the nation's workforce and economy.

According to The Poynter Institute, throughout the entirety of Trump's campaign, Trump made a total of 76 campaign promises and kept 24 of those promises while compromising on 23 of them (*Latest Promises*). Those that he kept in full included: making no cuts to Social Security, using U.S. steel for infrastructure projects, limiting legal immigration, and imposing a travel ban, leaving the Paris climate agreement, and creating a 10% repatriation tax (*Latest Promises*). Many of the compromises made, were still consistent with Trump's goal, including the call for tax cuts across all sectors and cutting the business tax rate. While Trump's original goal was to cut the rate from 35% to 15%, he did succeed in cutting the rate down to 21% (*Latest Promises*).

Trump's own website states, "Over the past four years, my administration delivered for Americans of all backgrounds like never before" (*Save America*). This statement illustrates Trump's belief that he had delivered on more promises than any other president before him.

Trump has also been admonished by allegations of corruption and collusion. Such as his constant usage of properties he owns for official business, allowing foreign officials and groups to gain exclusive access to the president as they reside on his properties or the appointment of his daughter Ivanka Trump as senior advisor to the president (CREW, 2021). In 2020, the US Senate also concluded that the Trump presidential campaign had colluded with Russia in the 2016 election (Hananel, 2020). Trump also made history as the first American president to be impeached twice. The first impeachment stated that Trump had abused his power and obstructed Congress and was opposed by a united front of Republicans before passing (Fandos & Shear, 2021). The second impeachment followed the Capitol Insurrection; although within the final days of Trump's presidency, Congress voted to impeach on three main points: Trump's false claim he won the 2020 election, his incitement of the riot, and his actions attempting to overturn the election results (Phillips & Stevenson, 2021).

Throughout Trump's singular term, many attributed the embrace of nationalism and emboldening of white supremacy to his inflammatory policies and actions. Throughout his presidency, Trump had been at the helm of this resurgence as his "Make America Great Again" campaign prevailed. Trump's policies and actions upheld and fueled "whitelash" which argues that white supremacy, capitalism, and the patriarchy are a part of the fabric of American society (Embrick et al., 2020). "Whitelash" also states that racism, classism, and sexism are embedded within America's foundation (Embrick et al., 2020). Trump's opinions toward immigration and people of color have influenced attitudes and actions from the institutional level down to the

individual. As more individuals feel safe to proclaim their racist ideologies and attitudes, domestic terrorism has been more broadly visible throughout the United States.

Joseph Biden

Joseph Biden has had a long history within US politics. First elected to office at the young age of 29, then-senator Biden represented the state of Delaware and passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and has sat as both Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee (*Joe Biden: The president* 2021). When previous president Obama ran for office in the 2008 election, Obama chose Biden as his vice-presidential running mate (*Joe Biden: The president* 2021). When running for re-election, Biden stayed at the right-hand side of the Obama administration. Although many speculated Biden would run in the 2016 presidential election (and against then-candidate Trump) Biden declined due to the recent death of his eldest son, Beau. However, Biden would later formally announce his candidacy for the presidency in April 2019 (Taylor, 2019).

Amidst the tumultuous political landscape created by Donald Trump, much of Biden's campaign promises were directly challenging or overturning Trump-era laws, plans, and actions. Biden initially ran under the promise of "Build America Back Better" by rebuilding immigrant communities and the immigration system, tackling climate change, investing in infrastructure, and making healthcare affordable for all (*Build America Back Better*). Biden's campaign website also features direct calls to action to many religious and minority communities vowing to create safer spaces for worshipping and housing (*Build America Back Better*). The many campaign promises made early in Biden's campaign trail distinguished him from his Republican opponent and then president, Donald Trump. However, the sudden distress of COVID-19, created a brand-new threat to the standard way of life.

COVID-19

Biden's predecessor, former-president Trump treated the news of COVID-19 with skepticism and disdain. Prior to the discovery of COVID-19, the Trump administration had disbanded the White House pandemic response team in 2018 (*Timeline of Trump's Coronavirus Responses* 2021). In the early days of chaos in March, Trump tweeted about the coronavirus calling it "the Chinese virus" (Kurtzman, 2022). This remark was linked to a rise in anti-Asian hashtags and online rhetoric following his usage of the term as people began using #chinesevirus (Kurtzman, 2022).

Trump left the COVID-19 response plan in the hands of individual states with no national or federally developed plan securely in place (Kates et al., 2020). The Trump administration was ill-prepared to handle a pandemic and the president's public responses did little to provide factual information on the virus or measures of protection. By April of 2020, the Trump administration began pushing for the reopening of states and public schools (Kates et al., 2020).

As the USA and the world were discovering more about the virus day by day, Trump hesitated to support the WHO and CDC deeming multiple facets of public health a "hoax" by the Democrats or "fake news" (*Timeline of Trump's Coronavirus Responses* 2021). Trump openly disregarded the mask mandate and proclaimed the use of the untested drug, hydroxychloroquine as an effective treatment for COVID-19 (Kates et al., 2020). The Trump administration did offer the American people COVID relief checks, but many complained of the small amount and lack of continuous monetary support from the government. Trump's second term agenda proposed to develop a COVID vaccine by the end of 2020, return to normal in 2021, make all critical supplies and medicines available for healthcare workers, and to refill stockpiles and prepare for future pandemics (Kates et al., 2020). However, by the end of his presidency, Trump had not

developed or released any national plan for vaccine rollout. Much of Trump's statements and actions relating to COVID-19 planted doubt and fear in the American people as they encountered a threat unlike any other.

The devastation of COVID-19 meant the Biden campaign also had to switch gears to include a new federal plan to combat the global pandemic in addition to his promises surrounding economic prosperity and immigration reform. Biden leveraged the moment to enhance his Build Back Better campaign. The core of Biden's new campaign promises then centered on COVID-19 testing and tracing, producing more American-made PPE equipment, following CDC guidelines, preparing for vaccine and treatment rollout, and issuing a nationwide mask mandate (*Beat COVID-19*). Biden's campaign was met with addressing ongoing political affairs as well as the global virus, which resulted in an even greater tumultuous election than was to be expected. Biden was able to institute a federal mask mandate, rollout vaccines, and deliver COVID-19 tests nationally. However, Biden's promise to offer an additional $2,000 to the American people in COVID relief checks was left unfulfilled and mocked, as he only provided a one-time check of $600, considered as an addition to the previous amount of relief offered to Americans (Adamczyk, 2021).

As the 2020 election results were counted and then recounted, Donald Trump had received 74 million votes, more than any other presidential candidate had ever received prior (2021). However, Joseph Biden had received 81 million votes, making him the presidential candidate with the most votes within the same record-breaking election (2021). With such a cataclysmic turn out, the nation truly felt divided once more. The divide between Democrats and Republicans seemed far and wide as the USA was nearly split in half throughout this election cycle. Then-president Trump immediately called for a recount and began spreading the lie that

the election was tampered with and that he had actually won the election. The election recount confirmed that Joseph Biden had won the 2020 election.

