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Content Analysis of Presidential Speeches: Term to Term Changes

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Content Analysis of Presidential Speeches: Term to Term Changes

A Senior Honors Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Abstract

This essay aims to show how American presidential Inaugural Addresses change throughout presidencies, and analyzes whether or not those changes are indicative of an evolution throughout the presidency itself. Within this research, an analysis will be done on the Inaugural Addresses for the first and second terms of both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. This study discusses possible reasons why changes may occur from the first term of a presidency to the second term, and, if there are indeed noticeable changes, what those changes could mean on a larger scale. Possible changes that could be seen include the topics mentioned, the tone in which they are mentioned, and how willing they are to discuss partisan and controversial ideas. This analysis will be done through a content analysis of each Inaugural Address for the above presidents, looking for mentions of religion, country, unity, economy, and war. The hypothesis behind this research is that the Inaugural Address of a first term president will be more likely to contain content aimed at attracting votes for the next election, while the Inaugural Address of a second term president will likely have more insight into the personal views of the president, as they are no longer trying to attract new votes.

Background

The first American Presidential Inaugural Address occured on April 30, 1789, as George Washington undertook the oath of office at Federal Hall in New York City - and delivered the first speech by any president of the United States of America. Stephen Howard Browne (2016) looks into the meaning and importance behind that first Inaugural Address. According to Browne, this speech was made with the intention, by Washington, to reconcile the competing claims of power and liberty that came with the creation of this new government. With the

unknown that was the presidency, clouded by the fears of an abusive monarchy, Washington's first speech needed to embody and give voice to "the kind of virtue requisite to securing America's republican aspirations," (pg. 399). It was this speech that set the pattern for each subsequent American president to make a speech as they undertook their oath. These speeches have come to be a major part of any American presidency, and what the presidents say in them has the potential to tell one a lot about the coming administration. .

Since Washington's first address, scholars have been studying these presidential speeches to try to understand any underlying meanings behind them. While many people focus on the more well-known Inaugural Addresses, such as that of Abraham Lincoln, every American presidential Inaugural Address can tell researchers something about American politics. For example, Xue et al. (2013) looked into metaphors within American presidential Inaugural Addresses, analyzing examples of American presidents using metaphors within the speech to convey their own political viewpoints, and the president's attempts to motivate their audiences to sympathize with the issues that the president has deemed most important. In addition to looking at what the linguistic patterns of speeches can tell scholars about the motives of American presidents, these speeches can also show the relationships between the presidents and their audience.

Korzi (2001), for example, examined different models of American presidential Inaugural Addresses - constitutional, party, and plebiscitary - to analyze the different types of relationships between the presidency and the people. Constitutional presidents, according to Korzi, are those who see their position as that of a restrained constitutional officer, with a minimal relationship to the people. A party president is one who is more tied to the will of the people, especially within their own political party. Plebiscitary presidents do not identify

themselves within a political party or as a constitutional officer, but rather identify themselves as part of the engine of American political politics, and fully tie themselves to the opinion of the people. These speeches can tell us a lot about American politics, presidents, and people - if researches only know where to look.

If some researchers look into what the metaphors that American presidents use can tell us, and others look into the different types of relationships that American presidents have with the people within their speeches, then it can logically be assumed that there is more that the words within presidential speeches can tell us. The Inaugural Address is the first speech that every American president will make to the people after taking office - it is what will establish their administration and the stances that they will have. To look at these speeches means looking into the stance of a president on his first day in office.

Literature Review

There has been, throughout the years, research done on different speeches made by former presidents of the United States. Much of the studies done on this topic have revolved around the idea of the 'permanent' themes in American politics through content that appears repeatedly in multiple presidential speeches (Ericson 1997; Campbell and Jamieson 1985). The idea behind this kind of search for a 'permanent' is that if certain ideas or themes are continuously expressed in presidential addresses, then it can be reasonably concluded that they are a representation of the thoughts that run behind American politics; meaning that if multiple presidents all discuss the same topics in their speeches, those topics are likely important to American society and American politics.

While the above studies have examined how constants in presidential speeches can reflect ideas that are important in society, they do not focus on what the changes in the ideas found within presidential speeches can show. In the same way that multiple presidents speaking about the same topics in the same way can show what is important to society over the long term, presidents speaking about different topics than those before him, or speaking about the same topics in a different way, can show what is important to that president personally, and even how what is important to society has changed over time. If a president speaks about bipartisanship and cooperation twice as much in their first term Inaugural Address than they do in their second term, it could indicate that they do not truly hope for bipartisan cooperation within the government, but rather, they thought that the American people wanted a president who aimed for it. In the same light, if a president does not mention religion at all, or does so very minimally, in their first term, but references it repeatedly in their second term, it could indicate that they believe in more religion in government, personally, but thought that showing it would not get them re-elected, so they refrained from mentioning it when there was still that chance for re-election.

Other researchers have looked into multiple words and themes that have run throughout the years in one specific kind of address, such as the Presidential Inaugural Addresses, or the State of the Union Addresses (McDiarmid 1937; Teten 2003; Chester 1980; Toolin 1983). Even more researchers have examined themes within multiple kinds of presidential speeches, but only focused on one specific president (Pitney Jr. 1997; Chester 1981; "PRESIDENT HOOVER'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS," 1929). These papers, though, did not focus on an in-depth study into how one type of speech, by one president, can change within their time in the White House.

In addition to these studies, other researchers have examined into the connection between public policy and public opinion, specifically presidential public rhetoric and public opinion, concluding that contemporary presidents are "more likely to respond to public preferences," (Jacobs 1992) and hypothesizing that "presidents who served *later* would be *more* highly responsive to public opinion than earlier presidents," (Rottinghaus 2006). This is possibly because more modern presidents have more access to public opinion; census and survey data can be gathered at larger scales, TV, radio and the internet mean that people can get their opinions out their much more easily and much quicker. In the same way, presidents are more accountable to what they say in their speeches, as they are much more widely seen, and it is therefore much easier for the people to know when a president has gone against their opinion. This means that American presidents, specifically more modern American presidents, will have speeches that are in line with public opinion, and that their stances are likely to be a reflection of society at that specific point in time.

It is then theorized that in the first term of the presidency, there is a greater chance that presidents will be more congruent, or in line with the median voter's political stances, than in the second term, due to reelection concerns (Rottinghaus 2006). Jacobs (1992) studies not only *whether* modern government officials respond more to public opinions, but whether or not they use their knowledge of the opinions of the public to manipulate them, most likely in the election booth. This means that it is quite possible, and probable, that presidents who have easy access to public opinions will use that knowledge to be able to change what they talk about in order to attract the maximum amount of voters. For example, if data on public opinion shows a high level of separation between the voters in the two parties, you will not expect the president to speak very much on bipartisanship, as that would not attract the voters who separate themselves from

the other party. From this hypothesis, one would expect that there would be a noticeable shift from the speeches of a president in his first term to the speeches of that same president in his second term. It would be expected that the speeches from the first term would tend to be more moderate on, if not neutral to, highly partisan political issues, while their second term speeches would reflect more of their controversial and political views, as they would no longer be trying to attract the swing votes for the next election.

