

## Methodology Example – Content Analysis

The methodology used for this thesis is fairly straightforward and simple. In order to test this paper's research question and hypothesis, it was essential to analyze whether there is a significant correlation between the frequency of a modern American president's use of "I+" pronouns in a State of the Union address and the year that State of the Union address was given. To test this relationship, I collected the number of times a president used "I+" pronouns in every verbally delivered State of the Union address since President Franklin D. Roosevelt's first in 1934 to President Barack Obama's final and most recent in 2016. Additionally, I collected the total word count of each of these addresses in order to create a ratio with the amount of times an "I+" pronoun was said divided by the total amount of words said in the address. Just as this paper utilizes the term "I+" to refer to the use of all singular first person pronouns, for the remainder of this study, the term "I+"/>WC will be utilized to refer to the use of "I+" pronouns over the total word count of an address. The term "I+"/>WC calculates the frequency in which a president uses "I+" pronouns, not simply the total number of times an "I+" pronoun is used. This can be more thoroughly explained with an example.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan used "I+" pronouns a total of 61 times in his State of the Union address, but used a total of 3,774 words in the entire address. The "I+"/>WC ratio for Reagan's 1987 address is 0.01616, which means "I+" pronouns make up 1.616 percent of all words Reagan said in this address. In comparison, in 2012, President Barack Obama used "I+" pronouns a total of 103 times – which is much larger than Reagan's 61 – in his State of the Union address, but used a total of 7,028 words – which is nearly double Reagan's 3,774 words – in the entire address. The "I+"/>WC ratio

for Obama's 2012 address is 0.01466, which means "I+" pronouns make up 1.466 percent of all words Obama said. When simply comparing the raw numbers of these two addresses without observing the "I+"/>WC ratio, it is obvious that Obama used more "I+" pronouns as well as more words in total, but when comparing the "I+"/>WC ratio of both addresses, it is obvious that President Reagan used a higher frequency of "I+" pronouns. Reagan's "I+"/>WC ratio was 0.01616 compared to Obama's 0.01466.

By creating the "I+"/>WC ratio, this study can compare these speeches together and determine who is more "egocentric." If I were to determine "egocentrism" simply based on the amount of "I+" pronouns used, President Obama is far more "egocentric" in his 2012 address compared to President Reagan in his 1987 address. Regrettably, this would not account of the word length of each speech and in turn would not calculate the frequency at which a president uses "I+" pronouns. It is important to use frequency of "I+" rather than total amount of "I+" used because it accounts for how often a president uses "I+" pronouns, not simply the number of times they were used. Using the "I+"/>WC ratio, we are able to receive a better evaluation of which presidents are the most "egocentric" when comparing them to one another.

More precisely, I was able to collect the number of times "I+" pronouns were used in State of the Union addresses as well as the total word count of these same addresses by using the University of California, Santa Barbara's "The American Presidency Project" website, (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php>). This website gave me access to all State of the Union addresses delivered since George Washington's first in 1790. With access to all of the State of the Union addresses, I was able to 'copy' and 'paste' each address into an online word count tool (<http://wordcounttools.com>). This

tool automatically collected the number of times “I+” pronouns were said as well as the total word count of these State of the Union addresses. From here, I manually transferred the information collected by this word count tool into a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was organized into four columns, 1 the president who delivered the State of the Union address, 2 the year the address was given, 3 the number of “I+” pronouns used in the address, and 4 the total number of words said in the address. Then, this spreadsheet was imported in SPSS, which was then able to analyze the relationship between two variables; each address’ “I+”/WC ratio and the year each address was given. More specifically, these two variables were presented in a scatter plot, which plots these variables on an X, Y axis in order to compare their relationship. Additionally, in a study that involves “time” – or years – a scatterplot is able to show the general trend of the second variable over time, which in this study is presidents’ use of “I+”/WC or “egocentric” language. In addition to using a scatter plot to analyze the two variables’ relationship, this study ran these variables through a correlation test. By doing this, this study aims to discover whether the relationship between I+/WC and year is correlated.