In anger and disbelief at both the state and the presidential election results, on January 6, 2021, a group of armed terrorists led an insurrection at the US Capitol. The Capitol Insurrection involved breaking into the federal Capitol building, the chambers of members of congress, and the defacing and theft of government property. As members of congress fled to safety, President Trump stoked the fire of the terrorists by stating in a – now removed- video from the White House: "Go home. We love you. You're very special" (Booker, 2021). In the days following, three tweets made by Trump were removed from the platform. On January 8th, two days after the insurrection, Twitter suspended Trump's account after multiple, repeated violations (Booker, 2021). With an unmistakable event like this, it became obvious that white supremacy and its presence within the US, still strongly persists. The Capitol Insurrection left five dead, including a Capitol police officer, yet four days would pass before Trump ordered flags to be flown at half-staff (Booker, 2021).

On January 20, 2021, Joseph Biden was inaugurated as president of the United States. Biden gave a lengthy speech highlighting the triumphs, struggles, and long history of the Capitol of the United States, only a short few weeks after the Capitol Insurrection of January 6th. Biden referred to the US as having, "Much to repair. Much to restore. Much to heal. Much to build. And much to gain" (*Inaugural address by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr..* 2021). An indirect statement on the work to be done in the US political landscape. Later into the address, Biden states,

> -We can put people to work in good jobs. We can teach our children in safe schools. We
> can overcome this deadly virus. We can reward work, rebuild the middle class, and make

health care secure for all. We can deliver racial justice. We can make America, once

again, the leading force for good in the world (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R.*

Biden, Jr.. 2021).

This was a clear call back to many of his promises during the campaign trail. A call back that is

also reiterated much further into the speech:

We face an attack on democracy and on truth. A raging virus. Growing inequity. The

sting of systemic racism. A climate in crisis. America's role in the world. Any one of

these would be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is we face them all

at once, presenting this nation with the gravest of responsibilities (*Inaugural address by*

president Joseph R. Biden, Jr.. 2021).

Biden addressed many of his campaign promises in this one sentence, grouping these promises

together in a moving statement, issued before a television camera, standing by himself, to the

American people. Although these matters were not delved into within his inaugural address,

President Biden's framed message of unity and community was present throughout it.

In the first year of Biden's presidency, a few of his promises have been successfully

fulfilled, such as: increasing COVID-19 testing, reversing immigrant family separation policies,

rescinding the Muslim travel ban, and rejoining the Paris climate agreement (*Biden Promise*

Tracker). However, Biden has not completely reversed immigration, as the immigrant internment

camps that have been present since the Obama era and became a sore point in the Trump era, are

still running as of today. As President Biden has barely completed one full year in the White

House, none of his campaign promises can be deemed as broken or compromised, as they may

still be in the process of being passed and/or implemented. With three years left in his term as

president, there is still plenty of room for campaign promises to come to fruition or be struck down.

Given the context and history behind the inaugural speech, this study seeks to answer how the inaugural address impacts people's perception of the presidency based on the language being used. This study asks the questions:

RQ1: Which inaugural address utilizes more unifying language rhetoric towards the American people?

RQ2: Do either inaugural address utilize positively associated word choice to influence the public?

RQ3: Do both addresses utilize similar amounts of positively associated word choice throughout their speeches?

Similar Studies

This research is based upon the precedent set by similar studies. Cheng (2006) conducts a similar study analyzing the inaugural speeches of former Taiwanese president, Chen Shui-bian's speech in both 2000 and 2004. Cheng (2006) breaks down the addresses by multiple components and quantitively dissects the information present within them based on word count, date of speech, key references made, and frequency of these references. These findings illustrated the President Shui-Ban's consistent use of buzzwords assisted the framing nature of his speech. The term "people" was utilized 37 times within the 2000 inaugural speech and 41 times in the following 2004 speech, Shui-Ban used it liberally, as a unifying keyword to bring the people of the country- regardless of party- together (Cheng, 2006). Similarly, Chung and Park (2010) explore how political speech must be described, categorized, and clarified in order to understand its message. Throughout this study the frequency of personal pronouns, cognitive-process

analysis, and feeling and emotional-process analysis were calculated to determine how presidents Moo-Hyun Roh and Myung-Bak Lee each stylized their inaugural speeches (Chung & Park, 2010).

Table 3 (*Appendix A, figure 1*), focused on personal pronouns and found that the first-person plural was used most often for both presidents, as the use of the word *we*, was highly unifying and effective across voters (Chung & Park, 2010). This was also analyzed within Cheng's (2006) study, as seen in Table 2 (*Appendix A, figure 2*), which found president Shui-Ban's constant usage of *we* to be indicative of representing multiple facets of identity; from *we* as Taiwan, the new government, the citizens, etc. The overarching use of "we" over "I" first-person usage illustrates the importance of unifying words in both studies, as forming personal connections to voters is likely to lead to positive associations and agreement among the public with the new presidency.

The cognitive-process analysis categorized key phrases into 6 variables that are often utilized. The 6 variables were: Cause, Reason, Expectation, Limit, Prediction, and Conviction (Chung & Park, 2010). For example, phrases like *self-confidence* and *faith* are representative of conviction, *wisdom* and *conflict* represent reason, and *because* often used would be indicative of cause (Chung & Park, 2010). The final table of analysis was feeling and emotional process which classified the emotions elicited as either positive feelings, positive emotions, negative feelings, negative emotions, anxiety, anger, optimism, or sorrow/melancholy (Chung & Park, 2010). This focused on the frequency of positively associated words versus negatively associated words in order to classify which feelings were most often elicited.

These studies have undertaken qualitative and quantitative examinations of inaugural speeches and will serve as the basis on which this research will follow when examining the two

inaugural speeches following the 2016 and 2020 U.S. presidential election, respectively. The data achieved within these studies are indicative of the powerful nature of inaugural speeches and their ability to frame a presidency and leave a lasting impression upon the nation (Wattenberg, 2004). While these studies highlight the intricacies of the presidency in Taiwan and Korea, the US, in turn, must address where its own priorities lie and how its presidents convey this within their inaugural speeches. When conducting this study, many aspects of these groundwork studies may be utilized in order to provide an in-depth analysis of how the most recent American presidents have executed their inaugural speeches.

This study proposes multiple hypotheses in order to answer the research questions. These hypotheses seek to determine which inaugural address may present language that ignites a more unifying force unto the American people. This comes at an extremely timely point in American politics, given the current political climate and divide the nation is bearing witness to. These hypotheses present a test of difference between the two inaugural addresses as they seek to answer the research questions.

H1: The 2017 inaugural address will utilize more unifying language than the 2021 inaugural address.

H2: The 2021 address will produce more positive emotional sentiment associated with it than that of the 2017 inaugural address.