Question

Within American politics, it has been questioned many times how well the President of the United States represents the people, and the country. It is difficult to ascertain how well the actions of the president represent his true intentions and thoughts on the how the country should be addressed, because of the influence that Congress and the Cabinet will always have on any action taken by the president. One of the few ways to analyze a president's true thoughts on the nation, and therefore how well they represent the country, is through their words. The question when looking at presidential speeches, then, is how much of what the president says is reflective of what they actually think, and how much is said with the goal of being re-elected. To analyze this question, one would have to look into the differences between first term presidents, who will still be hoping to run in the next election, and second term presidents, who know that they will not be able to be elected again.

This research examines four Presidential Inaugural Addresses - two speeches from two presidents - analyzing specific patterns within the content. According to Rottinghaus (2006), presidents tend to discuss topics that voters will know about and hear often, and they will most likely take moderate, or congruent, positions on these topics when they are hoping for reelection.

For that reason, within this paper, the research specifically tested for mentions of religion, country, unity, economy, and war. These topics were chosen as they represent common topics that most voters will be able to understand at least a little bit. Even voters who do not monitor politics closely will tend to have some sort of opinion on these topics, whereas those s such as foreign policy and diplomacy may not be as known by the average voter.

This research will provide insight into how presidential speeches change from first term to second term, possibly indicating that speeches in a president's first term are aimed more towards remaining popular and the hope of being re-elected, while in the second term they are more free to speak about what they truly find important. The study will pick up with the presidency of George W. Bush, as the research done by Rottinghaus (2006) ended with President Clinton.

Methodology

This study examines Inaugural addresses for the first and second terms of Presidents W. Bush and Obama, analyzed through typed transcripts. Through content analysis of the addresses of each term for the above presidents, this research will search for evidence of any strong changes in the content of the Inaugural Addresses. These presidents were chosen because they served two consecutive terms post-FDR, when they knew that their second term would definitely be their last, and because there is less research done on them as compared to earlier presidents. These two are the most recent two-term presidencies, and therefore likely to give the most accurate information, to date. The decision to analyze these presidents was made with the theory that the content of their Inaugural address would change when they were no longer able to be re-elected.

The analysis will be done in two ways; first, the addresses will be searched just for mentions of specific words within each of the four categories (religion, country, unity, economy, and war) simply counting words - not considering context. . Twenty total words have been selected to represent these five broad topics: god, heaven, pray, America, country, nation, constitution, United States, together, bipartisan, cooperation, united, jobs, taxes, debt, economy, fighting, combat, war, and conflict.

The table below displays the words that have been chosen to represent each category - meaning that, if a president were to discuss these topics,you are likely to see these words appear in the sentences talking about that topic:

Table 1:

Religion	Country	Unity	Economy	War
God	America	Together	Jobs	Fighting
Heaven	Country	Bipartisan	Taxes	Combat
Pray	Nation	Cooperation	Debt	War
	Constitution	United	Economy	Conflict
	United States			

Secondly, the addresses will be analyzed paragraph by paragraph, looking to see how many sentences reflect these topics and in what tone they are mentioned - whether they are discussed in a partisan/controversial tone or a neutral tone, a negative tone or a positive tone, etc.

This analysis will both count how many times the topics are mentioned and look into the

sentence that they are found in to see what context they are used.

An example of a paragraph that will be coded under the "religion" category comes from

Bush's first term Inaugural Address, where he states:

> Our unity, our Union, is a serious work of leaders and citizens and every generation. And this is my solemn pledge: I will work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity. I know this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves, who creates us equal, in His image, and we are confident in principles that unite and lead us onward.

Due to the reference to a higher power, the use of the capital H in "His," and the reference to a

creator, I would code this paragraph as being about religion.

A paragraph that would be coded as belonging to the "country" category can be seen in

Obama's second term Inaugural Address, which reads:

> Each time we gather to inaugurate a President we bear witness to the enduring strength of our Constitution. We affirm the promise of our democracy. We recall that what binds this Nation together is not the colors of our skin or the tenets of our faith or the origins of our names. What makes us exceptional—what makes us American—is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago:We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Because this paragraph references specifics about American identity and history, it would be

coded as primarily being about the country.

An example of a paragraph that would be counted in the "unity" category can be found in

Obama's first Inaugural Address, where he states:

> My fellow citizens, I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our Nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

This paragraph would be coded in the "unity" category primarily because President Obama references President Bush and his service to the country, and the cooperation that the two parties had together, but also because he references his "fellow citizens."

For the "economy" category, an example of a paragraph that would fall under that category can be seen in President Obama's second speech, where he says:

> Together, we determined that a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce, schools and colleges to train our workers.

This paragraph would fall under that category not only because it specifically mentions the economy, but also because it goes into specific infrastructure concepts that are intertwined with the economy.

Finally, an example of a paragraph that would be coded under the "war" category can be found in President Bush's second Inaugural Address, where he states:

> So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world. This is not primarily the task of arms, though we will defend ourselves and our friends by force of arms when necessary. Freedom, by its nature, must be chosen and defended by citizens and sustained by the rule of law and the protection of minorities. And when the soul of a nation finally speaks, the institutions that arise may reflect customs and traditions very different from our own. America will not impose our own style of government on the unwilling. Our goal instead is to help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way.

This would be coded under that category because of its references to supporting the growth of democracy in other countries, the mentions of defense, and the remarks on ending tyranny.

In addition to those categories, each paragraph will be coded as either positive, negative, neutral, or partisan. An example of a positive paragraph would be in President Bush's first Inaugural Address, where he states:

Thank you, all. Chief Justice Rehnquist, President Carter, President Bush, President Clinton, distinguished guests, and my fellow citizens. The peaceful transfer of authority is rare in history, yet common in our country. With a simple oath, we affirm old traditions and make new beginnings.

This paragraph is speaking positively about the country and its culture, and it is not a statement that would cause disagreement among political parties, which is why it would be classified as positive.

A negative paragraph would be, from his first Inaugural address, where he says:

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our Nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the Nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly. Our schools fail too many. And each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

This paragraph would be coded as negative because it comments on the hardships that the country is facing, and all of its struggles; it also only comments on what the struggles are, and not very much on the solutions, which stops it from being partisan because it is fairly widely acknowledged across party lines that these things are problems - partisanship comes in when one starts to discuss the solutions to the problems.

President Obama's second Inaugural Address gives an example of a neutral paragraph, where he states:

Thank you. Thank you so much.Vice President Biden, Mr. Chief Justice, Members of the United States Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens.

This paragraph has no real positive or negative tone, and it is not something that would be different from one party to another. This is a simple statement without much inflection, and as such would be considered neutral.

A partisan paragraph can be found in President Obama's second Inaugural Address, where he says:

We, the people, still believe that our obligations as Americans are not just to ourselves, but to all posterity. We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations. Some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science, but none can avoid the devastating impact of raging fires and crippling drought and more powerful storms.

Because the primary topic of the paragraph - climate change - is a highly controversial topic which has sparked a lot of debate between political parties, and because it is something that people have a lot of differing opinions on, it would be coded as partisan.

This information should be able to demonstrate whether there are any major differences between what a president is willing to discuss, and how they discuss it, from their first term compared to their second term. The data from these two presidents are indicative of modern presidencies, and the conclusions drawn cannot necessarily be assumed to transfered to earlier presidencies.

