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# The Effects of Media Coverage on Public Opinion: A Comparative Case Study of Clinton and Trump's Impeachments by the House

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THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA COVERAGE ON PUBLIC OPINION: A COMPARATIVE  
CASE STUDY OF CLINTON AND TRUMP'S IMPEACHMENTS BY THE HOUSE

By Alexa Mellis

An Independent Study Thesis  
submitted to the Department of Political Science  
at The College of Wooster  
March, 2021  
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## Abstract

Impeachment is a rather rare phenomenon, and thus is widely understudied. Specifically, there is a lack of research regarding the ability of the news media to affect public opinion toward impeachment. However, there is reason to believe the media plays a significant role in shaping attitudes on impeachment: the media greatly influences the general public and because elected officials are focused on re-election, they are inclined to listen to the general public's views regarding salient issues such as impeachment. This independent study aims to holistically understand the implications of the media influencing public opinion with regard to impeachment. I hypothesize that as a result of either neutral or positive coverage, co-partisans of the President will hold positive attitudes toward the President or his political party and against impeachment, while members of the opposing party will continue to hold negative attitudes toward the President and his party i.e. supporting impeachment. When partisan independents are presented with neutral or positive coverage of an impeached president, I expect their evaluations to remain consistent with the general public's opinion. To evaluate my hypotheses, I employ a comparative case study approach, specifically looking at President Clinton's 1998 impeachment and President Trump's 2019 impeachment. I combine content analysis of newspaper coverage with quantitative analyses of public opinion during these impeachments. Through the content analysis and difference of means tests, I find that there is in fact a relationship between polarization, media coverage, and views towards impeachment, driven by the tenor of media coverage throughout the various stages of the impeachment process.

## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

On Wednesday, January 13, 2021, President Donald J. Trump was impeached for the second time by the United States House of Representatives. This time around, he was impeached for “incitement of insurrection.” The House vote was 232-197: ten Republicans crossed party lines by voting to impeach, while every Democrat voted in support of impeachment (Kilgore 2021). On the contrary, with Trump’s first impeachment in December 2019, zero Republicans voted in favor of impeachment, while three Democrats sided with Republicans (Kilgore 2021). By February 13, 2021, Trump was acquitted, and despite being impeached by the House twice, permitted to run for office in the future (Kilgore 2021). With regard to Trump’s second impeachment, it was much more evident via Twitter and his speech in Washington that he did in fact incite an insurrection. Despite this, *only* ten Republicans crossed party lines. This is not a coincidence. This is a result of increasing levels of polarization and negative partisanship, which have been on the rise since the 1980’s (Mason 2018). Scholars have coined the term “negative partisanship,” in reference to party member’s intense dislike of “the other” political party. According to Liliana Mason (2018), people often dislike the other party more than they like their own political party. But this drastic shift in our political climate did not happen overnight.

The media has been extremely influential in the increase of polarization and negative partisanship. The media frames issues in a partisan lens, which influences how people think about certain issues. On a daily basis, the news media reinforces these partisan norms, with certain media outlets coining themselves as conservative or liberal,

allowing Americans to self-select into which news they hear, and how different information is portrayed. For example, according to a Pew Research study, sixty-three percent of Fox News regulars believed Trump's response to COVID-19 was excellent (Gramlich 2020). When MSNBC regulars were asked the same question, only two percent believed his response was excellent (Gramlich 2020). However, looking at all adults in the United States, this number is twenty-three percent (Gramlich 2020). This issue of selective exposure is even worse with the use of Twitter and Facebook as news sources, as people tend to follow other people with the same political beliefs. Selective exposure is the idea that people opt-in to news-sources that re-affirm their partisan beliefs (Stroud 2010, 557-558). Additionally, these sources as news sources are incredibly problematic because there is no fact-checking on either platform, in addition to very few barriers to what content people are able to share.

Because of these issues and the general ability of the media to frame public opinion, I argue that impeachment attitudes are not simply a result of increasing polarization and negative partisanship. In the case of Trump's first impeachment, as well as Bill Clinton's impeachment in 1998, the media constantly reinforced these partisan norms, further polarizing the country. Impeachment was framed as one party against the other, regardless of the evidence presented throughout the impeachment inquiry. Rather than focusing on the politics of impeachment, the media framed the issue to be Democrats versus Republicans. It has become a series of attacks on "the other," rather than a means of institutional checks and balances intended by the Framers of the Constitution.

In support of this argument, I explore the following hypotheses: first, among co-partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will manifest as positive attitudes toward the President and his political party; second, that among opposing partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship result in negative attitudes toward the President and his political party; finally, among Independents, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, evaluations of the President will remain consistent with the general public's opinion. In order to evaluate these hypotheses, I conduct a comparative case study of the Clinton and Trump impeachments, conducting a content analysis of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to study the media's tone.

Chapter two synthesizes the existing literature regarding impeachment and the media's ability to frame issues and shape public opinion through its coverage. In particular, I focus on polarization, negative partisanship, the media's role in influencing public opinion, and the media's tone. This section is concluded with gaps in the literature and expectations for my project. Chapter three begins with a Theory section, which primarily focuses on negative partisanship and the media's role in shaping public opinion. Following this, my three hypotheses are further explained, along with my research design and methodology. In chapter three, I also provide justification for my case selection as well as my coding guidelines.

Chapter four involves a discussion and analysis of my findings in relation to my hypotheses. Through conducting difference of means tests, I find general support for my hypotheses regarding polarization, the media, and views towards impeachment. The

media and how it chooses to frame impeachment has an effect on the attitudes of the mass public toward either the impeached President or his political party, though these results are contingent on individuals' own partisan affiliation. Finally, in chapter five I summarize my findings and their implications, as well as strengths and weaknesses of my project. Last, I discuss areas for future research. At the end of this project there is an Appendix, with all of my descriptive statistics, the results of my difference of means tests, as well as sample articles and coding sheets, and my overall coding results.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

Since the Founding Fathers began discussing impeachment, there has been an ongoing debate surrounding the topic (Sunstein 1998, 279). These issues include what constitutes impeachment, how the impeachment process works, and the potential outcomes of impeachment. Over time these issues have become clearer; however in the Constitution the Framers left room for interpretation.

In regard to what constitutes grounds for impeachment, the Constitution states, “Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors” (Sunstein 1998, 279). This has been interpreted to mean that criminal violations are not necessary or sufficient for impeachment (Sunstein 1998, 284). The terminology that the Founding Fathers used was not by accident; “high” was intended to illustrate the seriousness of abuse of power (Sunstein 1998, 285). This phrase leaves much up to interpretation, as “high crimes and misdemeanors,” or abuse of power, can mean many different things to different individuals or Congresses in general. Because of the vague, but carefully selected language that the Founders used, Gerald Ford believed that “an impeachable offense ‘is whatever a majority of the House of Representatives considers [it] to be’” (Sunstein 1998, 282). Thus, there is really no set of exact guidelines for what constitutes impeachment, but rather, impeachment is determined by what one branch of government believes.

In fact, over the years, several other Presidents could, and maybe should have been impeached (Sunstein 1998, 281). It was believed that President Reagan and

President Bush were involved in unlawful acts surrounding the Iran-Contra Controversy (Sunstein 1998, 296-297). President Roosevelt was accused of secret arms transports to other countries (Sunstein 1998, 297). Eisenhower lied about a Soviet Union plane and shipping arms to other countries (Sunstein 1998, 297). President Ford was suspected of making a deal with President Nixon to pardon him (Sunstein 1998, 298). Similar to Clinton, President Kennedy was accused of sexual relationships while in office (Sunstein 1998, 298). Finally, President Lincoln suspended the right of habeas corpus (Sunstein 1998, 298). However, none of these former Presidents were impeached. While this may be in part due to lack of clarity in the Constitution, this may be due to lack of media support for the impeachment of these Presidents, and thus, positive public perceptions of these Presidents. Especially among recent Presidents on this list, lack of media and public support was likely a factor, due to the growing media presence over the past several decades. Because the media plays a crucial role in influencing public opinion, the media may have saved these Presidents from impeachment. Similarly, due to their large influence on the public, the media may have influenced the political context for those Presidents that were impeached by the House.

Going back to Gerald Ford's quote, the House ultimately decides what is an impeachable offense, but the general, voting public plays a large role in any decision made within the United States democratic system due to their influence in November. This may explain why numerous former Presidents have not been impeached; the House knew it was not favorable among the public, and thus did not call for impeachment. Therefore, the public's views can impact the turnout of impeachment proceedings, let



alone any salient issue. This is because, at the end of the day, Members of Congress are focused on getting re-elected to another term (Mayhew 1974). Thus, if a large portion of their constituents are strongly against impeachment, it is likely that their vote will follow suit, and vice versa. Therefore, could the fact that the two most recently impeached presidents- Clinton and Trump- were acquitted by the Senate be due to public opinion, which is ultimately shaped by negative partisanship and the mass media?

### Role of Negative Partisanship

First, it is important to consider the impact of negative partisanship on public opinion. Negative partisanship has been defined as the pattern of voting on the basis of hostility towards the opposition party and their leaders (Abramowitz and McCoy 2018, 139). In fact, negative partisanship has become so strong that, “even weak partisans in the U.S. now hold negative views of the out-party” (Bankert 2020, 3). Social identity theory is the theoretical framework for understanding negative partisanship (Bankert 2020, 5). This idea comes from the minimal group paradigm, illustrated in Henri Tajfel’s experiment in the late 1960’s. In this experiment, Tajfel “found evidence of ingroup bias: a preference for privileging of the ingroup over the outgroup” (Mason 2018, 11). Being part of a group, regardless of how meaningful or meaningless the group is, ingroup favoritism results: “Even when there is nothing to fight over, group members want to win” (Mason 2018, 11). These same primal tendencies are found throughout American politics (Mason 2018, 12). The outgroup is “the other” party, while the ingroup falls into the same political party as the individual (Mason 2018). Mason argues that “according to social identity theory, group members, at a very primal level, are powerfully motivated to see outgroups as different from them and to view the world through a competitive lens,

with importance placed on their own group's superiority" (Mason 2018, 49). Mason believes that Democrats and Republicans "dislike, even loathe" each other, due to their group's identity (Mason 2018, 47). In fact, differing policy opinions plays a very small role in this partisan "loathing" (Mason 2018, 47). Policy disagreement alone cannot explain the extent that partisans loathe one another (Mason 2018, 50). Today, the parties primary concern is winning (Mason 2018, 48). Policy results are not the main concern for average partisans, while winning is (Mason 2018, 54). Additionally, politics is not the only thing dividing the parties: "The American political parties are growing socially polarized. Religion, race, as well as class, geography, and culture are dividing the parties in such a way that the effect of party identity is magnified" (Mason 2018, 14). Thus, when dealing with many political issues, politics are not the only lens through which these issues are examined.

This idea of negative partisanship has been on the rise since the 1980s. In 1980, an average of 75% of Democrats and Republicans combined consistently voted for their party. Between the 2004 and 2012 elections, this number rises to an average of 90%, which is a rather significant increase (Abramowitz and Webster 2016, 14). Additionally, in 2016, voters gave their own party an average rating of sixty-two degrees, and the opposing party an average rating of twenty-three degrees on a feeling- thermometer scale ranging from zero to one-hundred (Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 122). In fact, partisan voting in general increased significantly between the 1970s and 2000s, with the number of strong partisan identifiers (Mason 2018, 46). Between 2008 and 2012, the country's feelings towards the political parties became increasingly polarized, while

policy attitudes stayed constant (Mason 2018, 52). As illustrated in the 2018 congressional elections, Democrats and Republicans dislike the opposing party more than they like their own party (Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 122). Voters would prefer to vote for a candidate from their own party that they are not totally confident in, than vote for the other party's candidate, again reinforcing the prioritization of out-group animus over in-group preference (Abramowitz and McCoy 2018, 149; Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 132). Despite both Hillary Clinton and Trump being unfavorable in 2016, co-partisans remained loyal to their political party (Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 132). Despite candidates' unfavourability in the 2016 election, eighty- nine percent of Democrats voted for Hillary Clinton while eighty- eight percent of Republicans voted for Donald Trump (Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 120).

Negative partisanship has been a common strategy employed by the Trump administration since the beginning of his presidential campaign and throughout his presidency, thus increasing polarization (Carothers and O'Donohue 2019, 76). Rather than trying to please the public as a whole, President Trump appeals to his base, the far right (Carothers and O'Donohue 2019, 76). During Trump's campaign, he created a divide between "us," the true Americans who wanted white males to be in charge, versus "them," the immigrants, minorities, liberals, and others that disagree with Trump (Abramowitz and McCoy 2018, 139). This idea was strengthened throughout the impeachment proceedings and afterward. Even in his last weeks in office, Trump further divided the country by claiming the 2020 election was a fraud and instigating violence at the Capital. Clearly, President Trump consistently attacks opponents and skeptics, makes

issues partisan, and is hostile towards the media (Carothers and O'Donohue 2019, 76).

Trump views the opposition as the other “team”, who was constantly harassing him and the Republican Party, which again, illustrates that Trump has relied on the strategy of negative partisanship and polarization since the beginning of his campaign. He has consistently rallied his far-right base and other Republicans to feel and act more on his “side” and push Democrats further away, reinforcing the idea of negative partisanship among voters.

Because Americans vote this way in elections, it is likely that these same ideas can be applied to the case of impeachment. This is due to the fact that in both instances focused on here, impeachment was framed as attacks by the opposing party rather than a constitutional debate over executive power. Therefore, partisans are likely to stick with their political party regarding opinions towards impeachment. Additionally, although the framers discussed impeachment as a constitutional process prior to the advent of modern political parties, the dynamics of contemporary partisanship has transformed impeachment into a brazenly political process. Thus, the way that this constitutional matter is enacted today may lead to questions about the legitimacy of the process, due to inevitable partisanship that comes with modern politics. For example, attitudes towards Kenneth Starr’s investigation of Clinton at the time of impeachment revealed that fifty-eight percent of Republicans said that the investigation was impartial, while only ten percent of Democrats considered it an impartial investigation (Miller 1999, 723). Comparatively, thirty-seven percent of Republicans said Starr’s investigation was partisan, while the same figure for Democrats was eighty-eight percent (Miller 1999,

723). This illustrates the idea of negative partisanship, as Democrats blamed Republican leaders for impeachment and showed hostility towards Republican leaders. In terms of opinions on the House impeachment process, thirty-seven percent of Republicans said that the process was partisan, compared to seventy-four percent of Democrats (Miller 1999, 723). This once again reinforces the prevalence of negative partisanship with regards to public opinion on impeachment.

In fact, during the Clinton impeachment proceedings, Republicans aimed to fiercely oppose the Democratic agenda, and at the same time, attack Clinton's credibility (Carothers and O'Donohue 2019, 74). Republicans wanted to make this a polarized issue and did everything they could to blame Democrats (Carothers and O'Donohue 2019, 74). According to Newt Gingrich, "It was obvious that this was not an issue of the President having another affair, there was an issue of perjury involved" (Gillon 2008, 224). This references the partisanship surrounding the Starr investigation led by Kenneth Starr and the Republican party, which focused on perjury and sex, and thus in turn, made perjury and sex partisan issues. Gingrich's quote illustrates the two different perspectives taken by the two political parties: viewing impeachment as a sex scandal, or something more. On the other side of the spectrum, at least according to Gingrich, Clinton wanted to politicize the issue, in order to confuse the general public (Gillon 2008, 225). Gingrich believed that Clinton wanted the impeachment process to appear as a power struggle between political parties to the general public, which is how Clinton framed the issue (Gillon 2008, 225). Thus, based on the Clinton impeachment, it is clear that polarization plays a factor on both sides.

## The Media and Public Opinion

Every day, the media influences issue salience among the public, otherwise known as agenda-setting. Agenda-setting refers to the media influencing what topics the public discusses and finds important (McCombs 2014, 1). The salience of the news media's agenda is communicated through where the story appears (McCombs 2014, 1). For example, if a story is covered on the front page, the media is setting it up to be viewed as more important than a story covered on the back page (McCombs 2014, 1). The public is directly influenced by the media's agenda. Thus, media salience leads to public salience, in that what issues the media finds to be important will then become issues that the public finds to be important (McCombs 2014, 2). The first stage in forming public opinion is creating salience among the public and placing an issue on the agenda for debate and discussion (McCombs 2014, 2).

Despite the rise of social media, many online sources rely on agenda-setting very similarly to previous decades dominated by print and television news (McCombs 2014, 18). Additionally, there are very little generational differences in the effect of agenda-setting (McCombs 2014, 19). While there is evidence that younger generations are not exposed to "traditional" media as often as older generations, there is little evidence that a common public agenda will disappear with differing media outlets (McCombs 2014, 21). In fact, the differences in types of media used had very little influence on agenda-setting effects (McCombs 2014, 21). Paying attention to political news in general strongly influences issue salience, and in fact, matters more than which newspapers or news television shows one follows (McCombs 2014, 21).