Chapter Three: Method

This study's triangulated method approach will both qualitatively examine the content of each presidential speech and quantitively examine the key concepts, word count, and frequency of word usages throughout each speech. The subject matter for this research focuses on the inaugural speeches given by American President Trump in January of 2017 and American President Biden in January of 2021.

The previous administration in which the new president is inheriting determines much of what their inaugural address and presidency will address. The end of the Obama administration saw the U.S. at the verge of a great financial period following the Great Recession of 2008, but it also saw a revamp in racism toward the president as well as within society (Weller & Duke, 2018). The Obama administration was also embroiled in the issue of gun control and police brutality (Rudalevige, 2016). Much of these issues were later passed onto the Trump administration. Coming in the wake of the first Black American presidency, Trump's presidency engaged with an audience that held negative attitudes toward the incumbent and other people of color (Dimock & Gramlich, 2022). Trump's presidency centered on a callback to conservative values and a white America, while also capitalizing on the growing distrust of the media and established politicians.

The Trump administration then brought issues of its own to light. The US was experiencing a surge of white nationalism, isolationist ideology, and the beginning of mass protests following the murder of George Floyd (Dimock & Gramlich, 2022). The tail end of the Trump administration was characterized by the economic devastation and loss of life associated

with COVID-19 (Dimock & Gramlich, 2022). Biden's longtime career as a politician was viewed negatively by many of those with distrust in the government especially those that favored Trump. The Biden administration inherited an international pandemic for which little had been accomplished at the federal level and also witnessed the issue of race at the forefront of American interest (Dimock & Gramlich, 2022). Biden's presidency thus far has taken a great interest in trying to re-integrate diversity within US politics, such as with his choice to employ Kamala Harris as his vice president, making her the first woman, who is also both Black and Asian, in the position. Biden's inaugural speech was indicative of this diverse American landscape.

For the quantitative portion of this research, the researcher will use Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count software, also known as LIWC. LIWC software was developed by researchers, Martha Francis and James Pennebaker, at the University of Texas (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). LIWC has existed for over 30 years now, with major updates to the program happening in 1997, 2007, and now in 2022 (*How it Works*). This software was used in similar previous studies, which has set the precedent for its use. LIWC is a text-analyzing software that calculates the percentage of words in a text that fall into one of its many categories, including emotions, social concerns, and parts of speech (*How it Works*).

This program has two central features- the processing component and the dictionaries (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). The "dictionary" is a map that connects psychosocial constructs and theories with words, phrases, and other linguistic constructions (Boyd et al., 2022). The program functions by searching each word in its dictionaries and if the word is found, it can then be categorized as a function word or a content word (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). A function word includes pronouns, prepositions, articles, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, and more

(Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). While content words generally consist of nouns, regular verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). An LIWC Analysis will be used to identify the emotional sentiment, pronoun usage, and frequency of terms found to be used throughout each speech. The frequency of these terms identified in this portion will corroborate the sentiments and ideas later identified in the qualitative portion. The program will pull repeated words, phrases, or themes that are present within each speech. After analyzing these texts, it will be clear what terms considerably popped up and how this impacts the framing of messages within the speech.

The qualitative portion will then consist of a discourse analysis where the key researcher manually analyzes the texts to ascertain whether each president focused on delivering campaign promises, making new promises, or building sentiment within their speeches. Utilizing framing theory, the texts will be examined for the specific framing intentions utilized throughout in order to determine the overall sentiment delineated. The qualitative portion of this research will be able to identify more nuanced aspects of speech that the quantitative cannot pick up on, this could include metaphors, similes, or other similar structures.

In order to conduct the quantitative portion of this study, LIWC software was purchased to be used as the basis for analyzing the emotional sentiment of certain key phrases as well as the frequency of specific words and word tenses. The standard LIWC-22 dictionary that is provided by the software was utilized for this study. This dictionary designates the specific words the program would search for, if it was an emotion word, and under what the category the word would then fall. A supplementary dictionary was also utilized in order to set parameters specific to this type of study.

This supplementary dictionary consists of two major categories: pronouns and emotions. Under each category is the terms that the software will scour for in each inaugural address before categorizing them as the parameters suggest. The words found under the pronoun category include first-person singular (*I, me, my, mine, myself*), first-person plural (*we, us, our, ourselves*), second-person singular (*you, your, yours, yourself*), second-person plural (*yourselves*), third-person singular (*he, him, his, himself, she, her, hers, herself, it, its, itself*), and third-person plural (*they, them, their, theirs, themselves*). The pronoun category remains the focus of this study with first-person plural, second-person singular and second-person plural acting as the unifying categories of pronouns, while first-person singular, third-person singular and third-person plural act as the divisive categories of pronouns. The emotions category then consists of two main identifiers, positive and negative emotion. There are a few general emotions listed under each to aid LIWC in identifying emotional sentiment. Under positive emotions there are many terms, including: happy, elated, proud, congratulate celebrate, and glad. Negative emotions terms include sad, depressed, fear, unhappy, angry, and afraid. A full breakdown of the codebook is available in *Appendix B*. The LIWC analysis will further categorize the emotional sentiment under positive, negative, anxious, anger, and sadness.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

Table 1 illustrates the word frequency analysis that was conducted on both the 2017 and 2021 inaugural addresses. The 15 most frequently reoccurring words used within Trump's inaugural address were: *our, we, America, you, your, American(s), their, people, country, nation, great, protected, right, president, other,* and *dreams*. While the 15 most frequently reoccurring words used within Biden's inaugural address were: *we, our, I, us, my, America, you, nation, me, democracy, American(s), people, story, unity,* and *today*. Biden's inaugural address reflects the use of many varying pronouns and addressing the nation through a myriad of ways. It should be noted that the word count for Biden's inaugural address stands at a word count of 2375 while the word count for Trump's inaugural address stands at 1464, a difference of 911 words. The difference in length between the two can attribute to some of the differences in frequency amongst word usage.

The importance of the frequency of these terms is to illustrate the focus of these speeches through the repetition of these key words. Through this, it is possible to gain an overall perspective on the type of message each president chose to impress upon the American people. The most frequently occurring words within Trump's inaugural address are aimed directly at the American people as a whole and detaches himself as a main player from most of the conversation. There it is apparent that the 2017 inaugural address's structure is fixed upon the US itself throughout time and its changes. Whereas the 2021 inaugural address is structured on the current issues present in society and the need for a fragmented society to come back together both politically and socially. The commonality of many of these terms between the two speeches

is to be expected, however the language choices reflect the themes present within each inaugural

address.