Data

The data below comes from typed transcripts of the inaugural addresses made by the American Presidency Project in collaboration with the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Word Counts:

This section counts how many times the preselected words are used in each speech, attempting to show how much each topic is discussed. These counts also look for different variations of the words - meaning, when searching for "taxes," we will also count "tax" and "taxing." This section does not take context or tone into account, as it is a straight count of how often the topics are brought up. The hope is that this section will show which topics are

mentioned more than others, if there are any words/topics that are brought up in the first term but not the second term - or vice versa - or any other related information. The below charts show how many times each word within the categories was mentioned in each speech, as well as the percentage out of the total word count that they represent. The total word counts for the speeches are as follows:

Bush Term 1 - 1,591 words   Obama Term 1 - 2,385 words
Bush Term 2 - 2,069 words   Obama Term 2 - 2,090 words

Table 2:

Religion

	God	Heaven	Pray	Total
Bush - Term 1	3 (.19%)	0 (0%)	1 (.06%)	4 (.25%)
Bush - Term 2	3 (.15%)	1 (.05%)	0 (0%)	4 (.2%)
Obama - Term 1	5 (.21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (.21%)
Obama - Term 2	5 (.24%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (.24%)

Table 3:

Country

	America	**Country**	**Nation**	**Constitution**	**United States**	**Total**
Bush - Term 1	20 (1.26%)	9 (.57%)	14 (.88%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	43 (2.71%)
Bush - Term 2	30 (1.45%)	8 (.39%)	13 (.63%)	1 (.05%)	5 (.24%)	57 (2.76%)
Obama - Term 1	15 (.63%)	2 (.08%)	18 (.75%)	0 (0%)	1 (.04%)	36 (1.5%)
Obama - Term 2	19 (.91%)	7 (.33%)	10 (.48%)	1 (.05%)	2 (.1%)	39 (1.87%)

Table 4:

Unity

	Together	**Bipartisan**	**Cooperation**	**United**	**Total**
Bush - Term 1	1 (.06%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (.19%)	4 (.25%)
Bush - Term 2	1 (.05%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (.24%)	6 (.29%)
Obama - Term 1	1 (.04%)	0 (0%)	2 (.08%)	2 (.08%)	5 (.21%)
Obama - Term 2	7 (.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (.1%)	9 (.43%)

Table 5:

Economy

	Jobs	**Taxes**	**Debt**	**Economy**	**Total**
Bush - Term 1	0 (0%)	1 (.06%)	0 (0%)	2 (.13%)	3 (.19%)
Bush - Term 2	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Obama - Term 1	4 (.17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (.13%)	7 (.3%)
Obama - Term 2	2 (.1%)	1 (.05%)	0 (0%)	1 (.05%)	4 (.2%)

Table 6:

War

	Fighting	**Combat**	**War**	**Conflict**	**Total**
Bush - Term 1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (.25%)	0 (0%)	4 (.25%)
Bush - Term 2	2 (.1%)	0 (0%)	7 (.34%)	0 (0%)	9 (.44%)
Obama - Term 1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (.29%)	2 (.08%)	9 (.37%)
Obama - Term 2	1 (.05%)	0 (0%)	6 (.29%)	0 (0%)	7 (.34%)

Analyzing Paragraphs:

For these counts, each paragraph was analyzed for the primary theme. Each paragraph could only be counted in one category - whichever one that was determined to be dominant - so that it would be easier to see what the majority of the speech was discussing. There was no

"other" category for this count, so each paragraph was counted as either discussing religion, country, unity, economy, or war. The total number of paragraphs that fell under each category was counted, and then broken down to see whether the paragraph was in a positive, negative, neutral, or partisan tone. The paragraph structures comes from the written transcripts provided.

Table 7:

Bush - Term 1

January 20, 2001

Total number of paragraphs: 30

	Total	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Partisan**
Religion	5 (16.67%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.67%)	0 (0%)
Country	13 (43.33%)	7 (23.33%)	1 (3.33%)	2 (6.67%)	3 (10%)
Unity	5 (16.67%)	5 (16.67%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Economy	4 (13.33%)	0 (0%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.33%)
War	3 (10%)	2 (6.67%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.33%)

Notes: This speech began with a lot of discussion concerning the country as a whole, and then moved on to more specific topics afterwards.

Table 8:

Bush - Term 2

January 20, 2005

Total number of paragraphs: 28

	Total	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Partisan
Religion	3 (10.71%)	1 (3.58%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.58%)	1 (3.58%)
Country	8 (28.57*)	2 (7.14%)	0 (0%)	3 (10.71%)	3 (10.71%)
Unity	6 (21.43%)	3 (10.71%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.58%)	2 (7.14%)
Economy	1 (3.58%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.58%)
War	10 (35.71%)	2 (7.14%)	1 (3.58%)	2 (7.14%)	5 (17.86%)

Notes: This speech did not spend as much time on a general opening about the country - instead, this speech went into specific topics much earlier on. In addition, the initial intention of the "unity" category was to monitor how much the presidents discussed topics along the lines of bipartisanship, but in this speech much of the discussion that fell under that category was discussing international allies.

Table 9:

Obama - Term 1

January 20, 2009

Total number of paragraphs:29

	Total	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Partisan
Religion	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)
Country	16 (55.17%)	12 (41.38%)	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)	3 (10.34%)
Unity	5 (17.24%)	4 (13.79%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.45%)
Economy	4 (13.79%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (13.79%)
War	3 (10.34%)	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.9%)

Notes: Paragraphs under the "economy" category tend to also be discussing topics such as infrastructure, education, etc. - meaning, more specific policy matters. The speech began with the majority of the paragraphs being very positive, and then slowly started to become more partisan.

Table 10:

Obama - Term 2

January 21, 2013

Total number of paragraphs: 29

	Total	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Partisan
Religion	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)
Country	16 (55.17%)	4 (13.79%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.9%)	10 (34.48%)
Unity	4 (13.79%)	3 (10.34%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.45%)
Economy	5 (17.24%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.45%)	4 (13.79%)
War	3 (10.34%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (10.34%)

Notes: This speech discusses many more partisan issues - such as social security, medicare and medicaid, climate change, etc. - than the first term speech. Almost all mentions of "economy" were mentioned in a partisan tone.

Analysis

The charts and graphs below display the most valuable results gathered from the data.