In addition, issue framing, which is very similar to agenda-setting, shapes what individuals perceive to be most important, which then alters experiences and behavior (Haynes, Merolla and Ramakrishnan 2016, 17). Democratic and Republican leaders fight one another to frame issues first, as they believe that they will influence the public's beliefs and behavior (Haynes, Merolla and Ramakrishnan 2016, 17). While this specific example referenced Republican and Democratic leaders, elites are not the only ones who frame issues. The mass media frames issues every day, which plays a critical role in what and how people think about particular issues (Haynes, Merolla and Ramakrishnan 2016, 18). Not only is this news coverage on a daily basis, but it is 24/7, with the rise of social media. Additionally, outside of this, certain news sources have a clear partisan agenda, such as Fox, which is a right-wing media source. On the contrary, MSNBC is clearly a liberal news outlet. As a result, the mass public is exposed to near-constant framing of issues in explicitly partisan terms on a daily basis.

In the context of impeachment, according to Jurkowitz and Mitchel (2020), the sources that Democrats and Republicans use are directly related to their perceptions of Trump's actions towards Ukraine in 2019. Conservatives who only received political information from right-leaning sources had different responses than liberals who received information from left-leaning sources (Jurkowitz and Mitchel 2020). Additionally, partisan views of why Donald Trump withheld information differ depending on the media source (Jurkowitz and Mitchel 2020). Thus, public opinion is extremely dependent on the media source by which news is received. Because of the partisan agendas that many news media corporations possess, news becomes partisan, as the public relies on the news for

information. In fact, the media tends to present information in a manner that focuses on the differences between groups, instead of reporting about the general public's view on various issues (Anastasio, Rose and Chapman 1999, 155). This idea may be a result of these biased news outlets, that focus their attention on one end of the spectrum or the other.

Over time, actual news coverage of the presidency has shifted. Today, there is less news focused on the President, and the news that is centered around the President is more negative than in the past (Cohen 2008, 135). In fact, according to Thomas Patterson, "news outlets have softened their coverage. Their news has also become increasingly critical in tone" (Cohen 2008, 136). Thus, Patterson illustrates that coverage has both gotten softer but simultaneously more critical. Compared to the "broadcast era," the majority of the public consumes less news, and increasingly distrusts news outlets (Cohen 2008, 135). While the media constantly evolves and changes, with President Trump's 2016 campaign and election, the media dramatically shifted (Hird, Russell and McCombs 2018, 275). For example, typically, Presidents use the media to convey their public agenda to the general public. However, President Trump finds the media "biased and self-serving," and thus, resorts to Twitter rather than traditional media outlets such as newspapers or television networks (Hird, Russell and McCombs 2018, 275-276). Rather than using Twitter to convey important messages, President Trump frequently attacks opponents in 140 characters or less. This reinforces negative partisanship, as the President of the country publicly condemns the opposition, which then puts these ideas into the public's minds. Not only is the President perpetuating the idea of negative



partisanship, but the media potentially could be as well. Whether the media is aware of it or not, by covering Trump's tweets, media outlets may be strengthening negative partisanship and increasing the divide between political parties. Finally, the way that the media discusses and frames their coverage of President Trump, and his Tweets, for example, potentially influences the public's views.

### Role of the Media, Polarization and Tone

Additionally, the growing media divide helps perpetuate negative partisanship by allowing partisans to self-select into news sources and stories that best fit their ideologies and party platforms (Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 128). This idea of selective exposure argues that viewers opt-in to news-sources that confirm their partisan preferences or avoid news sources that challenge their beliefs. Moreover, selective exposure leads to lower tolerance for others' opposing viewpoints and the adoption of more extreme views, contributing to the country's rising aggregate levels of partisan polarization (Stroud 2010, 557- 558). For example, in the days following the news of the Clinton- Lewinsky scandal, the story monopolized media coverage (Gillon 2008, 226). Even the public complained about how excessive the media coverage of the scandal became (Gillon 2008, 226). In fact, eighty percent of people thought that there was too much media coverage of the Clinton- Lewinsky scandal (Jacobson 1999, 47).

Additionally, most of the country felt the scandal did not pertain to Clinton's duties as President, and thus, the public's perception of job performance did not change despite the constant media coverage (McCombs 2014, 66). Americans sympathized with the President, rather than turned against him (Jacobson 1999, 47). Not only did the public sympathize with Clinton, but they hated his opponents- the media, Kenneth Starr, and

Republican Congressional leaders (Jacobson 1999, 44) - which again builds on the idea of negative partisanship, though such a position may owe to the media coverage at the time.

Since 1998, technology has only improved, as has the presence of social media. Because of this technological progress, polarization in the country has evolved. Ultimately, this technological evolution may have impacted views of impeachment in 2019 as compared to views in 1998. In the modern age, the majority of Americans are online, which allows the media to play a major role in the daily lives of Americans (Zakrzewski 2020). Because of the influence of social media, the American public is becoming increasingly polarized (Zakrzewski 2020). This polarization carried over into impeachment, with both political parties taking to Facebook and Twitter to spread polarized messages to the public (Zakrzewski 2020). For example, following his acquittal by the Senate, Trump tweeted that he would “discuss our Country’s VICTORY on the Impeachment Hoax!” (Zakrzewski 2020). This is just one example of Trump’s polarized messages on Twitter and other platforms. Thus, the trend of negative partisanship is a result of the media’s coverage of politics, or in this instance, impeachment.

It is also important to consider what influences the media’s tone, and how the media’s tone influences the general public (McCombs 2014, 44). Traditional media outlets, including newspaper and television operate for profit, and are highly concerned about income (Glazier and Boydston 2012, 433). Because of this, “the need to attract and retain readers drives news outlets to keep coverage fresh and consumption high” (Glazier and Boydston 2012, 433). These traditional corporations are concerned with viewership

and revenue, and will therefore deliver content in the tone that the public most aligns with (Glazier and Boydston 2012, 433). Today, selective exposure is extremely prevalent, as individuals self-select news sources that agree with their political beliefs. For example, Democrats tend to follow left-leaning news sources, while Republicans follow right-leaning sources. Because of news sources' political agendas and biases, news then becomes partisan. Thus, the media is driven to use a certain tone based on what the public believes, which then reinforces their already existing beliefs.

Additionally, the media's tone greatly influences the public's attitudes and beliefs about politics and causes the public to adjust their behavior or beliefs (McCombs 2014, 103). In fact, the public absorbs the tone that the media uses (Carroll and McCombs 2003, 39). The tone that the media uses actually primes how the public speaks about and views a certain issue (Carroll and McCombs 2003, 39). For example, "in the USA, a day-by-day observation of the final three months in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections found that the tone of television news coverage about key campaign events influenced voters' preference for the candidates" (Carroll and McCombs 2003, 41), illustrating the idea that the media's tone does influence public opinion. Similarly, McCombs discusses the 2007 Danish election, and found that, "the more visible a party was in the news and the more positive the tone of the news reports, the more voters were inclined to vote for the party" (McCombs 2014, 100). This shows that the tone of media coverage matters to the public, and even influences how the general population votes for candidates or political parties. Additionally, with regards to President Clinton's impeachment, when coverage of the President was negative, public support for the President decreased (Zaller

1998, 183). Similarly, in the case of Trump, positive media coverage corresponded to positive public perceptions of him, reinforcing the impacts that media tone has on the general public (Sykes 2019).

In fact, even neutral media coverage and tone has lasting effects on the general public. Neutral media coverage of controversial events frequently causes members of a group to think that the media is being hostile to their group (Anastasio, Rose and Chapman 1999, 154). This goes back to Mason's idea of the ingroup and the outgroup (2018). Even when the media is neutral in tone towards issues like impeachment or elections, members of a group automatically assume that the media is against them. Furthermore, because coverage of both sides of an issue tends to emphasize differences between sides, the perceivers own group membership is made salient and thus sets in motion the motivation to perceive the in-group as superior and the out-group as inferior. Thus, neutral coverage of the in-group is perceived as unfair and hostile in comparison with the inflated perceptions of the correctness of one's in-group" (Anastasio, Rose and Chapman 1999, 154). Again, relating to Mason's idea of the importance of social and political groupings, this illustrates that groups prefer that the media validate their group's beliefs, rather than cover the issue in a neutral manner. This illustrates that the public may actually want the media to be biased, but only in favor of their individual group and not "the other".

The Public's Views of Impeachment are... Positive towards the President?

In the case of Clinton, the public's views of Clinton actually became increasingly positive following impeachment. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the public's sympathy toward the President extended to his party, as a consequence of impeachment,

in the 1998 midterm elections. The Democrats, Clinton's party, actually increased their number of seats in the House (Abramowitz 2001, 211; Jacobson 1999, 31). In the 1998 election, Republicans lost five seats and Democrats gained five seats (Abramowitz 2001, 211; Jacobson 1999, 31). This is extremely rare: "one of the few iron laws in politics is the loss of seats by the president's party in midterm House elections" (Abramowitz, Cover and Norpoth 1986, 1). Between 1860 and 1982, this law was only broken in 1934 (Abramowitz, Cover and Norpoth 1986, 1). That this reversal of the midterm trend occurred when the Democratic President was impeached lends credence to the idea that impeachment actually helped Clinton and his party. Using the 1998 ANES data, Abramowitz looked at several variables, including: party ID, liberal/ conservative identification, incumbency status, personal finances, and opinions about the economy. After impeachment was controlled for, the perceptions of the economy and President Clinton did not affect public opinion (Abramowitz 2001, 220). This study also found that the primary reason for the Republican losses in the midterm elections was due to negative perceptions of Kenneth Starr and the Congressional Republicans handling of impeachment (Abramowitz 2001, 216).

Following Clinton admitting to his affair with Monica Lewinsky and lying about it, Presidential job-approval stayed at a constant sixty-two percent (DeSilver 2019). Upon the House voting to impeach Clinton, his approval increased to seventy-one percent (DeSilver 2019). At this time, from fall 1998 to mid-December of 1998, approximately three in ten Americans, or fewer, supported impeaching President Clinton (DeSilver 2019). According to a Pew Research survey from January 1998, seventy-one percent of

Americans approved of Clinton's job as President; ten percent higher than a survey right before the scandal broke (DeSilver 2019). At this point, in January 1998, support for Clinton was higher than any other time during his Presidency (DeSilver 2019). Thus, there was an "impeachment bump" in Presidential approval ratings, in which approval of Clinton spiked, as a result of impeachment (Newport 2020). Throughout the impeachment process, approval ratings remained very high and the majority of voters wanted President Clinton to stay in office (Jacobson 2000, 1). Additionally, following the 1999 State of the Union, a poll conducted by the Washington Post found that sixty- seven percent of the public approved of Clinton's job performance (Gillon 2008, 228). Again, this illustrates the public's positive perceptions of the President, despite the impeachment proceedings. In fact, most Americans considered Clinton's impeachment to be all about sex, while Republicans argued over the rule of law (Gillon 2008, 243). Even when the Republicans released a tape that was supposed to be indisputable evidence, it actually boosted Clinton's approval rating to sixty- eight percent, as shown in a CBS survey (Gillon 2008, 243).

Another example of approval of President Clinton increasing due to impeachment is through the economy, which is an important aspect of the country that affects Presidential approval (Jacobson 1999, 33; Jacobson 2000, 20). According to a Gallup Poll conducted in the weeks leading up to the 1998 congressional election, sixty-six percent of the public approved of Clinton (Jacobson 1999, 34). Because of Clinton's successes with the economy, the Democratic Party found success on Election Day (Jacobson 1999, 46). Also, because many Americans believed that the Clinton

impeachment proceedings were about the President's sex life, they took Clinton's side, as sex was a private matter (Jacobson 1999, 46; Jacobson 2000, 4; Kagay 1999, 458).

Additionally, Clinton's confession and lying to cover up the scandal could not "disillusion people who did not have illusions to begin with" (Jacobson 1999, 45; Jacobson 2000, 4). This can be interpreted in many ways. The public may not have been illusioned to this issue because they were inclined to like Clinton from the beginning and saw impeachment as a partisan issue, and nothing could change that. Additionally, people may have already known Clinton's ways through his time as governor, and thus were not illusioned to impeachment. A third potential possibility could be that Gingrich put so much emphasis on not wanting to work with Democrats, and thus, the public was predisposed to see the House as unfair and disagreed with them. Finally, Americans sympathized with the President, calling the investigation a form of bullying; this echoes President Trump's description of the process as "Presidential harassment," which may have been a reason for the jump in Presidential approval, as mentioned before (Jacobson 1999, 47). To the Democrats and other Clinton supporters, the impeachment of Clinton by the House was simply a partisan attack on the Democratic party as a whole (Kagay 1999, 455).

Similarly, Trump became more favorable as the impeachment inquiry continued. Again, this may be attributed to the fact that it is impossible to form educated opinions on an issue if people are not paying attention to begin with (Newport 2020). In 2019, only thirty-seven percent of Americans paid attention to the Trump impeachment proceedings (Newport 2020). Therefore, opinions towards President Trump, the Republican Party,

Nancy Pelosi, and the Democratic party should not be significantly altered, as such a small portion of the population was informed. Possibly due to the lack of attention paid to the impeachment inquiry, combined with Trump's tenure over successful economy at the time, new trade legislation, or other public policies, public opinion actually became more favorable of Trump through the proceedings (Glimour 2020). As of December 2019 Trump's approval rating was at forty-five percent; a six percent increase from when Nancy Pelosi announced the impeachment inquiry (McCarthy 2019). Among Republicans, in December 2019, eighty-nine percent approved of Trump's performance, compared to eight percent of Democrats (McCarthy 2019). Among independents, approval of President Trump also increased over those few months; from thirty-four percent to forty-two percent (McCarthy 2019). A Gallup poll conducted between January 16 and January 29, 2020— during the Senate's vote on the impeachment articles— shows that forty-nine percent of Americans approve of President Trump, which was the highest approval rating the Trump Administration had seen since taking office in 2017 (Gilmour 2020). Among Republicans, at this time, approval of Trump reached ninety-four percent, while only a mere seven percent of Democrats approved of the President (Dzhanova and Breuninger 2020).

This increase in support for the President, despite impeachment, is likely due to the media's role in all of this, through agenda-setting and media framing. This idea of agenda-setting allows the media to influence what issues the public finds to be important (McCombs 2014, 1). Agenda-setting is the first step in influencing public opinion, as it places issues on the public's agenda for discussion and debate (McCombs 2014, 2). Thus,



with the case of these two impeachments, the media clearly found them important, which led the general public to believe they were. Next, the media must frame these issues to the public, which impacts the public's views on these topics (Haynes, Merolla and Ramakrishnan 2016, 18). However, these salient issues are often framed differently, depending on which source it is, and where it falls on the political spectrum. For example, Fox News is known to be Republican, while MSNBC is known as more liberal, and depending which one an individual reads, they may have a different point of view. Thus, with regard to impeachment, the public's views of the issue are dependent on which news source they read, which is often the news source that best aligns with their views. For example, looking at the Gallup statistic above, in which ninety-four percent of Republicans approved of Trump, and only seven percent of Democrats approved of Trump, it is likely that Democrats and Republicans have these different views because of differences in the way that the media framed these issues, as well as the differences in which source they are looking at.

### Gaps in the Literature

Since presidential impeachment is a relatively rare phenomenon which has only occurred four times in United States history, the field's understanding is incomplete. Therefore, while the topic is incredibly important due to its serious implications, there is a limited amount of scholarly research on the subject of impeachment. This problem persists when looking at the case of President Johnson, as it occurred before many public opinion measures were established. Additionally, in the case of President Trump, because of how current the information is, it is difficult to find peer-reviewed sources on the subject, as this process takes time. Finally, no articles really compare the impeachment of

President Clinton to the impeachment of President Trump, again, due to the recency of the Trump scandal.

In addition to lack of information, several aspects of American politics and society in general have changed since 1998. For example, partisan polarization has increased significantly (Mason 2018, 106). Negative partisanship has also increased, as Americans' dislike of the opposing party has outpaced positive feelings toward their own party (Mason 2018, 21). Third, social media and the Internet have a much greater presence in the lives of Americans, than they did in 1998. Thus, this may impact public opinion of President Trump, because there is a constant flow of information, and also because selective exposure is heightened in these environments. Additionally, the basis of impeachment is different in both cases. Clinton was impeached because of the sex scandal. Trump, on the other hand, was impeached for abusing his Presidential power, which has much more serious implications for the country than the President's sex life.