Before delving into the results portion of this study, there are several important notes that must be made in order provide clarity and precision within this paper. Firstly, as specified earlier in the methodology, this paper only utilized the verbally delivered State of the Union addresses since President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s first on January 3, 1934 to President Barack H. Obama’s last on January 12, 2016. It is important to note why President Franklin D. Roosevelt was the appropriate president to begin this study with. This thesis aims to evaluate only the “egocentric presidency” with regard to modern American presidents, so I used presidential literature to determine who was the first

modern president in a study such as this. As established in the literature review, presidential scholars openly argue that the modern rhetorical presidency began with President Woodrow Wilson or President Franklin D. Roosevelt. For the purpose of this study, President Franklin D. Roosevelt is determined to be the first modern president, as Murphy argued, because this study aims to evaluate widely publicized speeches through a variety of mediums (radio, television, etc.). When President Woodrow Wilson was the President of the United States from 1913 to 1921, presidential speeches had not yet been broadcast on the radio or on the television. Because of this, President Wilson was not speaking to as large of an audience as later presidents would, which may have dramatically changed the language and rhetoric he used. Instead, I chose to begin my study with the State of the Union addresses of President Franklin D. Roosevelt because as Murphy suggests, the modern “rhetorical presidency” coincides “with the increased use of technology by the president and Congress and the expansion of the audience for the State of the Union speech,” which had completely occurred by President Roosevelt’s time in office (Murphy, 2008).

The second important point to note is to provide why this paper utilizes State of the Union addresses and not other presidential speeches. Firstly, State of the Union addresses have occurred nearly every year in verbal form thus allowing for this study to have consistency as to the audience the president speaks to. Additionally, it is important to express that the State of the Union address is “mandated by Article II, Section 2 of the United States Constitution” (Peters, 2016). More specifically, the United States Constitution stipulates, “He [the President] shall from time to time give to the Congress information of the state of the union, and recommend to their consideration such

measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient” (United States Constitution, 1787). Because the State of the Union address is addressing Congress and then broadcast out to the American public, this event provides a unique opportunity to evaluate the use of presidential language and rhetoric. Due to the intended purpose of the State of the Union address, presidents tend to speak about issues of more substance and importance than in speech given in other forums and to other audiences. For this paper, State of the Union addresses were chosen to be the speeches to be analyzed because they provide a standard of consistency and due to their unique audience. Additionally, it must be noted that this study does not utilize State of the Union addresses that were delivered as written messages, such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s address in 1945 or President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s address in 1956. The chief reason for excluding these written messages is because the audiences of these written addresses are much different from the audiences of verbally delivered addresses. In this study and in all studies regarding “the rhetorical presidency,” the audience to which the president is addressing is crucial to the language and rhetoric the president chooses to use. For instance, the audience during a verbally delivered State of the Union address would be all individuals in attendance, anyone watching the address on the television, and anyone listening to the address over the radio. Contrariwise, the audiences of written State of the Union addresses only include individuals who have access, time, and interest in reading them. In order to provide consistency and relevance, this thesis only evaluates verbally delivered State of the Union addresses.

The last note that must be made before exploring into the results portion of this study is that five of the seventy-nine addresses included in this paper “are technically not

considered to be “State of the Union” addresses” (Peters). Moreover, “the five most recent presidents (Reagan, Bush, Clinton, G.W. Bush, and Obama) addressed a joint session of Congress shortly after their inaugurations but these messages” are not truly State of the Union addresses (Peters). Peters (2016) argues that although the addresses are not truly State of the Union addresses, it is safe to consider them as such for research purposes. What is most important is that the audiences of these five speeches are the same as traditional State of Union addresses. Additionally, Peters explains “the impact of such a speech on public, media, and congressional perceptions of presidential leadership and power should be the same as if the address was an official State of the Union” (Peters). The five speeches that are included in this study that are not technically State of the Union addresses, but for research purpose might as well be, are President Reagan’s 1981 “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Program for Economic Recovery,” President George H. W. Bush’s 1989 “Address on Administration Goals Before a Joint Session of Congress,” President Clinton’s 1993 “Address on Administration Goals Before a Joint Session of Congress,” President George W. Bush’s 2001 “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on Administration Goals,” and President Obama’s 2009 “Address Before a Joint 20 Session of the Congress.” In the next section, this thesis will reveal and examine the results regarding this study’s research question; have modern American presidents referred to themselves in State of the Union addresses more over time?