Bush Total Word Count Comparison
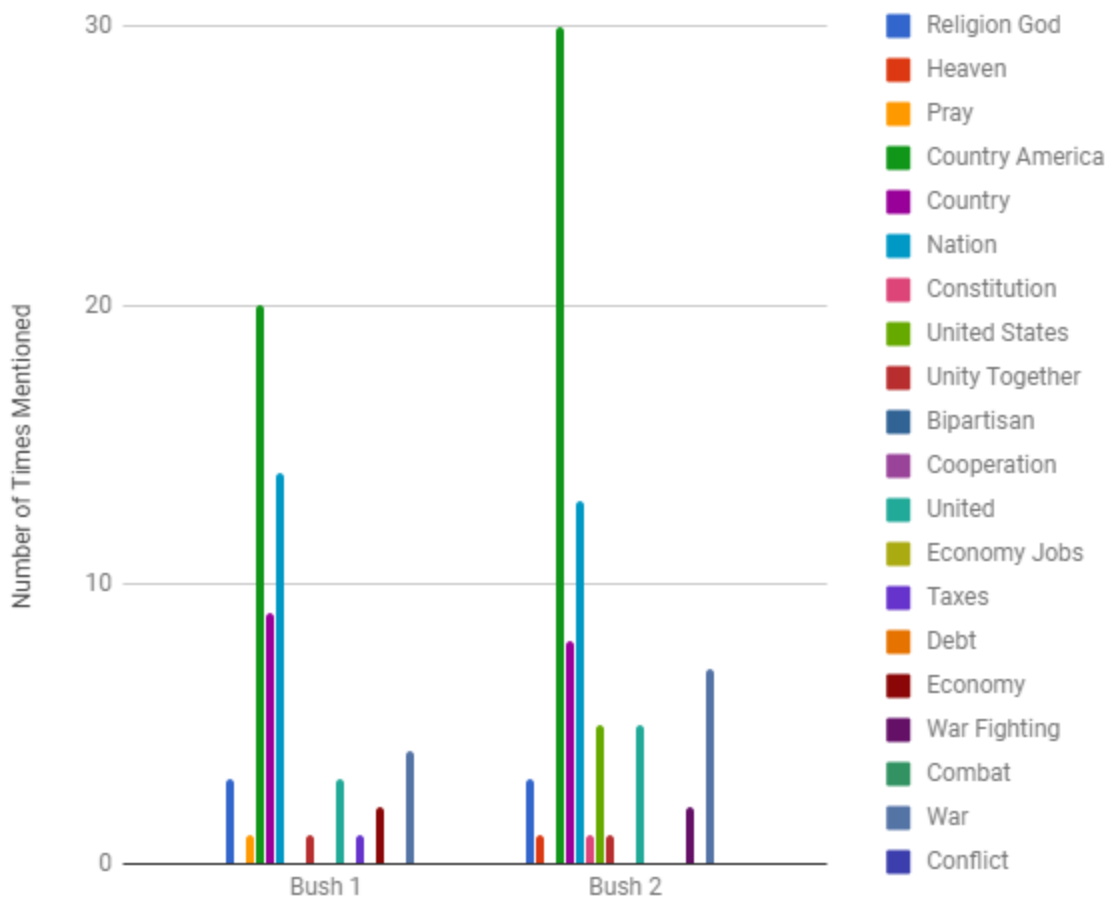
This graph displays the differences between the word count in Bush's first and second term speeches. The most obvious changes that you can see in this graph is the increase in the mentions of war, the United States, and America from his first term to his second term. The break down of the word counts for each speech by Bush are below.

Bush First Inaugural Address Paragraph Count
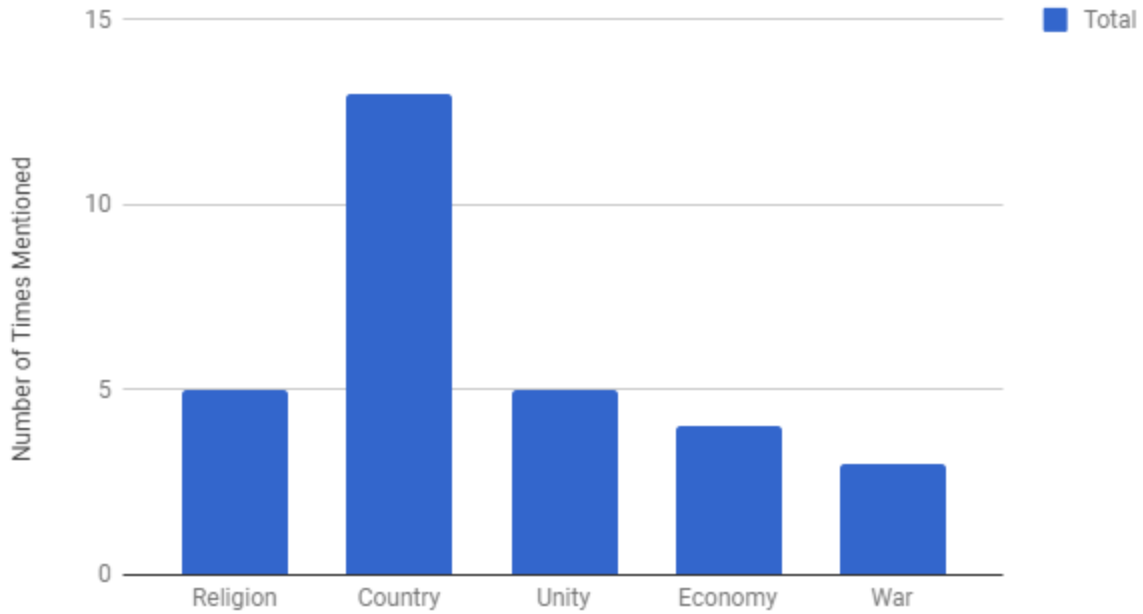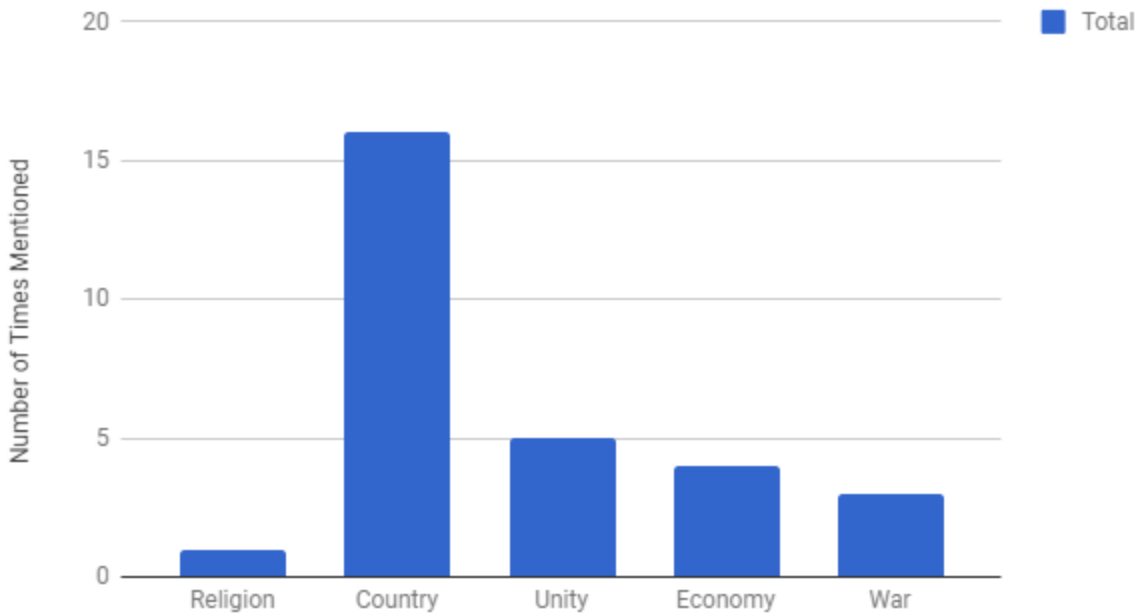