Based on the literature, even with these differences between 1998 and 2019, there is a reason to believe that the media's role in shaping public opinion of an impeached president has not changed. Throughout impeachment, the media in general impacts how people think and feel about the President and their party. For example, in the Clinton case, leading up to impeachment, his approval rating was roughly sixty percent (Zaller 1998, 182). In the following ten days, as a result of impeachment, media coverage significantly increased, as did Clinton's approval rating (Zaller 1998, 182). In fact, Clinton's approval was up to seventy percent after only ten days of impeachment coverage (Zaller 1998, 182). In the case of President Trump, this illustrates the heavy

influence that media coverage has on public opinion, as measured by Presidential approval. These same trends are illustrated in a Public Religion Research Institute Study, which found that fifty-five percent of Republicans who receive news from Fox News say that anything that Trump did would not decrease their approval of him (Sykes 2019). Therefore, when coverage of President Trump was positive, via Republican-leaning sources similar to Fox, public opinion was also positive or unchanged towards the President. Among twenty-nine percent of Republicans who did not rely on Fox News, anything that Trump did would not decrease their approval of him (Sykes 2019). Again, this illustrates that media coverage directly influences public opinion, and also reinforces partisan norms. Because FOX News is a conservative news source, this illustrates that levels of partisanship remain constant, if not increase. Additionally, these Republicans evaluations of President Trump remain positive. I expect to find very similar trends throughout my project. Media coverage before, during, and after impeachment will influence levels of negative partisanship as well as evaluations of the President and the President's political party. More specifically, I expect that among Independents, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, evaluations of the President will remain consistent with the general public's opinion as shaped by media coverage. Conversely, among co-partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will increase, and evaluations of the President will remain positive. Finally, among opposing partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will increase, as evaluations of the President remain negative.

## Chapter 3: Theory and Methodology

### Theoretical Argument

According to negative polarization, public opinion leans in favor of an individual's own political party. Additionally, individuals strongly disagree with, and even dislike, the opposing party (Mason 2018, 21). Therefore, Republicans will side with Republicans, and Democrats will side with Democrats on the majority of issues (Mason 2018, 21). This is what occurred in the case of impeachment for both President Clinton and President Trump. During Clinton's impeachment hearings, Democrats viewed the proceedings as partisan attacks on their political party (Kagay 1999, 455). Similarly, in 2019, President Trump and the Republican Party considered the impeachment proceedings against him to be "Presidential harassment"; more or less, a series of partisan attacks on President Trump (Newport 2020). In both 1998 and 2019, Democratic and Republican party leaders used the media to present these messages and frame impeachment. Democrats portrayed impeachment as abuse towards Clinton, while Republicans in 2019 turned to Twitter and other news platforms to express that impeachment was a form of Presidential harassment by the Democrats. Because of the prevalence of the news media, and in the modern age, Twitter, messages from the media on the issue of impeachment serve to reinforce party norms (Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 128). Not only does the media reinforce partisan divides, but it strengthens them (Abramowitz and Webster 2018, 128; Jurkowitz and Mitchell 2020). Due to the media's effects and ability to reach most Americans, the media heavily influences public opinion towards issues. Thus, based on the confluence of negative partisanship and the role of the

media in shaping public opinion, my first hypothesis is that among co-partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will manifest as positive attitudes toward the President and his political party. My second hypothesis is that among opposing partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship result in negative attitudes toward the President and his political party. On the other hand, if coverage is negative, it is likely that co-partisans will continue to favor the President and the President's party, while opposing partisans' views of the President and the President's party remain unfavorable.

In terms of independents, "the more an independent is exposed to media coverage, the more likely it is that she or he will vote for the eventual winner" (Goidel and Shields 1994, 807). Additionally, when looking at elections and voting, media bias typically biases independents to side with the winner of the election (Goidel and Shields 1994, 807). For example, when the Democrat is expected to win, independents are very likely to vote for the Democrat, and the same holds true for when the Republican candidate is expected to win (Goidel and Shields 1994, 808). This may be simply due to the fact that independents do not have the partisan views that Democrats and Republicans have (Goidel and Shields 1994, 809). Thus, because independents have no partisan biases, they cannot possess levels of negative partisanship.

While this model is applied to elections, I expect to see similar trends when it comes to impeachment. In terms of independents, assuming media coverage is neutral or positive, I expect that they will lean more on the side of the general public. Thus, my third hypothesis is that among Independents, when the media's tone is neutral or positive,

evaluations of the President will remain consistent with the general public's opinion. For example, during the Clinton impeachment, the general consensus and rhetoric revolved around the sex scandal, and the public saw it this way. In fact, Clinton's approval during the impeachment proceedings was higher than any other point during his presidency; leading up to the 1998 midterm election, Clinton maintained a sixty-six percent approval rating (Jacobson 1999, 34). For example, following Clinton admitting to his affair with Monica Lewinsky and lying about it, Presidential job-approval stayed at a constant sixty-two percent (DeSilver 2019). Upon the House voting to impeach Clinton, his approval increased to seventy-one percent (DeSilver 2019). At this time, from fall 1998 to mid-December of 1998, approximately three in ten Americans, or fewer, supported impeaching President Clinton (DeSilver 2019). According to a Pew Research survey from January 1998, seventy-one percent of Americans approved of Clinton's job as President; ten percent higher than a survey right before the scandal broke (DeSilver 2019). At this point, in January 1998, support for Clinton was higher than any other time during his Presidency (DeSilver 2019). Thus, I expect independents to agree with the Senate's decision to acquit Clinton, as this seemed to be the general consensus at the time. Similarly, a Gallup Poll conducted during the Senate's vote on the impeachment articles found that forty-nine percent of Americans approve of President Trump, which at the time, was the highest it had been at any point during his Presidency (Gilmour 2020). Therefore, because the general public was rather divided, I expect independents to be pretty divided when it comes to support for Trump's removal from office.

## Operationalization

My unit of analysis is individual voters and their attitudes towards impeachment of President Clinton or President Trump. My independent variable is the tone/framing of media coverage during the impeachment process. To measure the intervening variable, media framing, and the independent variable, I conduct a content analysis of articles concerning the Clinton and Trump impeachments published by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. My dependent variables include how favorably the public views impeachment of Clinton and Trump, favorability of the President, and favorability of the President's political party. To measure this, I look at the gap in opinions regarding the impeachment of the President and how this differs by political party, and among Independents. I primarily use Gallup and Pew Polls to look at the favorability and approval rating of the President and the President's party, as well as impeachment itself. However, due to accessibility constraints, I do use other polls from the Roper iPoll Database to get quantitative data. Specifically, I am interested in questions related to the public's support for impeachment, and Presidential job approval as a measure of individual attitudes towards the President and the President's party.

## Case Selection and Timeline

The population of cases in which the President was impeached by the House is four: President Johnson (1868), President Clinton (1998), and President Trump (2019 and 2021). Through the comparative case study approach, I examined two cases of impeachment by the House: the impeachment of President Bill Clinton and the first impeachment of President Donald Trump. Out of the four instances in which a United States President was impeached, President Trump and President Clinton's cases present

the most accessible data due to their recency. The second impeachment of President Trump was not included in this study simply due to the timing of his impeachment. Andrew Johnson's impeachment was similarly excluded from this study due to issues with timing. President Andrew Johnson was impeached in 1868, a period for which there was a dearth of mass media coverage and scientific public opinion polling. The impeachments of President Trump (2019) and President Clinton occurred within twenty-one years of one another, during periods in which they oversaw relatively successful national economies. However, there is a large difference in media presence and framing. At the time of President Trump's impeachment, media framing was much more prevalent, likely due to the massive presence of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. While media framing was prevalent before the rise of social media, social media has made biased sources more accessible and circulated among the public. Additionally, President Clinton had a much higher approval rating than President Trump for the majority of his presidency. Another difference between the two cases is that both Presidents were impeached for different reasons.

The Clinton and Trump impeachments also occurred in very different political atmospheres. Clinton was in his second term during his impeachment proceedings, and thus was not concerned with re-election. However, in 2019, Trump was in his first term, and therefore was concerned with getting re-elected in 2020. Additionally, Clinton was also faced with unified Republican control of Congress, with Republicans in control of both the House and the Senate. On the contrary, in 2019, Trump faced a Democratic House and a Republican Senate. Therefore, I am using the method of agreement, as I



believe these two cases are rather different, but will both have the same outcome in terms of the media's effects on public opinion surrounding the Clinton and Trump impeachments. When looking at the impeachment of Clinton and Trump, they were widely different in that they were impeached for different reasons, at different points in their Presidency, different political environments, and so on. However, ultimately, I believe that in both instances, my hypotheses will hold.

For each case, I standardized the timelines, so that the first time period, pre-impeachment, starts two weeks before impeachment was called for in the House, and ends when a majority of the House formally voted to impeach the President on one or more articles of impeachment. Therefore, for Clinton, pre-impeachment is from September 21, 1998- December 19, 1998, and September 10, 2019- December 18, 2019, for Trump. The second time period, during impeachment, starts the day after the House impeached the President, and goes through the Senate vote. Thus, during impeachment is considered December 20, 1998- February 12, 1999 for Clinton, and December 19, 2019- February 5, 2020 for Trump. The post impeachment period is from the day after the Senate vote through two weeks after the Senate vote. February 13, 1999- February 26, 1999 is the post-impeachment period for Clinton, and February 6, 2020- February 19, 2020 is the final period for Trump. This is illustrated in Figure 3.1, below.

**Figure 3.1 Standardized Impeachment Timelines**

	Clinton	Trump
Pre-impeachment	September 21, 1998 to December 19, 1998	September 10, 2019 to December 18, 2019,
During impeachment	December 20, 1998 to February 12, 1999	December 19, 2019 to February 5, 2020
Post- impeachment	February 13, 1999 to February 26, 1999	February 6, 2020 to February 19, 2020

#### Content Analysis Method

In terms of content analysis, the dates of the articles I code correspond to the standardized timelines used to collect poll data. I rely on *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* as the two newspapers I am coding. I selected these two newspapers because in both 1998 and 2019, they were two of the most circulated newspapers in the country, thus wielding significant influence on public opinion (Barringer 1998; Watson 2019). Because I am looking at media framing and public opinion, it is important to use newspapers that are heavily circulated throughout the country. In addition, these two newspapers are typically viewed as unpartisan, and strictly factual (Glader 2017).

I code articles from both newspapers according to the author's tone, and whether impeachment is framed as a partisan issue or a constitutional issue. This idea of impeachment as a partisan issue involves the author portraying, and the public subsequently viewing, impeachment as one party against the other. If impeachment were a constitutional issue, this means that people have issues with impeachment as a political

process and the constitutionality of it. Therefore, I consider both of these viewpoints when coding the newspapers. I look at whether the media coverage is positive or negative towards the President and the President's party. Positive coverage refers to positive views towards the President and the President's party, and/ or opposing impeachment. Negative coverage, on the other hand, refers to pro-impeachment and/ or negative perceptions of the President and the President's party. This will be done for both the Trump and Clinton cases.

To find articles, I utilized the ProQuest Newsstream database. In the advanced search bar, I simply searched for "impeachment," limiting my results to Newspapers only, and further specified this to *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Next, I used the filter options to further refine my results, by only selecting editorials as the document type, selecting only English as the language, and only articles with the full text accessible. Finally, I limited results to only those articles published between the start and end dates for each time period. Because of the different time periods and newspapers, I conducted a total of twelve searches. If any articles that appeared in my final results were not relevant to impeachment, I did not code them. However, every other article that appeared in the search results was coded. In total, I coded 114 articles on the Clinton impeachment era for both news sources combined. For Trump, I coded 57 articles from both newspapers. The breakdown of time periods and newspaper is illustrated below in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2 Articles Coded by Newspaper, President, and Time Period**

	Number of Articles- Clinton	Number of Articles- Trump
Time Period 1	<i>New York Times</i> - 31 <i>Washington Post</i> - 25	<i>New York Times</i> - 21 <i>Washington Post</i> - 14
Time Period 2	<i>New York Times</i> - 30 <i>Washington Post</i> - 23	<i>New York Times</i> - 8 <i>Washington Post</i> - 11
Time Period 3	<i>New York Times</i> - 3 <i>Washington Post</i> - 2	<i>New York Times</i> - 2 <i>Washington Post</i> - 1

As illustrated above in Figure 3.2, for both Presidents there were not many articles written during time period three, the time immediately following Clinton's and Trump's acquittal in the Senate. This is important to consider in the analysis section, as it is difficult to draw conclusions based on five or less articles. However, in terms of the other time periods for both Clinton and Trump, there is a decent number of articles to aide in my analysis.

Finally, in terms of concerns with this method, content analysis may suffer from threats to reliability- coding may not always produce the same results for everyone because the process is inherently subjective, even when the coding parameters themselves appear to be fairly objective. Thus, I have created a very specific set of guidelines I used to code the sources in order to minimize the possibility of personal bias in coding. Additionally, I had two people code five articles each, to ensure that I am consistent and to avoid personal bias. I compared our level of agreement, and I did have pretty

consistent results, when comparing their coding to mine. The first coder and I had 90% of the same responses, and the second coder and I had roughly 85% of the same responses, for the entire coding sheet. This speaks to the validity of my coding and overall content analysis, as these results are pretty accurate, considering three people had very similar outcomes when coding articles.

### Coding Guidelines

As mentioned, to avoid personal bias or other threats to reliability, I have created a specific set of coding guidelines. These will help me consistently and accurately code the articles from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. First, I am tracking basic information such as which newspaper the article is from, when it was published, and the word count of the piece. Next, I am looking at if the article is an opinion piece and/ or a political piece. Opinion pieces are defined as articles that convey the author's opinion about impeachment, and political pieces are those that mention politics or any sort of political process. If the article is an opinion piece, it receives a 1. If the article is not an opinion piece, it receives a 0. Similarly, if the article is a political piece, it receives a 1, and if not, a 0 is assigned to this column. Therefore, it is possible for any given article to receive a 1 in both categories. These variables do not measure the extent to which the article is opinionated or political, merely it is a measure of if either one, or both are present at all throughout the piece. Additionally, I am coding for the placement of the article in the newspaper to help determine the salience. If the article is on the front page of the newspaper, it is assigned 1. If it appears elsewhere, a 0 is assigned. This is relevant to issue salience, as where the article is placed in the newspaper- front page or not- is one of many cues that the news media portrays relative to issue salience (McCombs 2002, 1).

Next, I am looking at the tone of the articles from the author's point of view, with three potential choices: positive, negative, or neutral. Because this is from the author's perspective, I am not accounting for outside quotations from individuals. I have defined positive tone as articles that are anti-impeachment of either President Clinton or President Trump or convey positive perceptions of the President or the President's party. Articles with a negative tone include those that are pro-impeachment of either President Clinton or President Trump or convey negative perceptions of the President or the President's party. Finally, neutral articles are those that don't take one side or the other, in that they don't present either position at all, or they present both positions without conveying the author's preference.

Finally, I am coding for depth of coverage using a five point scale. This is the primary measurement of how the media is framing the issue of impeachment specifically. On this five point scale, there are several different potential media frames, including opinion-based, slightly opinionated, neutral (neither or both), constitutional/ political leaning, and constitutional/ politically based. While earlier I mentioned coding for opinion and political pieces, this scale is differentiated because first, this is specific to impeachment, instead of the general focus of an article. Additionally, this focuses on depth of coverage, so for example, an article can be opinionated, but not solely opinionated, which is where the five point scale comes into effect. Thus, if the article is more about the author's opinion on the validity of the charges, and not about the political process, it gets coded as a 1. On the other hand, a 5 is assigned to articles with a strong constitutional or political emphasis. For articles that focus on both the political aspect and

the author's personal opinion, the article receives a 3. Thus, this five point scale is rather similar to the American National Election Survey seven point scale for individual's political views. Like the ANES defines individuals as "Democrat- leaning" and "Republican- leaning", on my five point scale, a 2 would be "opinion- leaning," while a 4 would be "political/ constitutional leaning."

In order to answer my research question, I rely heavily on the coding of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Therefore, for both the Trump and Clinton cases I use the coding to help determine several key aspects of my research question. First, and most basically, these articles illustrate the amount of media coverage during each time period. Additionally, I use the coding to determine the number of positive versus negative articles each newspaper produced for each President. Third, I look at the number of opinion versus political pieces produced by the two newspapers from 1998-1999 and again in 2019. Finally, I use the coding to determine the average depth of coverage in each time period, which helps paint a picture of the media coverage of the Presidents impeachment from both time periods.

### Analytic Method

Using the quantitative data from the polls, I first conduct three difference of means tests for each case to measure public opinion. For this test, I draw on data from September 21, 1998- December 19, 1998 and September 10, 2019- December 18, 2019 as my first points; two weeks prior to when the House called for impeachment up to impeachment by the House. I then look at views at the midpoint of the impeachment proceedings. For Clinton, I consider the middle period to be December 20, 1998- February 12, 1999, and for Trump, December 19, 2019- February 5, 2020; the day after

impeachment by the House through the Senate vote. Finally, I conduct this test post-impeachment; two weeks following the Senate trial. Thus, for Clinton, February 13, 1999- February 26, 1999. For Trump, post- impeachment is considered February 6, 2020- February 19, 2020. Each of these differences of means tests were conducted for each poll individually, because there is no guarantee that questions or participants are the same for each poll. Additionally, I conduct these tests to compare each political party against another; Democrats vs. Republicans, Democrats vs. Independents, and Republicans vs. Independents. This illustrates the levels of polarization at the time.