Table 1

Joseph Biden				Donald Trump	
Word	Frequency			Word	Frequency
we	88	**1**		our	49
our	43	**2**		we	48
I	33	**3**		america	19
us	27	**4**		you	15
my	20	**5**		american(s)	15
america	18	**6**		your	11
american(s)	18	**7**		their	11
you	17	**8**		people	10
nation	12	**9**		country	9
me	11	**10**		nation	6
democracy	10	**11**		great	6
people	9	**12**		protected	5
story	9	**13**		right	5
unity	8	**14**		president	5
today	8	**15**		other	5
their	8	**16**		dreams	5
president	7	**17**		bring	4
war	7	**18**		jobs	4
history	7	**19**		thank	4
days	6	**20**		god	4
stand	6	**21**		citizens	4
together	6	**22**		together	4
work	6	**23**		heart	4
day	6	**24**		today	4
truth	5	**25**		power	4
other	5	**26**		wealth	4
moment	5	**27**		day	4
children	5	**28**		left	3
power	5	**29**		millions	3
fellow	5	**30**		I	3
justice	5	**31**		united	3
peace	4	**32**		we've	3
virus	4	**33**		obama	3
god	4	**34**		government	3
good	4	**35**		bless	3
better	4	**36**		capital	3
soul	4	**37**		borders	3
face	4	**38**		families	3
country	4	**39**		countries	3
things	4	**40**		foreign	3
defend	4	**41**		nation's	3
time	4	**42**		factories	3
lost	4	**43**		national	2
love	4	**44**		good	2
great	4	**45**		forgotten	2
centuries	4	**46**		talk	2
jobs	3	**47**		success	2
right	3	**48**		washington	2
meet	3	**49**		party	2
thank	3	**50**		states	2

The LIWC analysis then consisted of analyzing pronoun usage and frequency amongst the two inaugural addresses. Table 2 below illustrates the differences in percentage of pronoun usage. Biden's 2021 inaugural address demonstrates large, repeated use of the first-person singular pronoun, at a rate of 10x more than Trump's 2017 inaugural address. Specifically, the first-person singular pronoun, *I,* appeared 33 times across Biden's inaugural address, but only 3 times within the entirety of Trump's inaugural speech. The first-person plural usage amongst both candidates is nearly identical in frequency. As shown in Table 1, the terms *we* and *our,* are the two most used words within each inaugural address ranking in first and second place for both Trump and Biden. Biden's 2021 inaugural address heavily utilizes the term *we,* a total of 88 times and the term *our,* a total of 43 times. Making 5.5% of Biden's inaugural address consist of these first-person plural pronouns. Trump's 2017 inaugural address utilized the term *our*, a total of 49 times and the term *we,* a total of 48 times. Thus making 6.6% of Trump's inaugural address consist of these first-person plural pronouns.

Table 2

	Frequency	First Person (singular)	First Person (plural)	Second Person (singular)	Second Person (plural)	Third Person (singular)	Third Person (plural)	Total Percentage
Joseph Biden	%	2.74	7.63	0.76	0	0.63	0.84	12.6
Donald Trump	%	0.27	9.08	1.84	0	0.89	1.23	13.31

The extensive usage of the term *we* by both presidents, is attributed by researchers to be a very effective term to connect voters to politicians (Chung & Park, 2010). This term creates a sort of fellowship between voters and candidates and helps to build trust and familiarity amongst

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each other (Chung & Park, 2010). As such, it is no wonder that both presidents heavily relied on its usage in order to better frame a unified nation to the American people. Of the two presidents, Biden's used the term *we* much more often than his counterpart. With 3.7% of his inaugural speech consisting of the term versus Trump's 3.25%. This illustrates Biden's greater attempt at building an emotional connection with the citizens within his inaugural address.

While neither president relied on the use of second-person plural pronouns in order to frame their messages. Trump's 2017 inaugural address, in turn, relied heavily on the use of first-person plural pronouns, second-person singular pronouns and third-person pronouns (both singular and plural) especially in comparison to that of Biden's address. In terms of language choice, the Trump inaugural address meticulously avoids pronouns referring to him alone (first-person singular) but focuses heavily on referring to the nation as one (first-person plural), the individual citizen (second-person singular), and "others" (third-person singular and plural). The avoidance of first-person pronouns creates that apparent fellowship with the people while the intentional othering of individual's actions and results point fingers away from the presidency. As such, the 2017 inaugural address does very well to influence US citizens to form a connection with the new president.

The next portion of this analysis consisted of measuring the emotional sentiment expressed within each inaugural address and how that affects the framing of messages to American citizens. Emotional sentiment reflects the feelings the speaker wishes to impress upon the audience. By utilizing more positive or negative emotionally charged terms, one can gather more support for one's cause or mission. Table 3 below shows the results of the emotional analysis of each inaugural address. It is clear that between the two presidents, Trump's inaugural address uses greater positive tone and emotion than Biden's. Both presidents used more

positively associated emotional words than negative, however, Biden utilized far more

negatively associated emotional words within every category including anxious, anger, and

sadness.

Table 3

	Positive Emotions	Positive Tone	Negative Emotions	Negative Tone	Anxious	Anger	Sadness	Total
Joseph Biden	0.72	4.3	0.97	2.78	0.25	0.29	0.25	9.56
Donald Trump	0.96	5.05	0.34	1.09	0.07	0	0.07	7.58

The use of negative emotional words and tone is prolific throughout Biden's speech as

the percentage of negative terms is more than doubled that of Trump's within every category.

Between both positive emotions and positive tone, Trump's speech falls under 6.01% positive

while Biden's trails behind at 5.02%, nearly an entire percentage less. There are many

similarities in the identifying terms between emotions and tone. For example, happy and glad can

both appear under either positive emotion or positive tone terms. The key difference between

tone and emotion lies in words that are heavily associated with emotional perception but are not

inherently emotions, for example, words like wrong and bad would be more indicative of

negative tone rather than negative emotion. As such, terms like those would fall under the tone

categories rather than emotion.

What the use of anxious, anger, and sadness is. The categories of anxious, anger, and

sadness appear within the software as indicators of strongly associated terms. Much like the

similarities found between tone and emotion, these categories are cross-applicable within the

negative emotions category. The breakdown of these emotions into further categories allow for the ease of understanding particular negative emotions that may be imposed upon the audience. For example, the anger category shows .29% of Biden's inaugural address to include anger associated terms while 0% of Trump's speech contains these words. This offers greater insight into the nature of negative emotions each president is relaying unto the American people.

When accounting for all emotional sentiments- whether positive or negative- it is clear that Biden's 2021 inaugural address utilizes greater overall sentiment than that of the 2017 inaugural address. However, the greater usage of negatively associated words throughout the speech may attribute to greater worry or dislike amongst the American citizens hearing this speech. Trump's avoidance of negatively associated terms, nearly in his address's entirety, once again shows greater capabilities of drawing in Americans to not only listen to but also accept the message of his speech.

The next portion of this study consists of a qualitative discourse analysis in order to further contextualize and understand the data presented in the quantitative research as well as expand upon it for context the software may have misunderstood. Based on the analysis conducted, the 2017 and 2021 inaugural addresses contain some overlapping themes and phrasing, but as a whole remain remarkably different speeches presented to the American people.