Bush Second Inaugural Address Paragraph Count
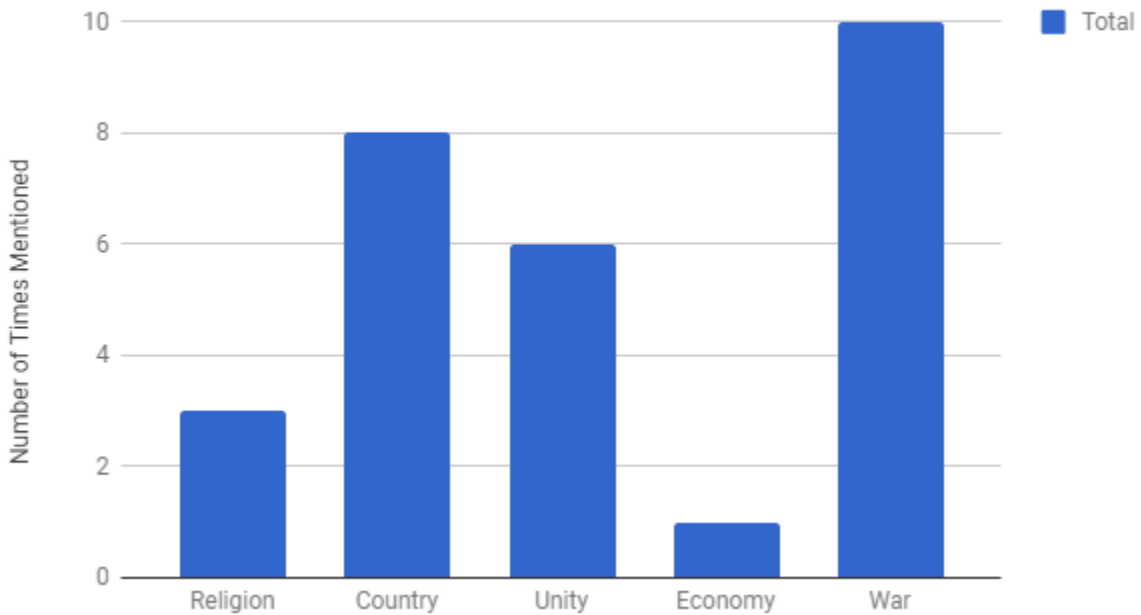
The graphs below display the differences between Obama's first term Inaugural Address word counts and his second term. The first graph shows the two speeches side by side, and the second

and third show a breakdown of each speech. From these, you can see that the most notable

differences are the decrease in mentions of nation and jobs - which go from 18 to 10 and 4 to 2,

respectively - and the increase in mentions of country and America - which go from 2 to 7, and

15 to 19, respectively.

Obama Total Word Count Comparison
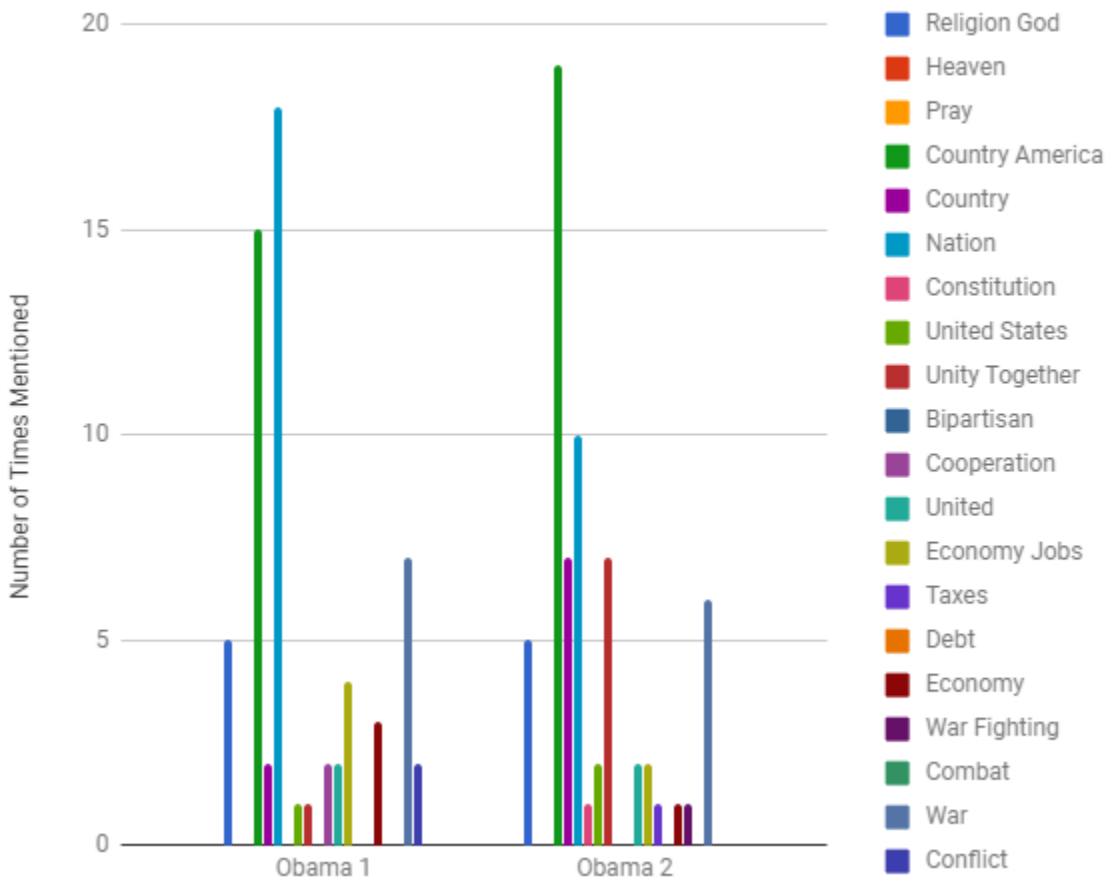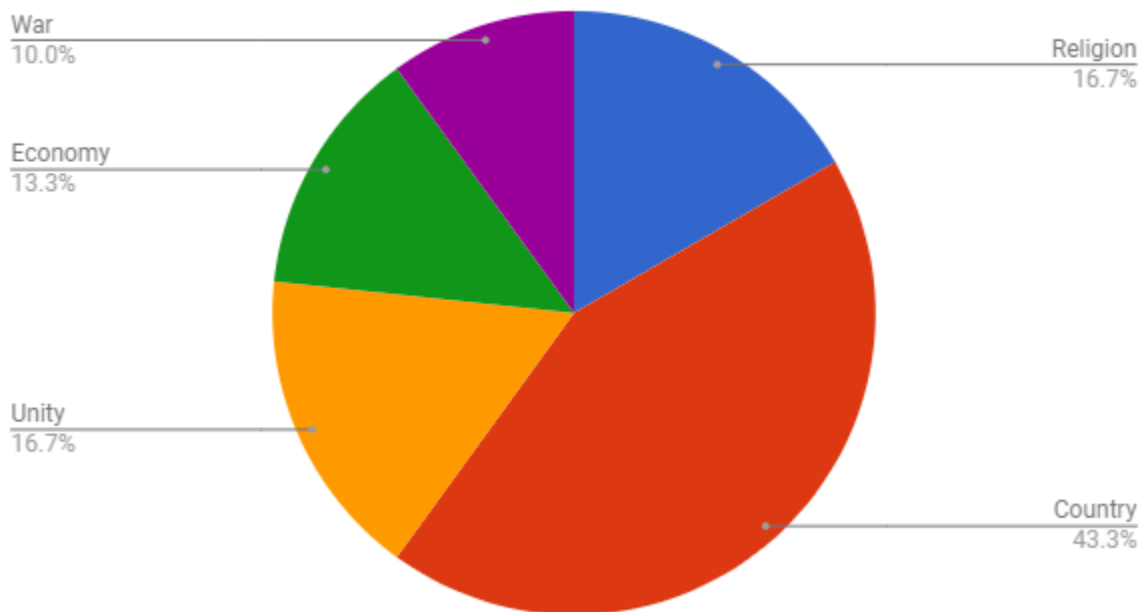
Obama First Inaugural Address Paragraph Count