I expect the results from these difference of means tests to be similar to my three hypotheses. Therefore, I predict that in the three Clinton time periods, Democrats will be more in favor of Clinton than Republicans. Additionally, I expect Democrats' and Republicans' levels of negative partisanship to increase. Independents will also lean more towards supporting Clinton; however, their support will likely not be as strong as Democrats', while negative partisanship remains relatively constant. In terms of the three Trump time periods, I expect Republicans to be significantly more in favor of Trump and the Republican party than Democrats, however, negative partisanship will increase among both parties. Because of the prevalence of negative articles directed towards Trump and Republicans in 2019 and 2020, I expect that Independents will lean more towards the Democrats perspective, as they tend to stick with the perceived majority (Goidel and Shields 1994, 807). However, because independents do not identify as one party or the other, they cannot express negative partisanship. Thus, in relation to my hypotheses, I expect to see similar trends. In both the Clinton and Trump cases, I expect



that among the President's co-partisans, negative partisanship will increase, as evaluations of the President and their party remain positive. On the other hand, I expect that for both cases, opposing partisans will increase their negative partisanship and maintain negative views of the President and the President's party. Finally, in terms of independents, primarily in the case of Clinton, I expect their evaluations of the President to follow the general public's views, which are themselves shaped by the overall tenor of media coverage toward Clinton and Trump.

## Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

### Introduction

Through this study, I am examining the implications of media coverage on public opinion before, during, and after impeachment. When examining this relationship in regard to presidential impeachment, I expect to find high levels of polarization and negative partisanship among the two major political parties. More specifically, I expect that among the President's co-partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will manifest as positive attitudes toward the President and his political party. My second hypothesis is that among opposing partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship result in negative attitudes toward the President and his political party. Finally, I expect that among Independents, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, evaluations of the President will remain consistent with the general public's opinion.

In order to assess these hypotheses, I standardized the impeachment timelines of President Clinton and President Trump's first impeachment, and divided them each into three different time periods. I then conducted a content analysis of two national, rather unbiased newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. When coding these editorials, I paid particular attention to the tone of the article, as well as if it was more opinion-based, or more political-based. I then conducted difference of means tests on different public opinion polls that corresponded to each time period. Finally, I compared the coding data to the difference of means tests.

This chapter will follow a similar format to my actual methodology. First, I will discuss the coding of the articles, and go through an example of a positive, neutral, and negative article. Then, I will discuss each time period for each President, beginning with the coding, and then looking at the quantitative data from the polls. Finally, I will compare and contrast the Clinton and Trump cases at the end of the chapter.

### Content Analysis

The first sample coding sheet is for a positive article from *The Washington Post* during the first Clinton Era<sup>1</sup>. As shown on the sample coding sheet, this article was both opinionated as well as political. For example, the author states, “While *we believe* that the allegations against Mr. Clinton -- even if proven -- should not trigger his removal...,” which makes this an opinionated piece (The Senate Trial, 1999, emphasis added). This is because this was the author’s stated opinion on the issue, arguing that Clinton should not be impeached, according to *The Washington Post*. Additionally, the author discussed how the Senate trial might play out as well as the potential of calling witnesses, making this a political piece. This article is positive towards the President and the Democratic party because it states, “The House, in our opinion, erred in its decision to impeach Mr. Clinton” (The Senate Trial, 1999). Here, the author blatantly states that Clinton should not have been impeached. Finally, in terms of depth of coverage, this article received a three because it was a pretty even mixture between opinion as well as political fact or discussion. For the purposes of my coding, depth of coverage is a scale of how opinionated and political the article is, with a 1 being extremely opinionated, and a 5

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of the Appendix is where all of the coding data and sample coding sheets as well as sample articles are located.

being primarily political. In relation to public opinion, I expect that when Democrats (co-partisans) encounter this article, or an article similar to this, they will continue to side with their Party, and argue that Clinton should not be impeached or acquitted. When Republicans encounter this article or a similar article, I expect that they will continue to be against Clinton, and stay true to relation to public opinion, I expect that when Democrats (co-partisans) encounter this article, or an article similar to this, they will continue to side with their Party, and argue that Clinton should not be impeached or acquitted. When Republicans encounter this article or a similar article, I expect that they will continue to be against Clinton, and stay true to the Republican Party. Finally, in terms of Independents, I expect that when they encounter this article or a similar one, they will lean towards Democrats, because of this positive coverage towards Clinton and Democrats.

In the Appendix, the third sample coding sheet and corresponding article is a neutral article from *The Washington Post*, during the first Clinton time period. This article was coded as both an opinion piece and a political piece. I coded it as opinionated because for example, the article states, “Our instinct is to favor disclosure, and the committee's earlier decision to release the full report of independent counsel Kenneth Starr was absolutely correct” (So Far, Not So Good 1998). It is also political, however, as it discusses the “checks against abuse,” as well as disagreement between the political parties. Finally, it received a three in terms of depth of coverage, because it was a fairly equal amount of the author’s opinion as well as political facts about the impeachment or process. Again, depth of coverage acts as a scale, measuring how opinionated and

political the article is. In relation to public opinion, I expect that when Democrats (co-partisans) encounter this article, or an article similar to this, they will continue to side with their Party, and argue that Clinton should not be impeached or acquitted, as the article is a neutral article. When Republicans encounter this article or a similar article, I expect that they will continue to be against Clinton, and stay true to the Republican Party, despite the article being neutral. Finally, in terms of Independents, I expect that when they encounter this article or a similar one, they will lean towards Democrats, because of this neutral coverage towards Clinton and Democrats.

The third article is a negative article from *The Washington Post* during the second Trump time period. I coded this article as opinionated and political, and in terms of tone, it was negative. This article was coded as opinionated because, for example, it states, “But if Republicans *muzzle* potential witnesses and suppress relevant documents, senators who *respect the Constitution* will be left with only one *honorable choice*” (The Consequences of Coverup 2020, emphasis added). Therefore, this article is opinionated as it says that the Republicans are “muzzling,” or silencing witnesses, likely for the benefit of Trump and their party. Additionally, the author uses the phrases “honorable choice” and “respect the Constitution,” implying that if one respects the Constitution, the only respectable thing to do is to impeach Trump. I coded this as political because it discusses public opinion polls about impeachment, the process itself, and the decision to call witnesses. Finally, in terms of depth of coverage, I coded this article a 2. This is because, throughout, the author uses words like “should” and “would be,” for example, which he or she uses to convey their opinion. Additionally, while the piece is definitely

political, it is much more about the author's opinion rather than the political process itself. In relation to public opinion, I expect that when Republicans (co-partisans) encounter this article, or an article similar to this, they will continue to side with their Party, and argue that Trump should not be impeached or acquitted, despite the article being negative. When Democrats encounter this article or a similar article, I expect that they will continue to be against Trump, and stay true to the Democratic Party. Finally, in terms of Independents, I expect that when they encounter this article or a similar one, they will lean towards Democrats, because of this negative coverage of Trump and Republicans.

#### Clinton

In terms of media perceptions of President Clinton before, during and after impeachment, the media portrayed him in a rather positive light. Throughout impeachment, the majority of coverage regarding Clinton, the Democratic party, and whether or not to impeach, was either neutral or positive, as Figure 4.1 illustrates.

**Figure 4.1: Number and Percentage of Articles by Time Period and Tone- Clinton Case**

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total #
Period 1	20 (33.89%)	22 (37.29%)	17 (21.81%)	59
Period 2	26 (50%)	20 (38.46%)	6 (11.54%)	52
Period 3	2	2	1	5

	(40%)	(40%)	(20%)	
Total #	48	44	24	116

As Figure 4.2 illustrates below, I recoded the data in the survey to better interpret the data. In this instance, a “0” represents anti- impeachment, while a “1” represents pro-impeachment of President Clinton. As illustrated, across both time periods, only 165 Republicans were against Clinton’s impeachment, while 406 Republicans were in favor of his impeachment. Looking at Figure 4.1 above, the majority of articles were either neutral or positive towards Clinton and the Democratic party. This speaks to the idea of polarization and negative partisanship, as Republicans still turned against Clinton regardless of how the media portrayed him. Looking at the Democrat column of Figure 4.2, we see the opposite trends, with 669 Democrats against impeachment, across both time periods. Only 64 Democrats were in favor of impeaching President Clinton. Given the media coverage illustrated in Figure 4.1, this makes sense, as most coverage was neutral or positive towards Clinton and the Democratic party. Finally, tuning to Independents in the figure below, Independents were pretty split throughout both time periods. Across both time periods, 232 Independents sided with Republicans, while 504 sided with Democrats. It is interesting to compare this figure with Figure 4.1, and see what role media coverage plays in this, particularly when it comes to Independents. In the first time period, as Figure 4.1 shows, over 70% of media coverage is neutral or positive towards Clinton and the Democrats. Interestingly enough, nearly 70% of Independents were against the impeachment of Clinton. In period two, as shown above, close to 90% of media coverage was neutral or positive, while 63% of Independents were against

impeachment at this time. While slightly fewer Independents' opinions correlated with media coverage in the second time period, it still illustrates that in both time periods, the media may influence the public's opinions, especially when it comes to Independents.

**Figure 4.2: Overall Breakdown of Political Party and Feelings towards Impeachment (For or Against Impeachment)- Clinton**

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Period 1	Against: 99 (30.94%) For: 207 (64.69%)	Against: 375 (92.36%) For: 28 (6.90%)	Against: 267 (67.77%) For: 105 (26.65%)
Period 2	Against: 66 (23.74%) For: 199 (71.58%)	Against: 294 (88.55%) For: 36 (10.84%)	Against: 237 (63.03%) For: 127 (33.78%)

I conducted difference of means tests to determine if variations in support or opposition to Clinton's impeachment were significantly affected by partisan identity. The results are reported below in Figure 4.3. Unsurprisingly, the largest difference in means is between Republicans and Democrats. The difference of means measures how far apart opinion are between the average Republican and the average Democrat. Therefore, this shows that Republicans and Democrats have very differing opinions on the subject of impeachment. As shown below in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4, the difference of means are relatively similar across time periods, and show a marked difference between the two parties.



**Figure 4.3: Difference of Means- Clinton Pre-Impeachment Period**

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Republicans	————	0.578 <sub>+</sub> (0.028)	0.380 <sub>+</sub> (0.035)
Democrats	0.578 <sub>+</sub> (0.028)	————	0.198 <sub>+</sub> (0.025)
Independents	0.380 <sub>+</sub> (0.035)	0.198 <sub>+</sub> (0.025)	————

\*The first number in each box is the difference of means, while the value in parentheses is the difference in the standard error. All of the values were rounded to the third decimal place.

\*\* The (+) indicates values that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval level

\*\*\*For full difference of means tests see Appendix.

When comparing these quantitative results in Figure 4.3 to the qualitative data from the coding in Figure 4.1, it is evident that impeachment is a rather partisan issue. First, looking at the pre-impeachment time period in the Clinton case, from September 21, 1998- December 19, 1998, over 70% of media coverage at this time was neutral or positive towards the President and his party, and anti-impeachment. Because most of the media coverage was neutral or positive during this time, the majority of media coverage was against impeaching Clinton and/ or was in favor of him or the Democratic party. For example, one positive article states, “But in this case, impeachment is an overly broad response... In the face of failure, this article is irresponsible... The abuse of power article, likewise, is a mistake” (Impeachment and Censure 1998). This article is a good example of coverage at this time, as the author is clearly against the impeachment of

President Clinton. As the difference of means test shows, between Republicans and Democrats, there is a large difference in the means, which illustrates that many more Republicans wanted Clinton impeached than Democrats. In fact, the difference in means between the two parties was 0.578, as shown above in Figure 4.3. Not only is the difference in means between the two parties statistically significant, but it is also substantively significant. On a scale from zero to one, this difference takes up over half the scale, which shows a significant difference in opinions between the two parties. In fact, only 28 out of 406 Democrats felt Clinton should be impeached.

It is, however, interesting that at the end of this time period, some Democrats and Republicans crossed party lines in the House votes on the articles of impeachment. For example, on the first article of impeachment, five Democrats voted in favor of it, while five Republicans voted against it (Hyde 1999). With regard to the second article of impeachment, twenty-eight Republicans voted against it, and five Democrats voted in favor of it (Hyde 1999). For the third and fourth articles, five Democrats and twelve Republicans crossed party lines in voting for the third article, while one Democrat and eighty-one Republicans did so in voting for the last article (Hyde 1999). This is rather interesting, as some co-partisans in the House turned against Clinton, regardless of media coverage. This could illustrate that Members of Congress do not care what the media thinks, or maybe it is simply because they felt Clinton did something wrong, and voted that way because polarization was not as strong at the time.

My first hypothesis- among co-partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will manifest as positive attitudes toward the President and

his political party- receives strong support in this first time period for Clinton. Among Democrats, Clinton's political party, the majority felt positively towards Clinton and his party when the media coverage was over 70% neutral or positive. My second hypothesis was that among opposing partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship result in negative attitudes toward the President and his political party.

Looking at the Republican Party, as Figure 4.3 shows, when media coverage was over 70% neutral or positive in the pre-impeachment period, a large number of Republicans supported impeachment. This supports my second hypothesis in this case. Finally, my third hypothesis is that among Independents, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, evaluations of the President will remain consistent with the general public's opinion.

Again, in the pre-impeachment period, media coverage was primarily neutral or positive towards Clinton and the Democrats. In terms of Independents' views towards Clinton and the Democrats, there was a rather small difference in the means between Independents and Democrats (0.198), and about twice that distance between Independents and Republicans (0.380). However, the difference of means between Democrats and Independents, as shown in Figure 4.3, is less than 0.2, which means on a scale of zero and one, they have very similar opinions on impeachment- both the mean Democrat and mean Independent are supportive of Clinton and disapprove of his impeachment. Consistent with my third hypothesis Independents were closer to the views of Democrats than Republicans, likely driven in no small part by the generally neutral or positive media coverage of Clinton and a consequent distaste for impeachment among the general public, as Figure 4.2 illustrates above.

**Figure 4.4: Difference of Means- Clinton “During” Impeachment Period**

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Republicans	————	0.607 <sub>+</sub> (0.031)	0.378 <sub>+</sub> (0.037)
Democrats	0.607 <sub>+</sub> (0.031)	————	0.229 <sub>+</sub> (0.031)
Independents	0.378 <sub>+</sub> (0.037)	0.229 <sub>+</sub> (0.031)	————

\*The first number in each box is the difference of means, while the value in parentheses is the difference in the standard error. All of the values were rounded to the third decimal place.

\*\* The (+) indicates values that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval level

\*\*\*For full difference of means tests see Appendix.

Looking now at Clinton’s “during” impeachment time period, from December 20, 1998- February 12, 1999- from the moment the House voted to impeach until the end of the Senate trial- there are very similar trends to the pre-impeachment period, in terms of public opinion shown in Figure 4.3. During the second time period, as shown in Figure 4.1, over 80% of media coverage was neutral or positive, with roughly 11.5% being negative towards Clinton and the Democrats, or in favor of impeachment. Here, again, the majority of coverage is in favor of Clinton and his political party, and/or against impeachment. For example, a positive article clearly states,

But we also contend that Mr. Clinton should finish his term because his failures are not of a scale to qualify under the Constitution as high crimes or misdemeanors. Also, Mr. Clinton’s offenses arise from personal behavior rather

than matters of state and do not warrant an alteration in the orderly transfer of power that is an anchor of American democracy (The Constitutional Test 1999). Thus, the author of this article clearly states that Clinton should not be impeached, as it does not qualify according to the Constitution. This article is representative of the average article during this time period. During the “during” impeachment time period, most coverage of Clinton was positive, and focused on the constitutionality of impeachment in the case of Clinton and the Lewinsky scandal.

Turning now to the difference of means tests, it is interesting to note that the difference of means between both Republicans and Democrats and Independents and Democrats actually increased, while the difference of means between Republicans and Independents decreased during this period. As shown in Figure 4.4, the mean of Republicans is much higher than the mean of Democrats, therefore, far more Republicans want Clinton removed from office than Democrats. In fact, the difference of means between the two parties was 0.607, as shown in Figure 4.4. Looking at the Senate votes, forty-five Republicans and zero Democrats voted to impeach Clinton, while ten Republicans and forty-five Democrats voted not to impeach Clinton. This is rather interesting, as ten Republicans crossed party lines in this vote, which goes against the idea of negative partisanship. However, in terms of the public opinion polls, negative partisanship and polarization were rather prevalent. Going back to my hypotheses, first in terms of co-partisans, or Democrats in this case, most of the coverage during this time period was neutral or positive, and still, a very small number of Democrats wanted Clinton removed from office. On the contrary, looking at the opposing partisans, the

Republicans, with media coverage being neutral or positive in this time period, still held true to their political party, and wanted Clinton removed from office. This is evident through the difference of means tests comparing Democrats and Republicans, where the difference was both statistically significant and substantively significant. The difference between the two was 0.607, which is a large difference on a scale from zero to one, taking up nearly two thirds of the scale. Thus, proving that in the “during” impeachment period, my first and second hypotheses were correct once again.