President Trump Address Frames

The 2017 inaugural address given by President Trump maintained four central frames: politicians as other, the common American, nationalism, and religion. The idea of the politician as other stems from Trump's self-separation of other politicians from the new presidency throughout the 2017 inaugural address. In one of the early paragraphs, Trump states, "-because today we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another, or from one

party to another, but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C., and giving it back to you, the people" (Staff, 2017). A statement like this insinuates that the current administration transcends political parties and the system, Trump is claiming that his administration is different than those that preceded it and this sentiment is later corroborated by the following:

> For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government, while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself but not the citizens of our country (Staff, 2017).

These sentences build to Trump's framing of the idea that all other politicians have been working for personal gain and against the general public. Trump's constant othering of politicians frames him to be a man in his own category. The following sentences then tie back into the importance of pronoun usage with Trump utilizing *their* and *they* in order to other conventional politicians from ordinary American citizens. "Their victories have not been your victories. Their triumphs have not been your triumphs, and while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land" (Staff, 2017). Trump, thus, uses these terms in order to frame mainstream politicians as being different from the current regime and against the common man. This type of framing can lead the American people to believe that other politicians are conspiring against their best interests. Trump's position as the newly sworn in president further lends to his credibility when making such claims. These claims then directly relate to the second central theme of the 2017 inaugural address, the common American.

The common American frame is integral to Trump's positioning as a man of the people. This works hand-in-hand with the aforementioned theme of politicians as other. Trump's remarks center him as fighting for the common man while in a position of power. The constancy

with which he uses the speech to directly address citizens and their possible concerns leverages Trump's inaugural address as being framed as "for the people." In the following statement Trump suggests that the will of the people is righteous and yet being ignored, and he follows this up with a promise to fight for their demands.

"Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves. These are just and reasonable demands of righteous people and a righteous public-" (Staff, 2017). Centering on fundamental wants and needs of the people, Trump frames the people as almost pious as they request these things, elevating the desires of the common man to the federal level. As noted in the quantitative portion of research, Trump makes only three *I* statements throughout the entirety of the inaugural speech, the first of which is him stating that he is taking the oath of office. The other two are found in the following statement, "I will fight for you with every breath in my body, and I will never, ever let you down" (Staff, 2017). This statement garners positive emotional sentiment amidst the feelings many citizens are facing of being unheard. These first-person terms are quickly followed by many *we* statements. Trump continues with:

> We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth, and we will bring back our dreams. We will build new roads and highways and bridges and airports and tunnels, and railways, all across our wonderful nation. We will get our people off of welfare and back to work, rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor (Staff, 2017).

This, in turn, reinforces the idea that Trump is a man of the people, no different than one's neighbor as he aims to fight alongside the common man for the rights that they all- that we all- deserve. Referring to the nation and its people as wonderful even amidst any chaos furthers the

positive framing this speech delivers to the audience. The American people are framed as deserving, in need of someone who is willing to fight for them, and Trump frames himself and one who will do just that. The following quote also reinforces this idea by addressing "the forgotten" members of this country and offering them a voice to be heard across the nation. "The forgotten men and women of our country, will be forgotten no longer. Everyone is listening to you now" (Staff, 2017). Although this does not target any group or demographic specifically, the vague addressing of "the forgotten" allows anyone who feels he/she belongs to that category to feel seen and heard. This further strengthens Trump's appeal to the average citizen as one of their own. Effectively, positioning Trump as offering a voice to the disenfranchised and perhaps even saving them.

In the closing paragraph of the 2017 inaugural address, Trump states, "You will never be ignored again. Your voice, your hopes, and your dreams will define our American destiny" (Staff, 2017). quickly followed by the statement, "Together, we will make America strong again. We will make America wealthy again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again. And yes, we will make America great again" (Staff, 2017). This clear callback to his campaign slogan further solidifies his frame of working for the people of America and enacting their will. The effectiveness of this framing paints the average citizen as in control and makes great strides in transacting trust between the president and his supporters. The constant repetition of "we will make" not only groups Trump along with American citizens but also presents an alliterative device that emphasizes the message Trump was trying to convey to the American people.

The additional use of nationalist framing littered throughout the speech further drives a sense of national pride into the receiving audience and positively associates Trump's presidency

with the rebirth of America. This sense of nationalism is vehemently present throughout the address, with nationalist introductions present within the opening paragraph. "We the citizens of America are now joined in a great national effort to rebuild our country and restore its promise for all of our people" (Staff, 2017).

The specific mention of aiding foreign governments to the detriment of America is repeatedly addressed, further dividing America from the rest of the world.

> For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry, subsidized the armies of other countries, while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military. We've defended other nation's borders while refusing to defend our own. And spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas, while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon. One by one, the factories shuddered and left our shores, with not even a thought about the millions and millions of American workers that were left behind. The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed all across the world (Staff, 2017).

This isolationist and nationalist mentality is portrayed as the answer to a long-term downfall that the USA has been experiencing. Trump's description of the disarray the USA has fallen under further backs his later point that there will be no more of that. This speech successfully addresses negativity associated with the current standings of the nation and then combats it with a revival of nationalist rhetoric. Trump then continues with:

> But that is the past, and now we are looking only to the future. We assembled here today our issuing a new decree to be heard in every city, in every foreign capital, and in every

hall of power, from this day forward: a new vision will govern our land, from this day

forward, it's going to be only America first. America first (Staff, 2017).

The revitalization of a nationalist movement appeals greatly to white Americans who feel their

rights are being stripped or their nation is giving more to others than its own citizens (Lozada,

2019). Trump's addressing of nationalist fears and desires targets those who wish to see a

secluded nation with closed borders and enhanced domestic policy. Trump's presidential

campaign that focused on the halting of immigration, the revitalization of the working and

middle class, as well as isolating the USA from other nations became the cornerstone for the

latter half of his inaugural address. This confirmed to his supporters and those on the fence that

these are the values that Trump aims to bring inside the office, even if these values are only

described at face value. The idea that the USA stands as the city upon a hill, taken from John

Winthrop's sermon in 1630 was later co-opted by President Ronald Reagan, only to later be co-

opted once more by President Trump (Van Engen, 2020). Trump's 2017 inaugural address states,

"We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example. We

will shine for everyone to follow" (Staff, 2017), recycling the nationalist sentiment to a new

audience that portrays the US as the shining city upon a hill that the world will look fondly

toward and strive to emulate. This allusion continues the positive sentiment Trump establishes

toward himself and subsequently disseminates across the entirety of his inaugural address.