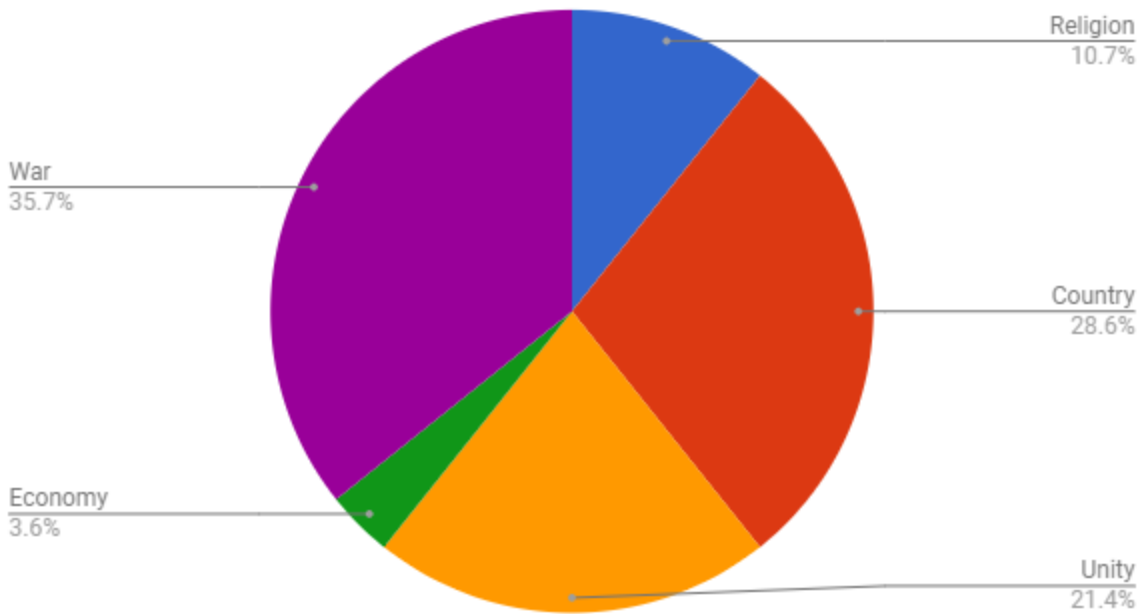## Obama Second Inaugural Address Paragraph Count
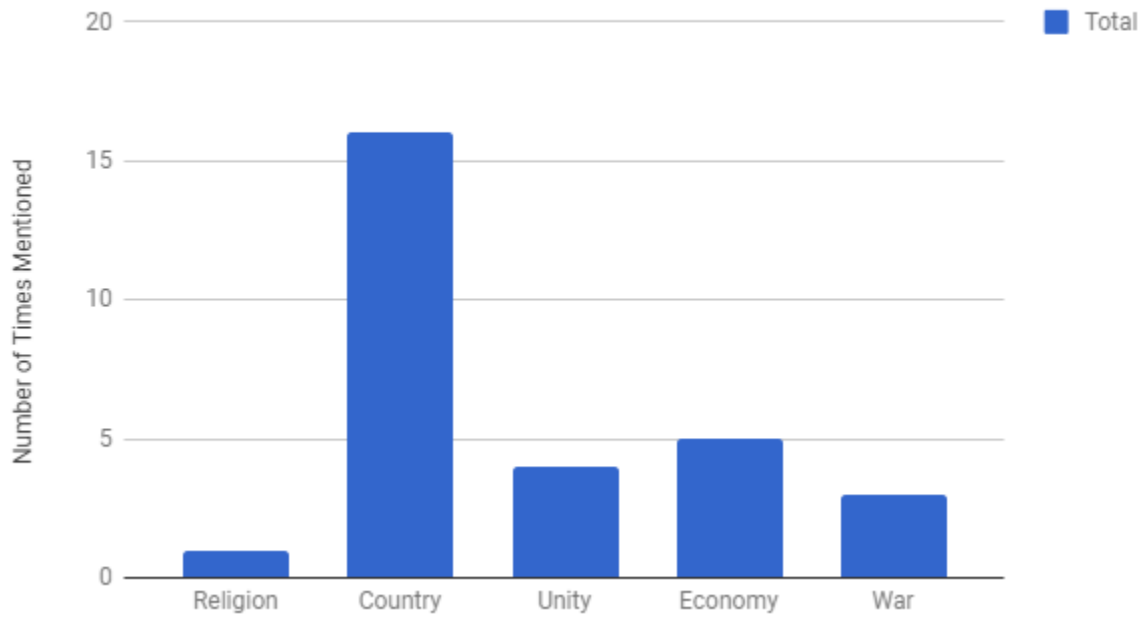
The more informative data comes from the paragraph counts, rather than the word counts. From these graphs, you can see how much of the speech was on each topic - as the counts included

every paragraph - and you can also see the tones that were used the most for each category. The

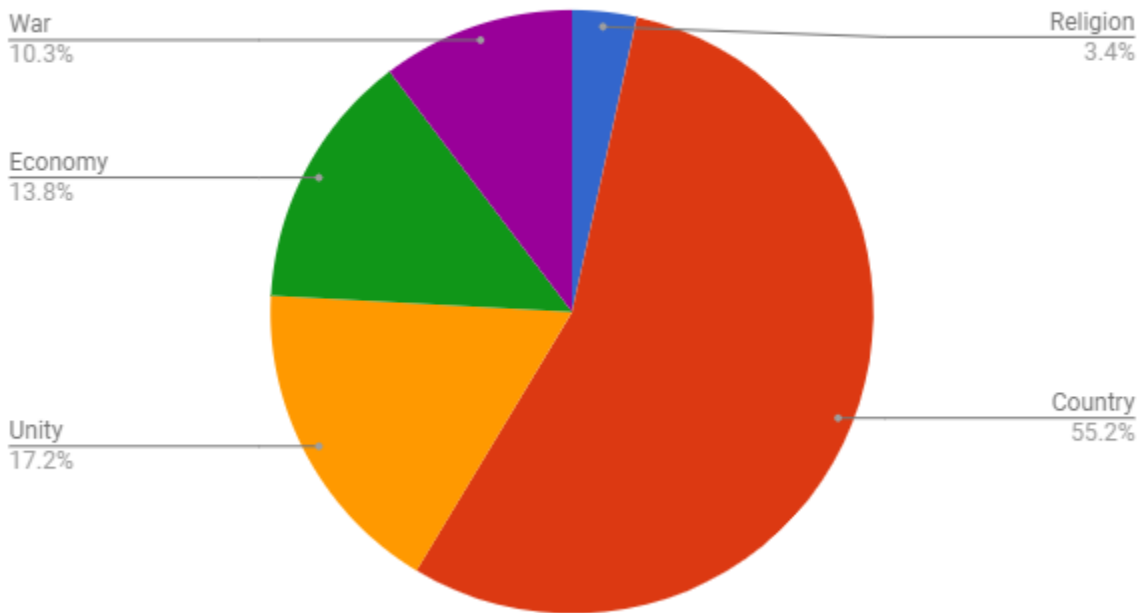below graphs show the paragraph analysis breakdown for all of the speeches involved in this

research.