Looking now at Independents, both the difference of means between Democrats and Independents and Republicans and Independents were statistically significant, but were not substantively significant. As Figure 4.4 illustrates, the difference between Democrats and Independents was 0.229, which is pretty close on the scale. Republicans and Independents were also pretty close, but their difference was slightly larger, of 0.378. Thus, Independents leaned more on the side of Democrats, and therefore against impeachment. Turning to my final hypothesis, as Figure 4.2 shows, the majority of people were against impeachment during this time period. In fact, 62.25% of respondents during this time period were against impeachment. Because Independents slightly favored Democrats and anti-impeachment, my third hypothesis is supported for this time period as well.

For the third Clinton time period- post impeachment, running from February 13, 1999 to February 26, 1999- I could not access any well-conducted poll data, but I would expect the same trends to occur throughout this period. Even with respect to the coding, there were only five articles collectively from The New York Times and The Washington

Post. Therefore, maybe after the Senate votes to acquit the President, the media no longer cares about impeachment and is ready to re-set their agenda so to speak, and influence the public on another issue. Because the media no longer cares, the public may no longer care or have opinions about impeachment, and that is why poll data was not accessible. In terms of the five articles that I did have, two were positive, two were neutral, and one was negative, as Figure 4.1 shows. While coverage was pretty evenly split, I would attribute this to the fact that the number of articles was very limited.

### Trump

Contrary to the neutral or positive portrayal of Clinton, Trump and the Republican party were frequently portrayed in a negative light by the media during Trump's impeachment. Throughout the three different time periods, there were no articles with a positive tone towards Trump or the Republican Party, or arguing against impeaching the President. While the vast majority of articles were negative, relatively small percentages were coded as neutral in tone, as illustrated in Figure 4.5. However, it is important to note that just because the media coverage here was not positive, does not mean these news sources are biased. In fact, there are countless potential explanations for this, such as maybe the newspapers thought most of their readers identified as Democrats or liberals, and felt there was no point in covering Trump and the Republican party in a positive way. Additionally, maybe in 2019, the media felt there was much more and stronger evidence to justify impeaching and convicting Trump than Clinton, and shaped its coverage accordingly.

**Figure 4.5: Percentage of Articles by Time Period and Tone- Trump Case**

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total #
Period 1	_____	6 (17.14%)	29 (82.86%)	35
Period 2	_____	1 (5.25%)	18 (94.74%)	19
Period 3	_____	1 (33.33%)	2 (66.67%)	3
Total #	0	8	49	57

As Figure 4.6 illustrates below, I recoded the data in the survey to better interpret the data. In this instance, a “0” represents anti- impeachment, while a “1” represents pro-impeachment of President Trump. As illustrated, across all time periods, 94.28% of Republicans were against Trump’s impeachment, while only 5.72% of Republicans were in favor of his impeachment. Looking at Figure 4.5 above, this is rather interesting, as there were no positive articles towards Trump at all. This speaks to the idea of polarization and negative partisanship, as Republicans still sided with Trump regardless of how the media portrayed him. Looking at the Democrat column of Figure 4.6, we see the opposite trends, with 90.80% of Democrats in favor of impeachment, across all time periods. Only 9.20% of Democrats were against impeaching President Trump. Given the media coverage illustrated in Figure 4.5, this makes sense, as most coverage was neutral or negative towards Trump and the Republican party.



Finally, tuning to Independents in the figure below, Independents were pretty split throughout all three time periods. Across all three time periods, 53.79% of Independents sided with Democrats, while 46.21% sided with Republicans. To better understand the role of media coverage in the Trump impeachment with respect to Independents, it is important to compare Figures 4.5 and 4.6. In the first time period, over 80% of articles were negative towards Trump and Republicans, and 62% of Independents were in favor of impeachment. In the second time period, media coverage was over 90% negative, while only 54% of Independents were in favor of impeachment. This is very interesting, as more coverage here is negative, but public opinion among Independents actually becomes more in favor of Trump. In period three, 66% of articles were negative, and opinion among Independents was almost an equal split. While there were a very limited number of articles during this time period, it is still interesting that public opinion among Independents is divided. While the majority of Independents in each time period were in favor of impeachment, the number actually decreases as time goes on. Therefore, maybe media coverage does not play as big of a role as expected. Another potential explanation for this trend may be because people are actually paying attention to the news and formulating their own attitudes on Trump's impeachment, rather than following cues from the media. Finally, this could be because there were actually fewer Independents in 2019-2020 than in the Clinton era. Maybe, some of the respondents that said they were Independent actually leaned Democrat or Republican, and therefore have partisan views on the issue of impeachment, as well as potentially other salient issues. Then, their political leaning or affiliation may not have been accounted for in this analysis.

**Figure 4.6: Overall Breakdown of Political Party and Feelings towards Impeachment (For or Against Impeachment)- Trump**

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Period 1	Against: 797 (89.35%) For: 95 (10.65%)	Against: 48 (3.64%) For: 1272 (96.36%)	Against: 348 (37.62%) For: 577 (62.38%)
Period 2	Against: 2933 (94.55%) For: 169 (5.45%)	Against: 419 (9.58%) For: 3953 (90.42%)	Against: 1664 (45.75%) For: 1973 (54.25%)
Period 3	Against: 2420 (95.69%) For: 109 (4.31%)	Against: 392 (10.76%) For: 3251 (89.24%)	Against: 1475 (49.43%) For: 1509 (50.57%)

In terms of the public opinion polls, the largest difference in means is between Republicans and Democrats, as expected. As shown below in Figure 4.7, Figure 4.8, and Figure 4.9, the difference of means are relatively consistent across time periods, though they vary greatly depending on the parties.

**Figure 4.7: Difference of Means- Trump Case, Pre-Impeachment Period**

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Republicans	————	0.857 <sub>+</sub> (0.011)	0.517 <sub>+</sub> (0.019)
Democrats	0.857 <sub>+</sub> (0.011)	————	0.340 <sub>+</sub> (0.015)
Independents	0.517 <sub>+</sub> (0.019)	0.340 <sub>+</sub> (0.015)	————

\*The first number in each box is the difference of means, while the value in parentheses is the difference in the standard error. All of the values were rounded to the third decimal place.

\*\* The (+) indicates values that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval level

\*\*\*For full difference of means tests see Appendix.

Similar to what I mentioned in the Clinton case, impeachment is clearly a partisan issue, and public opinion among parties tends to follow partisan trends, as shown in Figure 4.7. First, looking at the pre-impeachment period for the Trump case, from September 10, 2019- December 18, 2019, over 80% of media coverage towards Trump and the Republican party was negative, and favored impeachment. Thus, the majority of coverage was negative towards Trump and his party, and/ or in favor of impeachment. For example, one negative article states

There is already abundant evidence that Mr. Trump has abused his power, holding out hundreds of millions of dollars to secure a bribe from a foreign government he wanted to investigate his political rival. In the process, he undermined American national security, and he is continuing to obstruct efforts by a coequal branch of government to get to the bottom of what happened. These are classic examples of impeachable offenses; some are federal crimes (Implicating the President and His Men 2019).

The author of this article was clearly in favor of impeaching President Trump, making this a negative article, and thus, an example of the majority of coverage during this time. During this time period, the House voted on two articles of impeachment. In the first article, the abuse of power article, all 195 Republicans voted against impeachment, while 229 Democrats voted in favor of impeachment, and two Democrats voted against it

(Nadler 2020). The article two vote, regarding obstruction of Congress, was the same, but with one more Democrat voting against the article of impeachment (Nadler 2020). This illustrates the increased polarization and negative partisanship in the country, even among Members of Congress. As Figure 4.7 illustrates, there was major gap in the mean between Democrats and Republicans, with significantly more Democrats that thought Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment. Not only is this difference statistically significant, it is also substantively significant, as 0.857, on a scale of zero to one, takes up almost the entire scale, indicating a major difference between the means. In fact, only 48 out of 1,272 Democrats did not think Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment, while only 95 out of 797 Republicans felt his actions did warrant impeachment.<sup>2</sup>

Turning now towards my first hypothesis, which is that among co-partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will manifest as positive attitudes toward the President and his political party. However, while media coverage was primarily negative towards Trump and Republicans during this time period, as Figure 4.5 illustrates, there is still a lot to be said about Democrats and Republicans in relation to my hypotheses. In terms of co-partisans, or Republicans in this case, regardless of media coverage, they stayed true to their political party. This illustrates the high levels of polarization in the country, considering the fact that the two sources I analyzed printed no positive articles of Trump. However, other sources could have

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<sup>2</sup> In this poll, respondents were given four options when asked if Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment. I recoded the options "definitely" and "probably" as believing Trump's actions were sufficient grounds for impeachment, and the options "probably not" and "definitely not" as believing Trump's actions did not constitute grounds for impeachment.

printed only positive articles about Trump and Republicans, and maybe these were the only sources that Republicans read. This speaks to the effects of selective exposure, which is the idea that individuals self-select news sources and media that most agree with their views (Gillon 2008, 226; Stroud 2010, 557- 558). In terms of Democrats, or opposing partisans, they expectedly went against the Republicans and Trump, in the same direction as media coverage. However, with both Republicans and Democrats here, this may show that media coverage simply does not matter, and that partisans already have their minds made up. Whatever their political party agrees with, individual members of that party may just agree, without looking into the issue or caring about media coverage at all. Along with selective exposure, this pattern may explain why the divide between the parties is so evident throughout the Trump case, but it was not for Clinton.

Now looking at Independents, there is a pretty significant gap between Republicans and Independents, and a relatively small gap between Independents and Democrats, as Figure 4.7 shows. Between Republicans and Independents, the difference of means is 0.517, which is just over half of the scale. This is a large substantive difference between the two groups, illustrating that in general Independents are pretty far from Republicans in their views. Between Democrats and Independents, the difference of means is 0.340, which while statistically significant, is not quite as substantively significant. Democrats and Independents are pretty close on their views, though not as many Independents agree that Trump should be impeached. However, looking at Figures 4.5 and 4.6, we see the majority of media coverage was negative and the majority of the public was in favor of impeachment. While the effect is weaker than during Clinton's

impeachment, Independents still seem to respond to the tenor of media coverage as manifest in the general public’s attitudes, and were generally in favor of impeachment.

**Figure 4.8: Difference of Means- Trump Case, “During” Impeachment Period**

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Republicans	—————	0.850 <sub>+</sub> (0.006)	0.488 <sub>+</sub> (0.010)
Democrats	0.850 <sub>+</sub> (0.006)	—————	0.362 <sub>+</sub> (0.009)
Independents	0.488 <sub>+</sub> (0.010)	0.362 <sub>+</sub> (0.009)	—————

\*The first number in each box is the difference of means, while the value in parentheses is the difference in the standard error. All of the values were rounded to the third decimal place.

\*\* The (+) indicates values that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval level

\*\*\*For full difference of means tests see Appendix.

Comparing this to the second time period, the “during” impeachment period from December 19, 2019- February 5, 2020, as Figure 4.3 shows, over 90% of media coverage was negative towards Trump and Republicans, and in favor of impeachment. The majority of articles were in favor of impeachment and/ or negative towards the President and his party. For example, one negative article from this time period states, “Mr. Trump’s defense is designed to destroy those guardrails. If Republican senators go along with it, they will not only be excusing behavior that many of them believe to be improper. They will be enabling further assaults by Mr. Trump on the foundations of American democracy” (An Extraordinary Expansion of Power 2020). This author concludes by

stating that Trump is “assaulting” our democracy, demonstrating the intensity of the media’s negative coverage of Trump in the “during impeachment” period. During this time period, the Senate voted on the articles of impeachment, and acquitted Trump. All fifty-three Republicans voted to acquit Trump, while two Independents and all forty-five Democrats found Trump guilty (Nadler 2020). Similar to the House vote, this again illustrates partisan norms, as no Senators crossed party lines. Interestingly enough, both Independent Senators voted on the side of the Democrats, which also corresponds to the news coverage of Trump and the Republican Party. Like the pre-impeachment time period, there is a massive difference in means between Republicans and Democrats, with Democrats very much in favor of removing Trump from office. As Figure 4.8 illustrates, the difference of means between Republicans and Democrats is statistically significant. It is, in fact, also substantively significant, as on this scale of zero to one, the difference is 0.850, which is nearly the entire scale, which shows how vastly different the two parties feel about impeaching Trump. Turning now towards my first hypothesis, while media coverage was primarily negative towards Trump and Republicans during this time period, as Figure 4.5 illustrates, there is still a lot to be said about Democrats and Republicans in relation to my hypotheses. In terms of co-partisans, or Republicans in this case, regardless of media coverage, they stayed true to their political party. Democrats also stayed true to their political party, with the majority in favor of impeaching President Trump. Again, this speaks to the high levels of polarization in the United States, and potentially, even selective exposure like I discussed in my analysis of Trump’s first time period.

In terms of Independents, the differences in means between Independents and Republicans and Independents and Democrats is rather similar to the differences in period one. Looking at Figure 4.8 above, the difference of means between Independents and Republicans is 0.488, which is pretty significant, taking up almost half of the scale. This illustrates that Independents and Republicans still feel pretty differently about the issue. In terms of Democrats and Independents, the difference of means is 0.362, which is statistically significant, but not quite as substantively significant. Generally speaking, Independents hold similar views to Democrats- the mean Independent and mean Democrat both support impeaching Donald Trump- but it is interesting that there is a very slight increase in the difference of means between Independents and Democrats from the pre-impeachment period to the “during” impeachment period. Slightly fewer Independents wanted Trump removed from office once he had actually been impeached. At the same time, there is a small decrease in the difference of means between Independents and Republicans, which again shows that fewer Independents wanted Trump to be removed. Looking at Figure 4.5, media coverage was mostly negative towards Trump and Republicans. As Figure 4.6 illustrates, the majority of respondents were in favor of impeachment. Overall, Independents once again sided with the majority and the media. However, compared to the first time period, as Figure 4.6 shows, slightly less Independents are in favor of impeachment in this time period. As we move through the Trump impeachment timeline, the effect of media coverage appears to diminish for Independents.



**Figure 4.9: Difference of Means- Trump Case, Post-Impeachment Period**

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Republicans	————	0.849 <sub>+</sub> (0.007)	0.463 <sub>+</sub> (0.011)
Democrats	0.849 <sub>+</sub> (0.007)	————	0.387 <sub>+</sub> (0.010)
Independents	0.463 <sub>+</sub> (0.011)	0.387 <sub>+</sub> (0.010)	————

\*The first number in each box is the difference of means, while the value in parentheses is the difference in the standard error. All of the values were rounded to the third decimal place.

\*\* The (+) indicates values that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval level

\*\*\*For full difference of means tests see Appendix.

Finally, in the post impeachment period, from February 6, 2020- February 19, 2020, media coverage became much more neutral in comparison to the previous two time periods, with only 66% of coverage being negative, as Figure 4.5 shows. However, this shift in media tone may simply be because there were only three articles that I coded from that time period that fit all the criteria outlined in my methods chapter. One example of a negative article from this time period states,

Not only is Mr. Trump brazenly unrepentant for his attempt to extort Ukraine's help for his reelection, but also he is likely to take the Senate's vote as vindication and license for further improper actions. That makes it incumbent upon responsible members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to do what

they can to protect the integrity of the November election, as well as that of the Constitution (After the Acquittal 2020).

The author clearly believes that Trump did something wrong, and the necessary actions should be taken to “protect the integrity” of the country and democracy. When looking at the differences in means for this period, the trends are similar to the previous two time periods. Again, there is a large gap between Democrats and Republicans, with significantly more Democrats in favor of Trump’s removal from office. As Figure 4.9 illustrates, the difference of means between Democrats and Republicans is rather consistent across all three time periods, with the difference being 0.849, and again, taking up almost the entire scale. This indicates the large difference in opinions between the two parties when it comes to impeaching Trump. Turning now towards my first hypothesis, while media coverage was primarily negative towards Trump and Republicans during this time period, as Figure 4.5 illustrates, there is still a lot to be said about Democrats and Republicans in relation to my hypotheses. In terms of co-partisans, or Republicans in this case, regardless of media coverage, they stayed true to their political party, which speaks to polarization and negative partisanship. Democrats, or opposing partisans, also stayed true to their party, with the same pro-impeachment views as the media.