President Biden Address Frames

The 2021 inaugural address given by President Biden maintained five key frames, those

being democracy, unity, historical allusion, pressing issues, and religion. Much like that of

Trump's 2017 inaugural address, many of these frames work hand in hand with one another

allowing for easier interpretation and understanding by the audience. The frame of democracy

coincides heavily with that of unity as both pervade throughout the speech as the overarching focus. The word democracy appears ten times throughout the speech, normally within short succinct sentences. Such as, "This is America's day. This is democracy's day" (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr..* 2021). and "Democracy is fragile. And at this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed" (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr..* 2021). The mention of democracy and in turn, unity, are as previously discussed, influenced by the recent events of the Capitol Insurrection on January 6, 2021. The insurrection was fueled by accusations of the election being rigged and the seemingly wide division between supporters of Biden and supporters of Trump. This aligns with the heavy division between those voting blue (Democrats) and those voting red (Republicans) which became a largely controversial and bipartisan issue throughout Trump's presidency (2016-2020). Biden clearly addresses this in the following quote:

> We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal. We can do this if we open our souls instead of hardening our hearts. If we show a little tolerance and humility (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr..* 2021).

Biden's reiteration of democracy and unity illustrate his attempt at framing the new administration to represent the fairness of the American electoral system. Biden's attempt to persuade groupthink may appear a bit overbearing for a fragmented audience as it is constantly pushed into their minds. He later ties the two ideas together with the statement, "It requires the most elusive of things in a democracy: Unity" (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr..* 2021).

With this, the focus of the speech tilts from the reality of democracy to the need to reincorporate one another through means of public unity. The repetition of the concept of unity beckons the audience to react as a unit in order to defeat the so-called evils the nation is facing. Biden states:

> Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation. I ask every American to join me in this cause. Uniting to fight the common foes we face: Anger, resentment, hatred. Extremism, lawlessness, violence. Disease, joblessness, hopelessness. With unity we can do great things. Important things. We can right wrongs (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr.*. 2021).

These "common foes" cover a vast array of the ongoing struggles Americans are/have been facing. Once again connecting to the other major frame of pressing issues. With the most pressing issues of this generation focusing on three major aspects: racial justice, trust in the media, and COVID-19. Biden directly addresses these prevailing issues in his address a few times. The first reference being:

> Few periods in our nation's history have been more challenging or difficult than the one we're in now. A once-in-a-century virus silently stalks the country. It's taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II. Millions of jobs have been lost. Hundreds of thousands of businesses closed.
>
> A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer. A cry for survival comes from the planet itself. A cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear. And now, a rise in political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr.*. 2021).

This paragraph, a reference to the ongoing havoc within the US and the world, can be perceived as negative in emotional sentiment due to the plain listing of all the things going wrong. By simply stating all the negative current events, Biden's words could elicit fear or anger among many members of the audience. Acknowledging these events is not inherently negative, but by not immediately quelling possible negative emotions with a more positively associated sentiment, many could begin to focus on and harbor these bad feelings surrounding the 2021 inaugural address.

After briefly interjecting with a point of historical allusion, Biden recalls the frame of unity before making another direct reference to the ongoing issues within the US with the following:

> We can overcome this deadly virus. We can reward work, rebuild the middle class, and make health care secure for all. We can deliver racial justice (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr..* 2021).

The tone of this phrase is much softer in its positivity as Biden associates the new administration with the power and will to overcome these issues and rebuild together as a stronger and united America. The importance of igniting a positive sentiment such as this one, lies in the reassurance it provides with the usage of the term *we,* indicating that President Biden, alongside normal citizens, will strive to make the US a better place to live. The need for positive sentiment to act as reinforcement for citizen's feelings is a crucial line that Biden often teeters on.

The next major framing that often appears throughout the 2021 inaugural address is that of historical allusion. It is clear that the constant references to previous administrations, wars, and crises are done to allow the audience to conflate Biden's own inheritance of the office with that of America's past. Biden mentions three presidents by name in his inaugural address: Jimmy

Carter, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. Previous president Obama and previous vice president Pence are also thanked for their attendance at the inauguration. Given the animosity displayed by Trump following the results of the 2020 election and the subsequent insurrection days before Biden's inauguration, Pence's attendance as vice president of the Trump administration is commendable (Jalonick et al., 2021). His presence allows for a formal "handoff" of the administration and helps to ease qualms some Trump supporters may still have surrounding the new administration's validity. Pence's attendance can be seen as his final act of civility as the vice president of the US.

Meanwhile, President Obama's presence is thanked but his name is never mentioned throughout the address. This may appear surprising as Obama and Biden have remained friends after Biden served as vice president under the Obama administration. It may seem odd that Biden did not make reference to his previous role or his predecessor directly as he did to Carter. However, this seems to be a purposeful act of distancing himself, in order to show that he is no longer the vice-president but now the man in charge of the nation. To ensure that Biden does not live in the shadow of Obama, his indirect mention of him acts not as a snub, but as a reminder that Obama is no longer president and this is the rise of a new administration.

Each direct presidential mention ties into a facet of the presidency that Biden wishes to exemplify, for Carter that is his lifetime of service, for Washington it is his taking of the oath to serve the people, and for Lincoln it is remembrance of going down in history with "his soul in it" (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr.*. 2021). The use of allusion to the past presidencies serves to link Biden's new presidency with those held in fond remembrance. President Carter is the oldest living and longest-lived president and by referring to Carter directly, Biden is framing his relationship to the presidency as transcending decades and

generations as well as possibly alluding to the long-life Carter has had in attempts to relinquish any fears the people may have surrounding Biden's own old age (Barrow, 2019). The references to both Washington and Lincoln are easy to understand, with both being among the most recognizable presidents in the history of the US. Washington and Lincoln are often identified as two of the greatest presidents of US history, the two are commemorated and celebrated across multiple memorials including: Mount Rushmore, The Washington Monument, The Lincoln Memorial and more. The allusion associated with these prominent political figures frame Biden's election and his consequential future actions to be akin to that of some of the greatest presidents in American history. This is a careful framework weaved to incite trust and faith from a distrusting and nervous nation toward the newly inaugurated president.

The historical allusion continues with the references to tumultuous periods in American history that can contrast the very one the USA finds itself in now. The 2021 inaugural address references multiple times of war and racial division; sentiments that are easily identifiable within the last few years especially. Mentioning these poignant topics aids in corroborating Biden's statement of the longtime struggle the US has faced, as seen in the following paragraph:

> Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we are all created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, and demonization have long torn us apart. The battle is perennial. Victory is never assured. Through the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice, and setbacks, our "better angels" have always prevailed. In each of these moments, enough of us came together to carry all of us forward. And, we can do so now (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr.*. 2021).

Through the act of referencing these major turning points in American history, Biden further frames to the American people that in times of trouble they band together, and they must continue to do so now. It is intentionally pulling at those moments of fear and suffering to try and unite the American people into coming together to battle the threats being faced now. Following this reiteration of the need for unity is another quote littered with historical allusion:

> Here we stand, in the shadow of a Capitol dome that was completed amid the Civil War, when the Union itself hung in the balance. Yet we endured and we prevailed. Here we stand looking out to the great Mall where Dr. King spoke of his dream. Here we stand, where 108 years ago at another inaugural, thousands of protestors tried to block brave women from marching for the right to vote (*Inaugural address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr..* 2021).