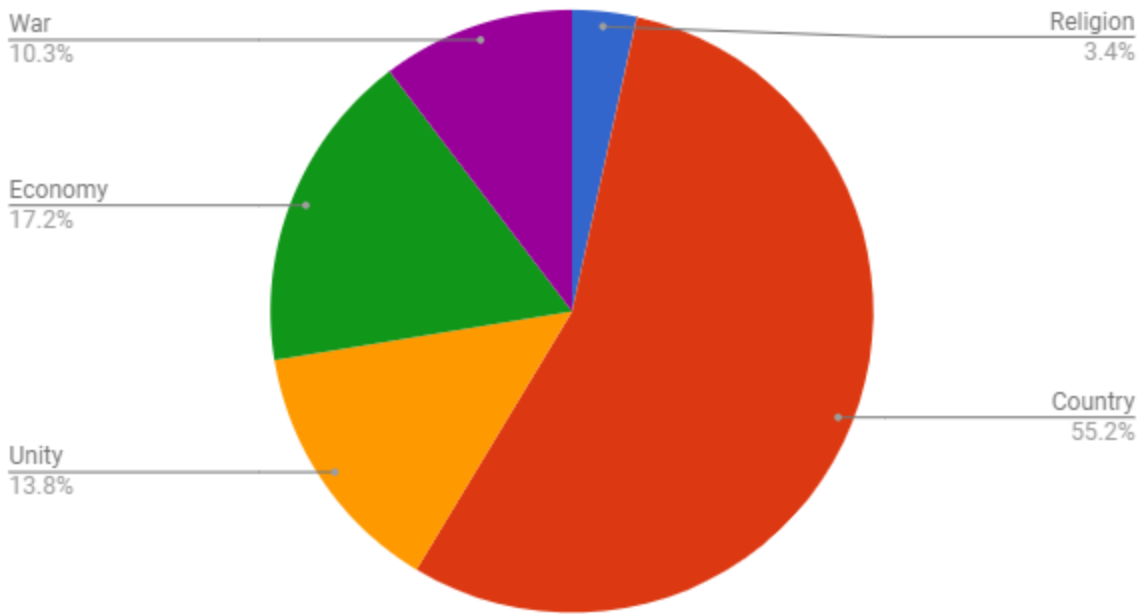## Bush First Inaugural Address Breakdown

War
10.0%

Economy
13.3%

Unity
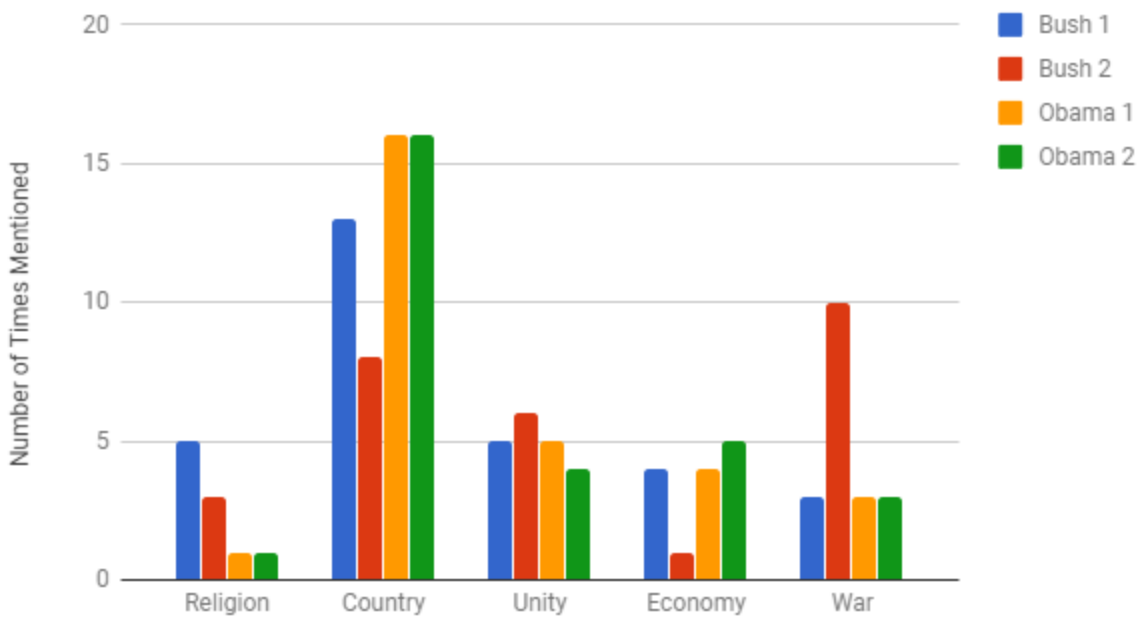16.7%

Religion
16.7%

Country
43.3%

Bush Second Inaugural Address Breakdown

Religion 10.7%
Country 28.6%
Unity 21.4%
Economy 3.6%
War 35.7%

Obama First Inaugural Address Breakdown

Religion 3.4%
Country 55.2%
Unity 17.2%
Economy 13.8%
War 10.3%

25

Obama Second Inaugural Address Breakdown

- War 10.3%
- Religion 3.4%
- Economy 17.2%
- Country 55.2%
- Unity 13.8%

Paragraph Count Comparison

Legend:
- Bush 1
- Bush 2
- Obama 1
- Obama 2

Y-axis: Number of Times Mentioned (0–20)
X-axis categories: Religion, Country, Unity, Economy, War