With respect to Independents, as Figure 4.9 illustrates, the difference between Democrats and Independents is 0.387, which is not quite as substantively significant as the difference between Independents and Republicans. The average Democrat and Independent are both in support of impeaching Donald Trump. There is a slight increase, though, in the difference of means between Independents and Democrats, meaning

slightly fewer Independents supported Trump potentially being removed from office. Looking at Republicans and Independents, the difference of means is 0.463, which is statistically significant, and takes up nearly half the scale, showing a pretty significant difference in opinions between these two parties. Compared to the mean Republican, the mean Independent is at best ambivalent about impeaching Trump. Again, the difference in means between Independents and Republicans is a little smaller, as Figure 4.9 shows, meaning that more Independents are against removing Trump from office. Looking at Figure 4.5, the majority of media coverage during this time was negative, however, there were only three articles for this time period. Additionally, the majority of the public, as Figure 4.6 shows, was in favor of impeaching Trump. Thus, Independents sided with the majority. However, Independents were slightly more split on the issue than in previous time periods, as Figure 4.6 illustrates, with slightly over 49% against impeachment, and slightly over 50% of Independents in favor of impeachment.

#### Clinton and Trump: A Comparison

In terms of the tone of the news media, there is a vast difference in the way in which Clinton's impeachment was viewed, compared to Trump's. There was a significant shift in tone, from a rather neutral or positive tone throughout Clinton's impeachment to an extremely negative tone throughout Trump's. This may simply be due to the increasing levels of polarization in the country, which has been on the rise over the past several decades. Another potential explanation, which seemed to be a rather common theme in the articles themselves, was that both Presidents were impeached for very different reasons. This seemed to be an important factor, particularly in Clinton's case, as many of the articles felt that Clinton was in the wrong, but his lies were not classified as

“high crimes,” and thus did not warrant impeachment. Some articles cited “precedent” as a reason that Clinton should not have been impeached, as it would significantly lower the bar for impeachment going forward. In Trump’s case, however, many of the articles discussed that he did in fact commit “high crimes and misdemeanors” that warranted his impeachment.

An interesting similarity between the two cases that I noticed when I was gathering articles was the lack of articles for the final period, after the Senate voted to acquit both Clinton and Trump. I think this is rather interesting as it almost sends the message that the media does not care about impeachment, after the Senate has made their decision. Looking at the Clinton and Trump cases, I found five and three articles to code, respectively, for the final period. While the polls illustrated that people still have their opinions at that time, the articles said otherwise. Thus, the media likely moved on to other salient issues at the time, or rather, began their agenda-setting process immediately following acquittal.

While both newspapers for both cases had a very small sample of articles in the time period after the Senate vote, overall, for the Clinton case, there were almost double the number of articles than in the Trump case. This may be due to several possible explanations. First, maybe during the Clinton time period, the media played a much larger role than in the modern age. Therefore, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* decided not to cover impeachment as extensively as they did after Trump’s acquittal as they did after Clinton’s acquittal in 1999. Another potential explanation could be that during the Clinton era, people felt the media covered impeachment too much. Therefore,

during the Trump era, the newspapers may have consciously chosen to decrease impeachment coverage. Third, maybe because Trump portrayed these sources as liberal, even though they are primarily bipartisan, the two newspapers decided to please their readers, as because of Trump's rhetoric, conservatives may have turned away from these sources. Therefore, Trump may have turned his base away from these sources, making the sources portray him in this way. Thus, maybe the media focused on reinforcing their readers existing opinions, rather than trying to please conservatives that are not tuned in or change opinions of liberal readers. Finally, maybe people already had their minds made up about Trump, so *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* felt there was no point in trying to change opinions. Hence, they only covered Trump and Republicans in a neutral or negative way.

**Figure 4.10: Depth of Coverage by Time Period**

	Clinton	Trump
Period 1	# of 1s: 7 # of 2s: 12 # of 3s: 17 # of 4s: 14 # of 5s: 6	# of 1s: 2 # of 2s: 6 # of 3s: 11 # of 4s: 11 # of 5s: 5
Period 2	# of 1s: 3 # of 2s: 11 # of 3s: 23 # of 4s: 12 # of 5s: 3	# of 1s: 1 # of 2s: 4 # of 3s: 8 # of 4s: 5 # of 5s: 1
Period 3	# of 1s: 0 # of 2s: 1 # of 3s: 2 # of 4s: 2 # of 5s: 0	# of 1s: 2 # of 2s: 0 # of 3s: 1 # of 4s: 0 # of 5s: 0
Average Score	2.74	3.14

Another similarity between the two cases is the depth of coverage aspect, which measured if the article was more opinion-oriented or political-oriented. This was

measured on a five- point scale with one being extremely opinionated, and five being extremely political or constitutional. Similar to how the ANES defines individuals as “Democrat- leaning” and “Republican- leaning”, on my five point scale, a 2 would be “opinion- leaning,” while a 4 would be “political/ constitutional leaning.” As illustrated above in Figure 4.10, the majority of articles fell in the 2-4 range, meaning a pretty equal mix of politics and constitutional issues, with the author’s opinion on the matter. Because of this, it is intuitive that coverage would generally be more neutral than positive or negative leaning. However, in the Clinton era, most coverage was positive, with a significant amount being neutral. In the Trump era, almost all coverage was negative, with very limited neutral coverage. The average score for both Clinton and Trump was about a 3, as Figure 4.10 shows. However, the average score for Clinton was just under a 3, and it was just over for Trump. This means that under Clinton, there were more opinionated articles, which may have ultimately had more of an effect on public opinion.

Under Trump, there were more articles that focused on the politics of the impeachment, and/or the constitutional questions it raises, as well as articles that leaned toward a political or constitutional focus. Because of this, the media may have had less of an effect as with Clinton, because media coverage was somewhat more fact based. This is rather surprising, as in terms of the tone, most coverage of Clinton was positive or neutral, and for Trump, most coverage was negative. Thus, maybe the media is not going as great of a job of being unbiased when it comes to tone as they are with overall framing as opinion oriented versus political oriented. It is interesting that in both the Clinton and Trump cases, the framing of the issue was relatively the same, with a similar focus on

both opinion and politics, versus one or the other. Additionally, this was consistent across each time period, with a score of 3 being the modal score.

**Figure 4.11: Overall Breakdown of Public Opinion and Feelings Towards**

**Impeachment- Clinton Period 1**

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Should be Impeached	207	28	105
Should not be Impeached	99	375	267

With respect to the public opinion polls, it is interesting that in both cases, most people identified as Republican or Democrat. For example, in the figure above from the first Clinton time period, 709 respondents identified as either Republican or Democrat, while only 372 individuals identified as Independent. These patterns are consistent throughout both cases, and each time period (see Appendix for other examples). This is rather interesting, as it illustrates the high levels of partisanship and polarization in the country, two decades apart. Even in the Clinton era, people wanted to choose a side, and at least according to these specific polls, voted in favor of their side with minor exceptions. This demonstrates the effects of polarization and negative partisanship, as each party does not want the other to “win”. For example, in the Clinton era, Independents sided much more with the media, as when the coverage was positive, Independents were against impeachment.

However, despite over 80% of coverage being negative during the Trump era, more Independents sided with Trump and Republicans as time went on and the

proceedings progressed. Therefore, maybe under Clinton, Independents were swayed by media coverage, while they were not in the Trump era. So, perhaps, media coverage mattered more in the later 1990s, but by 2019 and 2020, Independents became less susceptible to media influence. This may be due to increased polarization, or potentially fewer true Independents. Individuals may claim that they are Independent, when in actuality, they lean one way or another. Because of this, they are not true Independents, and actually vote and act according to the party they lean towards.

Additionally, one important comparison, while not covered extensively in my research, is the outcome of the House and Senate votes. In the Clinton era, members of Congress were much more willing to cross party lines and vote against their party with, at one point, eighty-one House Republicans crossing party lines on the vote to impeach Clinton. However, in the Trump era, only two House Democrats voted against the first article of impeachment and three House Democrats voted against the second article. Everyone else in the Trump case stayed true to their political party. This reinforces the growing divide in the United States as well as the rising levels of polarization and negative partisanship. Maybe this is because in the Clinton era, the media had more of an ability to influence members of Congress, as the media played a larger role in influencing public opinion at the time. Because members of Congress are focused on re-election, the media may have indirectly had a greater effect on members of Congress in the Clinton era than in the Trump era. Thus, the media may have lost their influence to some degree in a span of twenty years. This may be a result of increasing levels of polarization and negative partisanship, as the media may believe people no longer care about what they



think. Maybe the only people that care about the media's opinion post-Trump are Independents, and partisans have become so attuned to their own beliefs, that they do not want another perspective. Perhaps, however, it's the case that the media has done such a good job at polarizing people—especially with the rise of a 24/7 news cycle with plenty of options for selective exposure—that the *perception* of media influence diminishes because we don't see the media's framing effects on individual issues once the media has already pushed people to either identify with a party and/or become more entrenched in their partisan identity.

Finally, with respect to the Trump case, the sample sizes are extremely large for all three time periods. Because of this, these polls are probably a pretty accurate picture of public opinion before, during, and after impeachment. While the sample sizes for the Clinton polls were large enough, it would have been nice to have larger sample sizes as well. This way, all of my data would be pretty representative of the population. However, it was probably much easier with all of the technology in the Trump era to survey a larger group of people.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This Independent Study explored the media's influence on public opinion leading up to, during, and after the impeachment proceedings against former presidents Bill Clinton and Donald Trump. I identified that because the impeachment of the President has only occurred four times in the United States<sup>3</sup>, there is a lack of literature with regard to impeachment in general. Even when there is academic attention on impeachment, there is little direct comparison of the more recent impeachments of President Clinton and President Trump. I identified three hypotheses: among co-partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will manifest as positive attitudes toward the President and his political party; that among opposing partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship result in negative attitudes toward the President and his political party; among Independents, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, evaluations of the President will remain consistent with the general public's opinion, which is shaped by the media's coverage.

In order to explore these hypotheses, I used the comparative case study method, specifically looking at the Clinton and the first Trump impeachment cases. I chose the Clinton impeachment and the first Trump impeachment because of their recency and similar political and technological climates. Due to their recency, data was more accessible, and because they were only 21 years apart, they were much more comparable than President Johnson's impeachment in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, because Trump's

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<sup>3</sup> During the completion of this study President Donald Trump was impeached a second time on the charge of inciting insurrection, related to the events that took place at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

second impeachment occurred mid-way through my research, this case was not selected either.

To examine my research question, I conducted a content analysis of articles published by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* before impeachment, during impeachment, and after the Senate voted on the articles of impeachment to determine how the media portrayed impeachment. I then conducted differences of means tests using Gallup and Pew Research Center Polls which corresponded to the three time periods to determine public opinion at the time. In my analysis section, I compared the results found in the content analysis with the difference of means tests in order to determine the media's effects.

Overall, my difference of means tests were statistically significant across all time periods for both Clinton and Trump. That is, there were significant differences in the average level of support for impeachment of each president when comparing self-described Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. In relation to my first hypothesis—that among co-partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship will manifest as positive attitudes toward the President and his political party—I found this to hold true in the Clinton case. When the media was primarily neutral or positive towards Clinton and Democrats, Democrats stayed true to their political party. In terms of Trump, however, media coverage seems to play less of a role. Despite overwhelmingly negative coverage, Republicans still stood by Trump, and were against impeachment. This still speaks to the idea of partisanship, as despite the media's

negative portrayal of the President, his party was still on his side, regardless of what others said.

In terms of my second hypothesis, which was that among opposing partisans, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, negative partisanship result in negative attitudes toward the President and his political party, this was also true in the Clinton case. Despite media coverage being primarily neutral or positive throughout, Republicans still were in favor of impeaching the President. While with Trump there was no positive coverage, and the majority of coverage was negative, Democrats still were very much in favor of impeaching the President, which again speaks to partisanship. Assuming coverage aligns with party identification, it appears that among partisans media influence can reinforce views, though the same coverage is unlikely to change partisans' attitudes. Given the dynamics observed during Trump's first impeachment, it seems media coverage is irrelevant if that coverage goes against party- driven views. For Republicans the media's strongly negative coverage of Trump throughout his impeachment, i.e. coverage that often supported the idea of impeaching Trump and removing him from office, was irrelevant to their attitudes and their continued support of Trump.

Finally, looking at my final hypothesis, which was that among Independents, when the media's tone is neutral or positive, evaluations of the President will remain consistent with the general public's opinion, I found this to be true in the Clinton case as well. Throughout the three time periods, when the coverage was mostly neutral or positive, the overall trend in public opinion was one of support for Clinton and the Democratic Party. Independents followed this trend, and on average were very likely to

oppose Clinton's impeachment through all stages of the process. In the Trump case, Independents also followed the general trend— favoring impeachment— in response to coverage being neutral or negative toward the President at the time. Based on these results, I would argue that the media has the most influence on Independents. However, with polarization on the rise, I would argue that the number of true Independents is significantly decreasing. For example, in the Clinton era, Independents pretty clearly supported the President. However, looking at Independents in the Trump era, we see Independents much more split in half regarding support for or against impeachment, despite negative media coverage. As a result, I would argue that there are fewer true Independents today than during the Clinton era. In fact, I suspect it is likely that many “Independents” lean in favor of one party or the other. Thus, going forward, I expect media coverage to continue to tailor to one party or the other, rather than the Independent audience. This may have serious implications in the future. For example, if the media were to continue on this path of favoring one party over the other, the country will become increasingly polarized. In addition, negative partisanship will increase, as the media reinforces one party's beliefs, and downgrades or even attacks the other political party.

### Strengths

This Independent Study is valuable because it explores impeachment through a different lens, looking at news media and public opinion. To my knowledge, there is little previous research in the field which looks at these ideas in relation to impeachment. Thus, my work has the potential to inspire scholars to further explore these themes as well as impeachment in a broader sense. Additionally, to my knowledge, there was

limited scholarly work comparing the Trump impeachment to the Clinton impeachment, which is also explored through this Independent Study. While this may simply be due to the recency of the 2019 Trump impeachment, my research may inspire others to explore these similarities and differences between these cases much more in-depth.

Another strength of my thesis is that it combines both qualitative and quantitative data to gain a complete understanding of the material. The qualitative data from the newspapers allowed me to gain a full understanding of how the media framed impeachment in both cases, as well as the tone they used. The quantitative data from the polls allowed me to gain a snapshot of public opinion at the time. Additionally, the use of quantitative and qualitative data further illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon of impeachment.

#### Weaknesses

There were some limitations to my study that I would like to acknowledge. First, some of the poll data was difficult to access. For the final Clinton period (post-Senate vote), I was unable to access poll data in order to conduct a difference of means test. Additionally, for most other time periods, I was only able to gain access to one poll, whereas I would have liked to analyze two or three for each time period for both Clinton and Trump.

Additionally, in terms of the poll data, I think my results would be more conclusive if the survey sample was the same throughout each time period, at least for each President individually. This way, the means would be more comparable, as some sample sizes were significantly larger than the others. Additionally, this study would be more conclusive if each poll asked the exact same question, as each poll asked about

impeachment a little bit differently. For example, one poll for the Trump case asked respondents if his actions were ground for impeachment, while another poll asked what the outcome of the Senate trial should be, which could have an effect on respondents' answers.

Finally, in a perfect world, these two cases of impeachment would have occurred under very similar political climates, with very similar media capabilities. Although it was only 21 years from Clinton's impeachment to Trump's first impeachment, the political climate has evolved, with a further increases in polarization and negative partisanship. Additionally, in those 21 years, technology has greatly evolved, as have the concepts of mass media and social media. In 1998, Twitter did not even exist, however, Trump relied on Twitter to convey his message throughout his campaign and presidency. However, because impeachment has only occurred four times, these two cases and climates were the most similar to study.

#### Future Research

Going forward, it would be interesting to look at other factors that contribute to the public's opinion of the President and how that relates to impeachment and the media. For example, many people use the economy as a measure of the President's success, so it would be interesting to see if that plays a role in the public's opinion of impeachment. Second, studying Trump's second impeachment and seeing how it compares to Clinton's impeachment as well as Trump's first impeachment, is necessary in understanding the phenomenon. Even since 2019, the country has become increasingly polarized, primarily because of Trump discrediting the 2020 election and encouraging riots in 2021. While in 2019 and 2021 Trump was impeached for "high crimes and misdemeanors," the

impeachments were for different reasons: calling on a foreign power to investigate a political rival, versus inciting an insurrection in order to prevent the peaceful transfer of power after the 2020 presidential election. Consequently I would expect the media coverage from 2019 to 2021 to look slightly different. While no articles that I coded from 2019 were positive towards Trump or the Republican party, I would expect that articles from 2021 would be even more negative and more in favor of impeachment. This is because with his second impeachment by the House, there is more clear evidence that he did in fact encourage an insurrection. Unlike his first impeachment, a handful of Republicans actually voted for impeaching Trump, which goes against the typical negative partisanship and polarization in modern America.