This instance surrounds some of the greater feats of American unity: the restoration of the union, the end of segregation, and the right of women to vote. Once more, these references to American history are made to further frame the idea that unity can lead to great outcomes and prosperity for the nation. The idea that uniting as a nation will bring about necessary change stands as the greatest motivation for future voters. Biden's inaugural address has culminated around the concept of unity in order for the nation to persevere given the last few years of civil unrest. Although incorporating multiple emotional sentiments and talking points, the framing proliferated throughout the entirety of the 2021 inaugural address is that of the people of this nation banding together.

There is also one commonly seen frame throughout both of the addresses. This is the explicit Christianity-tied religious mentions- whether it be prayer, personal testimony, or references to God. Both president Trump and Biden make mentions of Christianity within their

speeches. The littering of Christian rhetoric within these speeches appeals to the largely

Protestant Christian population in the USA (Swatos, Jr, 2007). It is also important to note the fact

that every American president has publicly identified as belonging to the Christian faith (Swatos,

Jr, 2007). Each of the inaugural addresses examined in this study explicitly mention following

this faith and end respectively with the phrase, "God bless America" (Staff, 2017; (*Inaugural

address by president Joseph R. Biden, Jr..* 2021). This phrase, Swatos Jr. (2007) states acts as a

representation of giving voice to the American people. This once again plays into the bid for

acceptance by US citizens, who would likely pose great opposition to a president who combats

the idea of another central religion to the nation.

The frames identified within each of the inaugural addresses corroborate much of the

themes identified in the quantitative portion. RQ1 asked which inaugural address utilized more

unifying language toward the American people. The results of this research found that the 2021

inaugural address utilizes more unifying language than that of the 2017 inaugural address. In

terms of frequency throughout the speech, the 2017 inaugural address utilized slightly more first-

person plural pronouns (*we, us, our, ourselves*) than that of the 2021 inaugural address when

examined proportionately against term frequency to the wordcount. The usage of these pronouns

also drastically contrasted from the extremely limited amount of first-person singular pronouns

speech found in the 2017 speech than that of the 2021 speech. However, the greater use of third-

person plural pronouns (*they, them, their, theirs, themselves*) was also weaponized by the 2017

inaugural address which drives frames of separation and othering. This framing is corroborated

by the qualitative analysis which identifies Trump's othering of conventional politicians and the

government from the citizens of the nation. Further, it is clear in the qualitative analysis that the

2021 inaugural address is quite literally written by and for the concept of unifying the nation and

its people in order to enter a new period of American history. The central narrative frames of Biden's speech all act together as pieces of a greater story to further the idea of uniting as one nation. The narrative focus of Trump's 2017 inaugural address in turn focuses on the audience furthering their connection with him as a political figure rather than the people as members of a nation. These results thus reject H1 which predicted that the 2017 inaugural address would utilize more unifying language rhetoric due to the evidence presented by the triangulated method of research.

RQ2 then asked whether either of the two inaugural addresses utilize positively associated word choice to influence the public. Results showed that both the 2017 and 2021 inaugural addresses utilized positively associated word choice throughout their entirety. However, each speech contained varying amounts of positive sentiment and negative sentiment. This then leads to RQ3 which asked do the two inaugural addresses utilize similar amounts of positively associated word choice throughout their speeches. As identified in the quantitative portion, Trump's 2017 speech utilized greater positive sentiment in his word choices while Biden's 2021 speech utilized greater negative sentiment. This can also be seen in the qualitative portion, as Biden's speech continuously touched on racism, division, war, and the death toll associated with COVID-19. While the overall message delivered by the 2021 address is that surrounding unity and the possibility for good, this greater negative sentiment emerges through the mention of fear and anger surrounding events and subjects. In contrast, the 2017 address momentarily touches on the disgruntles of citizens before immediately consoling them with the promise of recognition and a voice in the government, thus furthering the positive sentiment and word choice found throughout. As such H2 can also be rejected.

The 2017 inaugural address given by Donald Trump is an excellent portrayal of framing theory at work in order to positively frame messages to an audience by sympathizing and amplifying their perspective. The specific usage/non-usage of pronouns, the common vernacular, and organizational focus of the speech stands to magnify the impact this speech has on a captive audience. Although Trump faced great criticism from the opposing side, his address' focus on the welfare of the nation's citizens commands great admiration. The 2021 inaugural address, in turn, struggles to captivate an audience as well. Biden's constant references to ongoing crises reinforces negative emotions of the time and the constant outright call to unify can appear awkward to an audience that is actively torn apart. However, the great undertow of each frame corresponding to the overall message of unity was technically well constructed. Although there was much more references to direct suffering and times of trouble than in the 2017 inaugural address, the 2021 inaugural address still serves as a speech that delivers great positive sentiment to the citizens of the US.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Political speech stands as the ultimate access an authority figure has to the audience that they hope to influence. Speeches like the inaugural address have throughout history demonstrated the capability to frame carefully crafted pieces of information and ideas in order to further a specific train of thought. The importance of understanding the implications that this can have as messages are framed to an audience, are necessary in order for the public to remain informed in an era of constant change and a bombardment of media. Throughout the past few years of cries to the attention of "fake news" and the bias of the media, it is more important now than ever for Americans to have access to political communication research in order to better understand the world around them. When dealing with politics almost nothing is as essential as the head of government. This study's focus on the US president's inaugural address serves to highlight the skillful weaponization of language in order to frame certain ideas. No matter the political party, the 2017 and 2021 inaugural address reflect centuries of history and careful consideration of the US citizens as a receiving audience.

The results of this research illustrate a few key points. The first being that the inaugural address truly is the first point of contact a president has with their citizens, as such it is extremely important to create a positive impression and lasting memory for audience members to return to later on in their political endeavors. The second is that the most effective of political speeches are not necessarily those written with grandeur. Although an advanced vocabulary and use of literary elements certainly elevate a speech's content, the charisma of the person speaking can influence millions. The third point shows that as political speech has changed throughout time,

so has the message the masses wish to hear. A politician today may not need to divulge all of their hopes, dreams, and admirations with the nation- familiarity and "common man" rhetoric can truly emphasize a politician's personal presence with the people. This strategy as seen employed by Trump was truly unlike any other politician, and this othering actually benefited his image as an anti-politic politician.

These addresses are simply a glimpse at all that is to come following the inauguration procedural event. The American people learn some of the core beliefs of the new administration and their future plans as well as what beliefs they are trying to embrace- if they can only look deep enough. The next four years of a single administration will include many more speeches, events, and announcements, by continuing to examine what language is used and how tone, message, and frames are changed or adapted throughout the course of time will truly illustrate how much a president sticks to their inaugural words.