Paragraph Tone Comparison
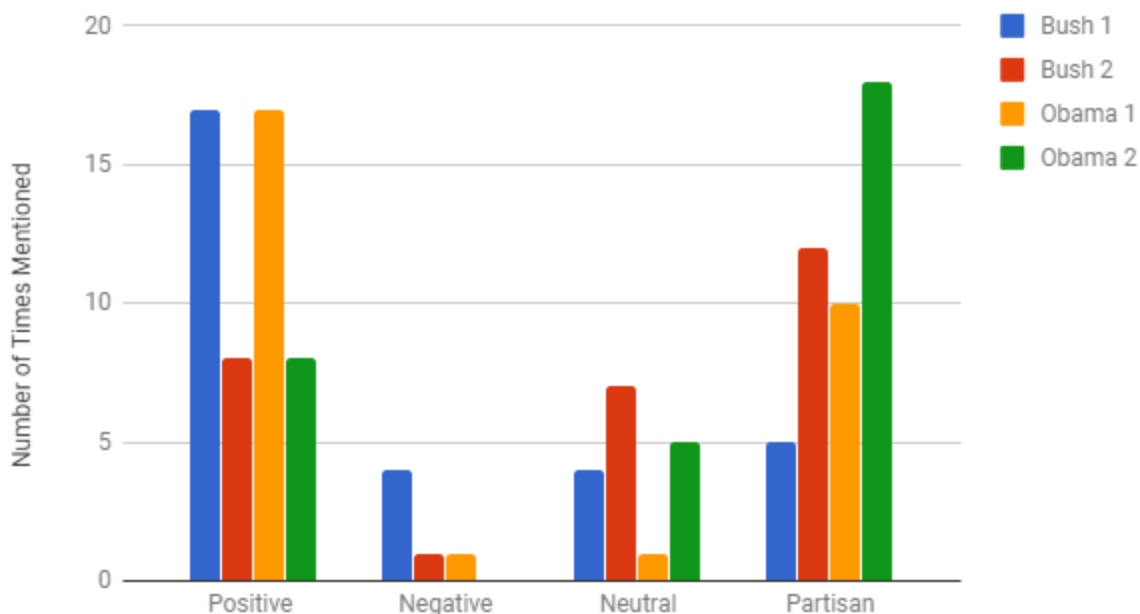
Discussion

Word Count

The results from the word count version of the content analysis did not say as much towards the research goal as was hoped for, though we could still gather some conclusions from the results. The most obvious conclusion that can be drawn is that out of all of the categories, the one that was mentioned the most was "country" - and by a large margin. Whereas the other topics were mentioned less than 10 times (or less than 0.5% of the speech) on average, country was mentioned 40-50 times (or 1.5 - 2.75% of the speech) per president. Beyond that obvious conclusion, there are some more subtle trends that can be drawn per president.

For President Bush, there were notable differences in his mentions of economy and war: economy was mentioned 3 times (.13%) in his first speech but none (0%) in his second, while war was mentioned 4 times (0.25%) in his first speech and 9 (0.44%) in his last. President

Obama had similar trends when it came to mentioning economy - 7 times (0.3%) in his first speech and only 4 (0.2%) in his second - but his mentions of war *decreased* from his first term to his second term, rather than increased like President Bush. This could suggest that it is a trend for presidents to discuss the economy more in their first term Inaugural Address than their second, but the differences are not quite drastic enough to definitively conclude that. Another common change from first term to second term speeches that is seen is that mentions of unity increase from the first to the second (President Bush went from mentioning it 4 times (0.25%) in his first speech to 6 times (0.29%) in his second, and President Obama increased from mentioning it 5 times (0.21%) in his first speech to 9 (0.43%) in his second). Again in this case, while the changes may suggest a trend, the differences are not noticeable enough to be clear.

Paragraph Count

The more telling part of analyses done was the paragraph counts. During the analysis of the data, it is important to keep in mind that all 4 speeches that were looked at had roughly the same number of total paragraphs - between 28 and 30 - meaning that, generally speaking, you can assume that 7 paragraphs in one speech holds approximately the same amount of weight as 7 paragraphs in any of the other speeches.

While President Bush saw some large differences in the number of times that topics were discussed from his first term to his second term, President Obama did not see the same changes. In Bush's speeches, you can see an increase from mentioning war 3 times in his first term to 10 times in his second, and a decrease of discussing the country 13 times in his first term to only discussing it 8 times in his second term. Obama, on the other hand, discussed religion, the country, and war the same amount in each speech, and only had a difference of one paragraph for both unity and economy. Therefore, no concrete conclusions can be drawn about trends in topics

shifting from first term to second term presidents from these paragraph analyses. The more likely explanation to the shift in topics discussed in President Bush's speeches was that during his first term the 9/11 terrorism attacks - and resulting military deployments in the Middle East - occurred, making war a much more relevant topic in his second speech than it was at the time of his first.

Although there not large noticeable trends in the topics discussed from first term to second term, there were more obvious trends in the tone and context that topics were discussed in. Coincidentally, both presidents had 17 "positive" coded paragraphs in their first term speeches, and only 8 coded as positive in their second. This suggests that, perhaps, in the first term Inaugural Address, both presidents wanted to maintain a more positive outlook on what they were discussing. It is telling that both presidents had more than half of their paragraphs be coded as positive for their first terms, but only about a quarter of their second term speeches be coded as positive.

In correlation with those numbers, both president saw an increase in partisan and neutral paragraphs in their second term speeches, as compared to their first term. President Bush went from 4 neutral and 5 partisan paragraphs - or 13.33% neutral and 16.67% partisan - in his first term, to 7 neutral and 12 partisan paragraphs - or 25% neutral and 42.86% partisan - in his second. Similarly, President Obama saw an increase from 1 neutral and 10 partisan paragraphs - or 3.45% neutral and 34.48% partisan - to 5 neutral and 18 partisan paragraphs - or 17.24% neutral and 62.01% partisan. These changes align with the theory that presidents are more likely to be partisan and controversial in their second term, because they are not trying to attract moderate or swing voters.

Possible Flaws

There were some possible flaws with this research, which may have caused slightly skewed research. One flaw, or bias, that impacted the research was that when coding paragraphs as positive/negative/neutral/partisan, the decisions were influenced by the knowledge of each president's party affiliation and the political history of what actions they would later take during their presidencies. Knowing what the presidents will do later on colors the interpretation of the words of their speech. Another aspect that could slightly skew the results is that the paragraph analysis section did not have an "other" section, which resulted in some paragraphs being coded under a category even if they did not strictly or obviously fall under that category.

This research was also highly subjective, especially in the paragraph analysis section, as coding each paragraph under a category and their tone was highly based on the interpretations of the researcher. The coding of the tone of the paragraph, especially, was highly influenced by the actions of that president as well as the current political climate at the time of the research. Other possible flaws include the limited number of presidents that were analyzed, as concrete conclusions cannot accurately be drawn from two samples. In addition, the words that were pre-selected for the word count section may present a flaw, as they may not have been the best words to represent those categories, and only looking for those words may have led to an undercounting of the categories - this flaw was offset, though, by the fact that the paragraph analyses were also done.

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to see whether or not there are clear differences in speeches from first and second term presidents. Theoretically, if there were differences it would indicate that something was causing presidents to act differently in their first term than they did in their

second, quite likely because of the re-election possibilities. It is both possible and probable that American presidents in their first term act and speak with the idea of re-election in their mind during their first term; when, in their second term, that idea is no longer a possibility, their actions and words are likely to change.

This study looked into two presidents' Inaugural Addresses to try to see if those changes were visible in the first speech of every presidency. The initial hypothesis was that these changes would be seen in the topics that were discussed, meaning that first term presidents would discuss one topic more than second term presidents, and another topic less. What was actually seen was that while there were no major changes in how often pre-selected topics were discussed, their tone and the context that these topics were discussed in did change. Presidents in their first term were shown to have almost twice as many positive paragraphs than they did in their second term - quite possibly because in their first term they were still trying to remain optimistic and attractive to voters. In their second term, both presidents were shown to almost double the number of paragraphs that were coded to be partisan - most likely because they were no longer trying to attract swing voters, and were therefore more likely to speak about what they actually want to say.

Therefore, it can be concluded that although presidents may not change the topics that they discuss from term to term, there is a trend that they will change their tone in order to be more appealing to the population base that is not firmly set to vote a certain way in the next election. In order to firmly state whether or not this trend can be applied to all American presidents, past and future, this research would have to be expanded to more than the two most recent presidents. A logical continuation of this research would be to look into more of the past presidents to see if the same trends hold true. One could apply the same methods to all post-FDR

presidents who served two terms, in order to find presidents who knew that they could possibly be elected again after their first term but not their second, and see if the same patterns appear. If they did, it could reasonably be predicted that, were President Trump to win a second term, you would see the same trends in his speeches as well.

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