Additionally, it would be interesting to see if these results hold in the future, if other Presidents are impeached down the road. Finally, while I only studied the impeachment of Presidents, conducting this study or a similar one on other politicians who have been impeached could also help to provide a complete picture of impeachment as a political process. For example, in 2010 G. Thomas Porteous Jr., U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana was impeached by the House and was convicted later that year (“Impeachments of Federal Judges”). It would be interesting to study how the media portrayed him, and if this played a role in public perceptions. I would argue however, that media coverage is the only reason that people really care about these non-presidential impeachments, with the exception of maybe individuals in their district. However, with these cases, it is also important to consider that these judges are theoretically nonpartisan, and thus, I would expect public opinion to look a lot more like



Independents in the Clinton era, where public opinion is more based off of the media coverage and how the judge is portrayed.

There are also changes in Congress that took place between 2019 and 2021. For example, in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Democratic margin shrank in the House, while the Republican majority in the Senate disappeared, with Vice President Kamala Harris becoming the tie-breaker in the Senate. Thus, because of this, this was arguably the most bipartisan impeachment ever. However, there were some similarities between the two Congresses. For example, in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, which was in session during Trump's first impeachment, Democrats held 281 seats, while Republicans held 254 ("Election Results, 2020: Comparison of State Delegations to the 116<sup>th</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses). In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, which was in session during Trump's second impeachment, Democrats held 272 seats, compared to Republicans' 263 ("Election Results, 2020: Comparison of State Delegations to the 116<sup>th</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses).

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## Chapter 6: Appendix

### Clinton Period 1 Tables

#### Impeachment Question:

“Based on what you know at this point, do you think that Bill Clinton should or should not be

impeached and removed from office?

- 1 Should be impeached
- 2 Should not
- 9 Don't know/Refused”

#### Political Party Question:

“In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat or Independent?

- 1 Republican
- 2 Democrat
- 3 Independent
- 4 No Preference
- 5 Other
- 9 Don't know”

**Table 6.1: Descriptive Statistics**

```
. summarize RepImpeach DemImpeach IndImpeach
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
RepImpeach	320	.646875	.4786897	0	1
DemImpeach	406	.0689655	.2537081	0	1
IndImpeach	394	.2664975	.4426895	0	1

In this poll, there were 1,120 observations, including 320 Republicans, 406 Democrats and 394 Independents. In order to be able to compare these results with my hypotheses, I created three dummy variables: RepImpeach, DemImpeach and IndImpeach, which took into account party identity and if they wanted Clinton to be impeached. Thus, the minimum and maximum were 0 and 1 respectively.

**Table 6.2: Overall Breakdown of Public Opinion and Feelings Towards Impeachment**

```
. tab ClintonImpeach PoliticalParty
```

ClintonImpeach?	PoliticalParty			Total
	1	2	3	
1	207	28	105	340
2	99	375	267	741
9	14	3	22	39
Total	320	406	394	1,120

The above table illustrates the overall breakdown of views towards impeachment by political party. For the purposes of my data collection, I dropped responses in which political party received a 4, 5, or 9, as I am interested in negative partisanship and polarization. Thus, those that do not identify with one political party or the other, are not relevant for my study. For this poll, 1, 2, and 3 for political party represented Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, respectively. In terms of impeachment, 1 stood for in favor of impeachment, 2 was anti-impeachment, and 9 was did not know/refused. However, in order to conduct my difference of means tests, I recoded the data so that 1 was in favor of impeachment, and 0 was not in favor of impeachment. Looking at the data, it is interesting that so many Democrats and the majority of Independents were against impeachment, while most Republicans were in favor of impeachment.

**Table 6.3: Number of Republicans that think Clinton Should be Impeached**

```
. inspect RepImpeach
```

**RepImpeach:**

			Number of Observations		
			Total	Integers	Nonintegers
#	Negative		-	-	-
#	Zero		113	113	-
#	Positive		207	207	-
# #					
# #	Total		320	320	-
# #	Missing		800		
			1,120		
0 1					
(2 unique values)					

This table illustrates the number of Republicans that think Clinton should and should not be impeached, based on my dummy variable, RepImpeach. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Clinton should be impeached, with 207 Republicans thinking this.



Zero denotes the 113 Republicans that thought Clinton should not have been impeached. The 800 missing values include those that identify as Democrat or Republican, or didn't know/ refused.

**Table 6.4: Number of Democrats that think Clinton Should be Impeached**

**. inspect DemImpeach**

<b>DemImpeach:</b>		<b>Number of Observations</b>		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Integers</b>	<b>Nonintegers</b>
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	<b>378</b>	<b>378</b>	-
#	Positive	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	-
#				
#	Total	<b>406</b>	<b>406</b>	-
# .	Missing	<b>714</b>		
<b>0 1</b>		<b>1,120</b>		
<b>(2 unique values)</b>				

The above table illustrates the number of Democrats that think Clinton should and should not be impeached, based on my dummy variable, DemImpeach. In this instance, 1, being "positive" denotes that Clinton should be impeached, with 28 Democrats thinking this. Zero denotes the 378 Democrats that thought Clinton should not be impeached. The 714 missing values include Republicans and Independents, or didn't know/ refused.

**Table 6.5: Number of Independents that think Clinton Should be Impeached**

**. inspect IndImpeach**

<b>IndImpeach:</b>		<b>Number of Observations</b>		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Integers</b>	<b>Nonintegers</b>
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	<b>289</b>	<b>289</b>	-
#	Positive	<b>105</b>	<b>105</b>	-
#				
# #	Total	<b>394</b>	<b>394</b>	-
# #	Missing	<b>726</b>		
<b>0 1</b>		<b>1,120</b>		
<b>(2 unique values)</b>				

This table illustrates the number of Independents that think Clinton should and should not be impeached, based on my dummy variable, IndImpeach. In this instance, 1, being

“positive” denotes that Clinton should be impeached, with 105 Independents thinking this. Zero denotes the 289 Independents that thought Clinton should not be impeached. The 726 missing values are Democrats or Republicans, or didn’t know/ refused.

**Table 6.6: Difference of Means Test- Republicans and Democrats**

**. ttest RepImpeach == DemImpeach, unpaired**

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RepImp~h	320	.646875	.0267596	.4786897	.5942275	.6995225
DemImp~h	406	.0689655	.0125913	.2537081	.044213	.093718
combined	726	.3236915	.0173768	.4682064	.2895767	.3578063
diff		.5779095	.0276657		.5235949	.6322241
diff = mean(RepImpeach) - mean(DemImpeach)				t =	20.8890	
Ho: diff = 0				degrees of freedom =	724	
Ha: diff < 0		Ha: diff != 0		Ha: diff > 0		
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000		Pr( T  >  t ) = 0.0000		Pr(T > t) = 0.0000		

As shown in Table 6.6, there is a mean difference of 0.5779095. Thus, because the mean of RepImpeach is greater than the mean of DemImpeach, more Republicans wanted Clinton impeached than Democrats, with a statistically significant increase of 0.5779095 (95% CI, 0.5235949 to 0.6322241),  $t(724) = 20.8890$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Not only is this difference statistically significant, but there is a substantive difference between the two means.

```
. ttest IndImpeach==DemImpeach, unpaired
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
IndImp~h	394	.2664975	.0223024	.4426895	.2226506	.3103443
DemImp~h	406	.0689655	.0125913	.2537081	.044213	.093718
combined	800	.16625	.0131712	.3725378	.1403958	.1921042
diff		.1975319	.0254176		.1476388	.2474251

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = <b>1.0000</b>	Pr( T  >  t ) = <b>0.0000</b>	Pr(T > t) = <b>0.0000</b>

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**Table 6.8: Difference of Means Tests- Independents and Republicans**

```
. ttest RepImpeach == IndImpeach, unpaired
```

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RepImp~h	320	.646875	.0267596	.4786897	.5942275	.6995225
IndImp~h	394	.2664975	.0223024	.4426895	.2226506	.3103443
combined	714	.4369748	.0185758	.4963596	.400505	.4734446
diff		.3803775	.0345539		.3125377	.4482173

```
diff = mean(RepImpeach) - mean(IndImpeach)          t = 11.0082
Ho: diff = 0                                         degrees of freedom = 712
```

```
Ha: diff < 0                Ha: diff != 0                Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000          Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000          Pr(T > t) = 0.0000
```

As shown in Table 6.8, there is a mean difference of 0.3803775. Thus, because the mean of RepImpeach is greater than the mean of IndImpeach, more Republicans wanted Clinton impeached than Independents, with a statistically significant increase of 0.3803775 (95% CI, 0.3125377 to 0.4482173),  $t(712) = 11.0082$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . This difference of means is statistically significant, but not substantively different.

### Clinton Period 2 Tables

#### Impeachment Question:

“As you may know, removing a president from office involves two major steps in Congress. First, the House of Representatives must vote on whether there is enough evidence to bring a president to trial before the Senate. This step is called impeachment. Next, the Senate must vote on whether to remove the president from office, or not.

As you may know, the House has now impeached Clinton and the case has been sent to the Senate for trial. What do you want YOUR Senators to do -- [FORM A: READ 1-2; FORM B: READ 2-1]? (6/21)

- 1 Vote in favor of convicting Clinton and removing him from office
- 2 Vote against convicting Clinton so he will remain in office
- 3 DON'T KNOW/REFUSED”

#### Political Party Question:

“In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat or an Independent?

(5/18)

- 1 Republican
- 2 Democrat
- 3 Independent
- 4 OTHER PARTY
- 5 DON'T KNOW/REFUSED”

**Table 6.9: Descriptive Statistics**

**. summarize RepRemove DemRemove IndRemove**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
RepRemove	278	.7158273	.4518328	0	1
DemRemove	332	.1084337	.3113967	0	1
IndRemove	376	.337766	.4735785	0	1

In this poll, there were 986 observations, including 278 Republicans, 332 Democrats, 376 Independents. In order to be able to compare these results with my hypotheses, I created three dummy variables: RepRemove, DemRemove and IndRemove, which took into account party identity and if they wanted Clinton to be removed from office. Thus, the minimum and maximum were 0 and 1 respectively.

**Table 6.10: Overall Breakdown of Public Opinion and Impeachment**

**. tab RemoveFromOffice Party**

RemoveFrom Office	Party			Total
	1	2	3	
1	199	36	127	362
2	66	294	237	597
3	13	2	12	27
Total	278	332	376	986

The above table illustrates the overall breakdown of views towards removal from office by political party. For the purposes of my data collection, I dropped responses in which political party received a 4, or 5, as I am interested in negative partisanship and polarization. Thus, those that do not identify with one political party or the other, are not relevant for my study. For this poll, 1, 2, and 3 for political party represented Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, respectively. In terms of impeachment, 1

stood for in favor of removal, 2 was anti-removal, and 9 was did not know/ refused. Looking at the data, it is interesting that so many Democrats and the majority of Independents were against removal from office, while most Republicans were in favor of removal. It is important to note for the difference of means tests, that I recoded the data so that 1 represented in favor of removal, and 0 was not in favor of removal.

**Table 6.11: Number of Republicans that think Clinton Should be Removed**

**. inspect RepRemove**

RepRemove:			Number of Observations		
			Total	Integers	Nonintegers
#		Negative	-	-	-
#		Zero	79	79	-
#		Positive	199	199	-
#					
# #		Total	278	278	-
# #		Missing	708		
0		1	986		
(2 unique values)					

This table illustrates the number of Republicans that think Clinton should or should not be removed, based on my dummy variable, RepRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Clinton should be removed from office, with 199 Republicans thinking this. Zero denotes the 79 Republicans that did not think Clinton should be removed from office. The 708 missing values include Democrats or Independents.

**Table 6.12: Number of Democrats that think Clinton Should be Removed**

```
. inspect DemRemove
```

DemRemove:		Number of Observations		
		Total	Integers	Nonintegers
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	296	296	-
#	Positive	36	36	-
#				
#	Total	332	332	-
#	Missing	654		
0	1	986		
(2 unique values)				

The above table shows the number of Democrats that think Clinton should or should not be removed from office, based on my dummy variable, DemRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Clinton should be removed from office, with 36 Democrats thinking this. Zero denotes the other 296 Democrats, who did not think Clinton should be removed from office. The 654 missing values include Republicans and Independents.

**Table 6.13: Number of Independents that think Clinton Should be Removed**

```
. inspect IndRemove
```

IndRemove:		Number of Observations		
		Total	Integers	Nonintegers
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	249	249	-
#	Positive	127	127	-
#				
#	Total	376	376	-
#	Missing	610		
0	1	986		
(2 unique values)				

This table illustrates the number of Independents that thought Clinton should or should not be removed from office, based on my dummy variable, IndRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Clinton should be removed, with 127 Independents thinking this. Zero denotes the 249 Independents that did not think Clinton should be removed from office. The 610 missing values include Republicans and Democrats.

```
. ttest RepRemove == DemRemove, unpaired
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RepRem~e	278	.7158273	.0270991	.4518328	.6624809	.7691737
DemRem~e	332	.1084337	.0170901	.3113967	.0748148	.1420527
combined	610	.3852459	.0197202	.4870528	.3465181	.4239737
diff		.6073936	.0310422		.5464306	.6683566

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = <b>1.0000</b>	Pr( T  >  t ) = <b>0.0000</b>	Pr(T > t) = <b>0.0000</b>

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```
. ttest IndRemove == DemRemove, unpaired
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
IndRem~e	376	.337766	.0244229	.4735785	.2897429	.385789
DemRem~e	332	.1084337	.0170901	.3113967	.0748148	.1420527
combined	708	.230226	.0158325	.421275	.1991417	.2613103
diff		.2293322	.0305531		.1693465	.2893179

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000	Pr( T  >  t ) = 0.0000	Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

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**Table 6.16: Difference of Means Tests- Independents and Republicans**

```
. ttest RepRemove == IndRemove, unpaired
```

```
Two-sample t test with equal variances
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
RepRem~e	278	.7158273	.0270991	.4518328	.6624809	.7691737
IndRem~e	376	.337766	.0244229	.4735785	.2897429	.385789
combined	654	.4984709	.0195664	.5003804	.4600503	.5368916
diff		.3780614	.0367388		.3059207	.450202

```
diff = mean(RepRemove) - mean(IndRemove)          t = 10.2905
Ho: diff = 0                                         degrees of freedom = 652
```

```
Ha: diff < 0          Ha: diff != 0          Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000    Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000    Pr(T > t) = 0.0000
```

As shown in Table 6.16, there is a mean difference of 0.3780614. Thus, because the mean of RepRemove is greater than the mean of IndRemove, more Republicans wanted Clinton removed than Independents, with a statistically significant increase of 0.3780614 (95% CI, 0.3059207 to 0.450202),  $t(652) = 10.2905$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . This difference of means is both statistically significant, but not extremely different.

### Trump Period 1 Tables

#### Impeachment Question:

“Regardless of your view of the House of Representatives’ decision to conduct an inquiry... Do you think Donald Trump has done things that are grounds for his impeachment?”

- 1 Definitely
- 2 Probably
- 3 Probably not
- 4 Definitely not”

#### Political Party Question:

“In politics today, do you consider yourself a...”

- 1 Republican
- 2 Democrat
- 3 Independent
- 4 Something else”

**Table 6.17: Descriptive Statistics**

```
. summarize RepGImpeach DemGImpeach IndGImpeach
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
RepGImpeach	892	.1065022	.3086524	0	1
DemGImpeach	1,320	.9636364	.1872642	0	1
IndGImpeach	925	.6237838	.4846974	0	1

There were 3,137 observations in this poll, including 892 Republicans, 1,320 Democrats, and 925 Independents. In order to be able to compare these results with my hypotheses, I created three dummy variables: RepGImpeach, DemGImpeach and IndGImpeach, which took into account party identity and if they believed Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment. Thus, the minimum and maximum were 0 and 1 respectively.

**Table 6.18: Overall Breakdown of Public Opinion and Impeachment**

```
. tab groundforimpeach F_PARTY_
```

groundfori mpeachment	Republica	Party Democrat	Independe	Total
0	797	48	348	1,193
1	95	1,272	577	1,944
Total	892	1,320	925	3,137

The above table illustrates the overall breakdown of views towards impeachment by political party. For the purposes of my data collection, I dropped responses in which political party received a 4, as I am interested in negative partisanship and polarization. Thus, those that do not identify with one political party or the other, are not relevant for my study. For this poll, I recoded that data, so that 1 represents grounds for removal, while 0 represents those that do not think Trump's actions were grounds for removal. Looking at the data, it is interesting that so many Democrats were in favor of removing Trump from office, as well as the majority of Independents. Additionally, most Republicans were against impeachment.

**Table 6.19: Number of Republicans that think Trump Should be Impeached**

**. inspect RepGImpeach**

<b>RepGImpeach:</b>		Number of Observations		
		Total	Integers	Nonintegers
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	797	797	-
#	Positive	95	95	-
#				
#	Total	892	892	-
#	Missing	2,245		
0 1		3,137		
(2 unique values)				

This table illustrates the number of Republicans that think Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment, based on my dummy variable, RepGImpeach. In this instance, 1, being "positive" denotes that Trump's actions were ground for impeachment, with 95 Republicans thinking this. Zero denotes the 797 Republicans that did not think Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment. The 2,245 missing values are either Democrats or Independents.

**Table 6.20: Number of Democrats that think Trump Should be Impeached**

**. inspect DemGImpeach**

<b>DemGImpeach:</b>		Number of Observations		
		Total	Integers	Nonintegers
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	48	48	-
#	Positive	1,272	1,272	-
#				
#	Total	1,320	1,320	-
. #	Missing	1,817		
0 1		3,137		
(2 unique values)				

The above table shows the number of Democrats that think Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment, based on my dummy variable, DemGImpeach. In this instance, 1, being "positive" denotes that Trump's actions were ground for impeachment, with 1,272 Democrats thinking this. Zero denotes the 48 Democrats that did not think

Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment. The 1,817 missing values are either Republicans or Independents.

**Table 6.21: Number of Independents that think Trump Should be Impeached**

**. inspect IndGImpeach**

<b>IndGImpeach:</b>			<b>Number of Observations</b>		
			<b>Total</b>	<b>Integers</b>	<b>Nonintegers</b>
#	Negative		-	-	-
#	Zero		<b>348</b>	<b>348</b>	-
#	Positive		<b>577</b>	<b>577</b>	-
# #					
# #	Total		<b>925</b>	<b>925</b>	-
# #	Missing		<b>2,212</b>		
<b>0 1</b>			<b>3,137</b>		
<b>(2 unique values)</b>					

This table shows the number of Independents that think Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment, based on my dummy variable, IndGImpeach. In this instance, 1, being "positive" denotes that Trump's actions were ground for impeachment, with 577 Independents thinking this. Zero denotes the 348 Independents that did not think Trump's actions were grounds for impeachment. Republicans and Independents make up the 2,212 missing values.