Framing theory remains the central framework of this research. As stated in the literature review, framing theory coaxes the public to filter their own perspectives and accept the information that is being fed to them (Kuypers, 2009). The presidential inaugural address typically falls under emphasis framing and should work to appease all types of observers within the audience- from those who question information to those who accept what they hear. As the commander in chief of this nation, the president has the ability to gather reporters, put together conferences and appear in print, video, or online without notice. But the power to truly move an audience, gather support, and change a nation is much more difficult a task. In the end, the president must be able to wield language to their benefit in order to change the hearts/minds of the people. This research ties back into framing theory as it aims to illustrate the importance that word choice and emotional sentiment can make when framing a message to the public. These

frames are reliant on the individual to deliver a message that is both positive and reassuring lest they take the risk to have their frames fail to reach their target.

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The frames analyzed within this research came from curated speeches that must have gone through levels of approval before being spoken by both Trump and Biden. These speeches reflect each as individuals as well as their administration. Trump's decision to "other" politicians from citizens, portray himself as the common man, and praise American nationalism encompass many of the ideals shared and acted upon throughout his presidency. Although many may disagree with his antics and beliefs, no one can deny that these frames seem to be titular to his character and this is also reflected within the unwavering strength of his support. Biden's use of democracy and unity framing, historical allusion, and discussion of current events do in turn illustrate eloquence and a higher caliber of speech, but it also illustrates the divide between him and the people. Biden is clearly shown to be a career politician, the very thing much of Trump's supporters' distrust and detest. His longstanding history as a politician reflect his knowledge of the ins and outs of the government, but it may also be one of the reasons why people could be less swayed by his words.

There were a few limitations present within this research, such as the limited perspective of a singular researcher and the limited scope this research covers. It is hoped that future researchers will be able to expand upon this research and dive deeper into these inaugural addresses of a divided and bitter America. Presidential speech and political communication are well cited and researched. This research has added a new level of understanding to framing theory and political messages aimed to great masses of a diverse population. If this research were to be continued, a future study could include a greater analyzation of the impact of pronoun usage and how it influences the unifying force of frames. The pronoun usage section of this study was an extremely interesting dive into how language manipulation can skew perceptions of a message. The use of LIWC software coupled with a qualitative discourse analysis will hopefully inspire future researchers to continue this line of research and pose their own questions on the implications and power of the inaugural speech or political speech in general. Future researchers could look not just at the words used by the president, but whether they coincide with his actions. No government or politician exists without a message to push, it is with great hope that this research aims to shed light on how frames used in speeches can be used to influence the public.

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Appendix A. Study References

Table A1. Chung & Park (2010)

TABLE 3. Linguistic analysis of personal pronouns

		First person (singular)	Second person (singular)	Third person (singular)	First person (plural)	Second person (plural)	Third person (plural)	Total
Moo-Hyun Roh	Frequency	11	0	1	33	0	0	45
	(%)	(24.4)	(0)	(2.2)	(73.3)	(0)	(0)	(100)
Myung-Bak Lee	Frequency	12	0	4	26	0	0	42
	(%)	(28.6)	(0)	(9.5)	(61.9)	(0)	(0)	(100)

Table A2. Chen (2006)

TABLE 2. *Frequency of lexical reference*

Key tokens of reference		2000 Inaugural Speech (Total words in English Text: 3,472; Total words in Chinese Text: 5,320, Total tokens in Chinese Text: 2,562)				2004 Inaugural Speech (Total words in English Text: 4,369; Total words in Chinese Text: 5,667, Total tokens in Chinese Text: 2,925)			
English	Chinese (source)	Total # of tokens of reference		Relative frequency of tokens		Total # of tokens of reference		Relative frequency of tokens	
		Eng.	Ch.	Eng.	Ch.	Eng.	Ch.	Eng.	Ch.
Taiwan	台灣 (*tai wan*)	50	41	1.44	1.60	72	48	1.65	1.64
people	人民 (*renmin*)	49	37	1.41	1.44	51	41	1.17	1.40
We/us/our/ours/ourselves	我們 (*women*)	86	44	2.48	1.72	113	30	2.59	1.03
democracy/democratic	民主 (*minzhu*)	29	31	0.84	1.21	27	28	0.62	0.96
new	新 (*xin*)	17	26	0.49	1.01	18	21	0.41	0.72
shared, together, jointly, share, both	共同 (*gongtong*)	11	4	0.32	0.16	23	17	0.53	0.58
freedom	自由 (*ziyou*)	8	11	0.23	0.43	3	6	0.07	0.21
human rights	人權 (*renquan*)	10	14	0.29	0.55	3	4	0.07	0.14
peace	和平 (*heping*)	4	3	0.12	0.12	14	14	0.32	0.48
Republic of China	中華民國 (*zhonghua minguo*)	9	9	0.26	0.35	9	8	0.21	0.27
all the people	全民 (*quanmin*)	4	9	0.12	0.35	2	7	0.05	0.24
compatriots	同胞 (*tongbao*)	11	10	0.32	0.39	1	5	0.02	0.17
hope	希望 (*xiwang*)	7	8	0.20	0.31	6	3	0.14	0.10

Appendix B. Codebook

Codebook

Pronouns

First-person Singular	I, I'd, I'm, I am, me, my, mine, myself
First-Person Plural	we, we'd, we're, we are, we will, us, our, ours, ourself, ourselves, ourself
Second-Person Singular	you, you'd, you will, you are, you're, your, yours, yourself,
Second-Person Plural	you all, yourselves
Third-Person Singular	he, him, his, himself, she, her, hers, herself, it, its, itself
Third-Person Plural	they, they'd, they would, they will, they have, them, their, themselves, themselves
Indefinite Pronouns	everyone, everybody, everything, anyone, anybody, anything, nobody, noone, nothing

Emotions

Positive	happy, elated, exciting, excited, fond, proud,comfort, comforting, confident, confidence, congratulate, celebrate, celebrating, healing, heal, calm, calming grateful, good, cheer, cheerful, cheering, content, contentment, entertain, entertaining, euphoric, funny, fun, glad, gladly, great, optimistic, optimism, please, pleasure, pride, proudly, spirit, spirited, uplift, uplifting, overjoyed, joyous, joy, like, enjoyable, enjoy, excellent, love, lively, hopeful, hope, hoping, admire, adore, thankful, thank, wonderful, smile, smiling, smiles
Negative	sad, saddening, depressing, depressed, depression, fear, hate, cry, unhappy, angry, afraid, scare, scares, scared, anxious, anxiety, disapprove, disapproval, dislike, suffer, suffering, stress, stressful, awful, confuse, confused, wronged, suspicious, tearful, aches, ache, aching, torture, tortured, alarmed, alarming, horrible, unmotivated, argue, arguing, bad, upset, upsetting, worry, worried, terror, terrifying terrified, overwhelm, overwhelming, fearsome, frightening, frightful, disappoint, disappointed, tires, tire, tired, wrong, wronged

Appendix C. President Trump's 2017 Inaugural Address, January 20, 2017

Note: This transcription is available at www.politico.com/story/2017/01/full-text-donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript-233907 and is here for reference.

Appendix D. President Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address, January 20, 2021

Note: This transcription is available at www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/ and is here for reference.