```
. ttest DemGImpeach==RepGImpeach, unpaired
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
DemGim~h	1,320	.9636364	.0051543	.1872642	.9535249	.9737478
RepGim~h	892	.1065022	.0103344	.3086524	.0862195	.1267849
combined	2,212	.6179928	.0103332	.4859881	.5977291	.6382565
diff		.8571341	.0105582		.8364291	.8778391

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = <b>1.0000</b>	Pr( T  >  t ) = <b>0.0000</b>	Pr(T > t) = <b>0.0000</b>

100

```
. ttest DemGImpeach==IndGImpeach, unpaired
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
DemGim~h	1,320	.9636364	.0051543	.1872642	.9535249	.9737478
IndGim~h	925	.6237838	.0159368	.4846974	.5925074	.6550602
combined	2,245	.823608	.0080462	.3812382	.8078293	.8393867
diff		.3398526	.0146922		.3110408	.3686643

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000	Pr( T  >  t ) = 0.0000	Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

101

```
. ttest IndGImpeach==RepGImpeach, unpaired
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
IndGim~h	925	.6237838	.0159368	.4846974	.5925074	.6550602
RepGim~h	892	.1065022	.0103344	.3086524	.0862195	.1267849
combined	1,817	.3698404	.0113286	.4828942	.347622	.3920588
diff		.5172815	.0191408		.4797412	.5548218

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000	Pr( T  >  t ) = 0.0000	Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

1 Republican  
2 Democrat  
3 Independent  
4 Something else”



**Table 6.25: Descriptive Statistics**

```
. summarize RepRemove DemRemove IndRemove
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
RepRemove	3,102	.054481	.2270009	0	1
DemRemove	4,372	.9041629	.2944014	0	1
IndRemove	3,637	.5424801	.4982607	0	1

There were 11,111 observations in this poll, including 3,102 Republicans, 4,372 Democrats, and 3,637 Independents. In order to be able to compare these results with my hypotheses, I created three dummy variables: RepRemove, DemRemove, and IndRemove, which took into account party identity and if they believed Trump should be removed from office. Thus, the minimum and maximum were 0 and 1 respectively.

**Table 6.26: Overall Breakdown of Public Opinion and Impeachment**

```
. tab removdta party_w5
```

REMOVDTAPP_W59. What do you think the outcome of a Senate impeachment trial shou	PARTY_W59. In politics today, do you consider yourself a			Total
	Republica	Democrat	Independe	
Donald Trump should s	2,933	419	1,664	5,016
Donald Trump should b	169	3,953	1,973	6,095
Total	3,102	4,372	3,637	11,111

The above table illustrates the overall breakdown of views towards removal from office by political party. For the purposes of my data collection, I dropped responses in which political party received a 4, as I am interested in negative partisanship and polarization. Thus, those that do not identify with one political party or the other, are not relevant for my study. For this poll, 1, 2, and 3 for political party represented Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, respectively. Looking at the data, it is interesting that so many Republicans were against impeachment, while most Democrats and Independents were in favor of impeachment. However, Independents just barely favored impeachment, which is important to notice. For the purposes of my data collection, I recoded the data so that 1 represented in favor of removal and 0 represented not in favor of removal.

**Table 6.27: Number of Republicans that think Trump Should be Removed**

**. inspect RepRemove**

<b>RepRemove:</b>		<b>Number of Observations</b>		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Integers</b>	<b>Nonintegers</b>
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	<b>2,933</b>	<b>2,933</b>	-
#	Positive	<b>169</b>	<b>169</b>	-
#				
#	Total	<b>3,102</b>	<b>3,102</b>	-
#	Missing	<b>8,009</b>		
0	1	<b>11,111</b>		
<b>(2 unique values)</b>				

This table shows the number of Republicans that think Trump should or should not have been removed from office, based on my dummy variable, RepRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Trump should be removed, with 169 Republicans thinking this. Zero denotes the 2,933 Republicans that do not think Trump should be removed. The remaining 8,009 missing values were those that identify as Democrat or Independent.

**Table 6.28: Number of Democrats that think Trump Should be Removed**

**. inspect DemRemove**

<b>DemRemove:</b>		<b>Number of Observations</b>		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Integers</b>	<b>Nonintegers</b>
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	<b>419</b>	<b>419</b>	-
#	Positive	<b>3,953</b>	<b>3,953</b>	-
#				
#	Total	<b>4,372</b>	<b>4,372</b>	-
#	Missing	<b>6,739</b>		
0	1	<b>11,111</b>		
<b>(2 unique values)</b>				

The above table illustrates the number of Democrats that think Trump should have been removed from office, based on my dummy variable, DemRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Trump should be removed, with 3,953 Republicans thinking this. Zero denotes the 419 Democrats that do not think Trump should be removed. The 6,739 missing values are either Republicans or Independents.

**Table 6.29: Number of Independents that think Trump Should be Removed**

`. inspect IndRemove`

IndRemove:			Number of Observations		
			Total	Integers	Nonintegers
#	#	Negative	-	-	-
#	#	Zero	1,664	1,664	-
#	#	Positive	1,973	1,973	-
#	#				
#	#	Total	3,637	3,637	-
#	#	Missing	7,474		
0	1		11,111		
(2 unique values)					

This table illustrates the number of Independents that think Trump should have been removed from office, based on my dummy variable, IndRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Trump should be removed, with 1,973 Independents thinking this. Zero denotes the other 1,664 Independents that did not think Trump should be removed. Republicans and Democrats make up the 7,474 missing values.

**Table 6.30: Difference of Means Test- Republicans and Democrats**

`. ttest DemRemove==RepRemove, unpaired`

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
DemRem~e	4,372	.9041629	.0044525	.2944014	.8954338	.9128919
RepRem~e	3,102	.054481	.0040757	.2270009	.0464896	.0624724
combined	7,474	.5515119	.0057531	.4973727	.5402341	.5627897
diff		.8496819	.006303		.8373263	.8620375

diff = mean(DemRemove) - mean(RepRemove) t = 134.8066  
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 7472

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0  
Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

As shown in Table 6.30 there is a mean difference of 0.8496819. Thus, because the mean of DemRemove is greater than the mean of RepRemove, more Democrats thought Trump

should be impeached than Republicans, with a statistically significant increase of 0.8496819 (95% CI, 0.8373263 to 0.8620375),  $t(7472) = 134.8066$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Not only is this statistically significant, but it is substantively different.

**Table 6.31: Difference of Means Tests- Independents and Democrats**

**. ttest DemRemove==IndRemove, unpaired**

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
DemRem~e	<b>4,372</b>	<b>.9041629</b>	<b>.0044525</b>	<b>.2944014</b>	<b>.8954338</b>	<b>.9128919</b>
IndRem~e	<b>3,637</b>	<b>.5424801</b>	<b>.008262</b>	<b>.4982607</b>	<b>.5262815</b>	<b>.5586787</b>
combined	<b>8,009</b>	<b>.7399176</b>	<b>.0049021</b>	<b>.4387067</b>	<b>.7303081</b>	<b>.7495271</b>
diff		<b>.3616828</b>	<b>.0089786</b>		<b>.3440825</b>	<b>.3792831</b>

diff = mean(DemRemove) - mean(IndRemove) t = **40.2829**  
 Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = **8007**

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = <b>1.0000</b>	Pr( T  >  t ) = <b>0.0000</b>	Pr(T > t) = <b>0.0000</b>

As shown in Table 6.31, there is a mean difference of 0.3616828. Thus, because the mean of DemRemove is greater than the mean of IndRemove, more Democrats thought Trump should be impeached than Independents, with a statistically significant increase of 0.3616828 (95% CI, 0.3440825 to 0.3792831),  $t(8007) = 40.2829$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . While this difference is only statistically significant, it is on track for my hypotheses to be correct, assuming media coverage matches.

```
. ttest IndRemove==RepRemove, unpaired
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
IndRem~e	3,637	.5424801	.008262	.4982607	.5262815	.5586787
RepRem~e	3,102	.054481	.0040757	.2270009	.0464896	.0624724
combined	6,739	.3178513	.0056727	.4656759	.3067311	.3289715
diff		.4879991	.0097058		.4689726	.5070256

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = <b>1.0000</b>	Pr( T  >  t ) = <b>0.0000</b>	Pr(T > t) = <b>0.0000</b>

### Trump Period 3 Tables

Regardless of your views about the outcome of the impeachment trial, which comes closest to your view of Donald Trump's conduct and the evidence presented against him in the impeachment trial? [RANDOMIZE ORDER 1-3 AND 3-1]

- ### Political Party Question:

1 Republican  
2 Democrat  
3 Independent  
4 Something else”

**Table 6.33: Descriptive Statistics**

```
. summarize RepRemove DemRemove IndRemove
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
RepRemove	2,529	.0431	.2031225	0	1
DemRemove	3,643	.8923964	.3099217	0	1
IndRemove	2,984	.5056971	.5000513	0	1

In this poll, there were 9,156 observations, including 2,529 Republicans, 3,643 Democrats, and 2,984 Independents. In order to be able to compare these results with my hypotheses, I created three dummy variables: RepRemove, DemRemove, and IndRemove, which took into account party identity and if they believed Trump should be removed from office. Thus, the minimum and maximum were 0 and 1 respectively.

**Table 6.34: Overall Breakdown of Public Opinion and Impeachment**

```
. tab removefromoffice F_PARTY_
```

removefrom office	Party			Total
	Republica	Democrat	Independe	
0	2,420	392	1,475	4,287
1	109	3,251	1,509	4,869
Total	2,529	3,643	2,984	9,156

The above table illustrates the overall breakdown of views towards impeachment by political party. For the purposes of my data collection, I dropped responses in which political party received a 4, as I am interested in negative partisanship and polarization. Thus, those that do not identify with one political party or the other, are not relevant for my study. For this poll, I recoded the data, so that 0 represents anti-removal from office, while 1 represents in favor of removal from office. Looking at the data, it is important to note that overwhelmingly, Republicans were against removal from office. On the other hand, Democrats were overwhelmingly in favor of removal from office. However, Independents were pretty split, with the majority siding with Democrats.

**Table 6.35: Number of Republicans that think Trump Should be Removed**

**. inspect RepRemove**

<b>RepRemove:</b>		<b>Number of Observations</b>		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Integers</b>	<b>Nonintegers</b>
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	<b>2,420</b>	<b>2,420</b>	-
#	Positive	<b>109</b>	<b>109</b>	-
#				
#	Total	<b>2,529</b>	<b>2,529</b>	-
#	Missing	<b>6,627</b>		
<hr/>		<hr/>		
0	1	<b>9,156</b>		
<b>(2 unique values)</b>				

This table shows the number of Republicans that think Trump should have been removed from office, based on my dummy variable, RepRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Trump should be removed, with 109 Republicans thinking this. Zero denotes the 2,420 Republicans that did not think Trump should be removed. The 6,627 missing values are Democrats and Independents.

**Table 6.36: Number of Democrats that think Trump Should be Removed**

**. inspect DemRemove**

<b>DemRemove:</b>		<b>Number of Observations</b>		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Integers</b>	<b>Nonintegers</b>
#	Negative	-	-	-
#	Zero	<b>392</b>	<b>392</b>	-
#	Positive	<b>3,251</b>	<b>3,251</b>	-
#				
#	Total	<b>3,643</b>	<b>3,643</b>	-
#	Missing	<b>5,513</b>		
<hr/>		<hr/>		
0	1	<b>9,156</b>		
<b>(2 unique values)</b>				

Illustrated above is the number of Democrats that think Trump should have been removed from office, based on my dummy variable, DemRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Trump should be removed, with 3,251 Democrats thinking this. Zero denotes the 392 Democrats that did not think Trump should be removed. The 5,513 missing values are Republicans or Independents.

**Table 6.37: Number of Independents that think Trump Should be Removed**

`. inspect IndRemove`

IndRemove:			Number of Observations		
			Total	Integers	Nonintegers
#	#	Negative	-	-	-
#	#	Zero	1,475	1,475	-
#	#	Positive	1,509	1,509	-
#	#				
#	#	Total	2,984	2,984	-
#	#	Missing	6,172		
0	1		9,156		
(2 unique values)					

The above table shows the number of Independents that think Trump should have been removed from office, based on my dummy variable, IndRemove. In this instance, 1, being “positive” denotes that Trump should be removed, with 1,509 Independents thinking this. Zero denotes the 1,475 Independents that did not think Trump should be removed. The 6,172 missing values are Republicans and Democrats.

**Table 6.38: Difference of Means Test- Republicans and Democrats**

`. ttest DemRemove==RepRemove, unpaired`

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
DemRem~e	3,643	.8923964	.0051348	.3099217	.882329	.9024637
RepRem~e	2,529	.0431	.0040391	.2031225	.0351798	.0510203
combined	6,172	.544394	.0063398	.4980656	.5319659	.5568222
diff		.8492963	.0070219		.835531	.8630616

diff = mean(DemRemove) - mean(RepRemove) t = 120.9503  
 Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = 6170

Ha: diff < 0 Ha: diff != 0 Ha: diff > 0  
 Pr(T < t) = 1.0000 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000 Pr(T > t) = 0.0000

As shown in Table 6.38, there is a mean difference of 0.8492963. Thus, because the mean of DemRemove is greater than the mean of RepRemove, more Democrats thought Trump



should be impeached than Republicans, with a statistically significant increase of 0.8492963 (95% CI, 0.835531 to 0.8630616),  $t(6170) = 120.9503$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . This difference of means is both statistically significant as well as substantively different.

**Table 6.39: Difference of Means Tests- Independents and Democrats**

**. ttest DemRemove==IndRemove, unpaired**

Two-sample t test with equal variances

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
DemRem~e	<b>3,643</b>	<b>.8923964</b>	<b>.0051348</b>	<b>.3099217</b>	<b>.882329</b>	<b>.9024637</b>
IndRem~e	<b>2,984</b>	<b>.5056971</b>	<b>.0091541</b>	<b>.5000513</b>	<b>.4877481</b>	<b>.523646</b>
combined	<b>6,627</b>	<b>.7182737</b>	<b>.0055263</b>	<b>.4498746</b>	<b>.7074404</b>	<b>.729107</b>
diff		<b>.3866993</b>	<b>.0100412</b>		<b>.3670153</b>	<b>.4063834</b>

diff = mean(DemRemove) - mean(IndRemove) t = **38.5112**  
Ho: diff = 0 degrees of freedom = **6625**

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = <b>1.0000</b>	Pr( T  >  t ) = <b>0.0000</b>	Pr(T > t) = <b>0.0000</b>

As shown in Table 6.39, there is a mean difference of 0.3866993. Thus, because the mean of DemRemove is greater than the mean of IndRemove, more Democrats thought Trump should be impeached than Independents, with a statistically significant increase of 0.3866993 (95% CI, 0.3670153 to 0.4063834),  $t(6625) = 38.5112$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . While this difference of means is not substantively different, statistically it matches my hypotheses, assuming media coverage aligns with this as well.

```
. ttest IndRemove==RepRemove, unpaired
```

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
IndRem~e	2,984	.5056971	.0091541	.5000513	.4877481	.523646
RepRem~e	2,529	.0431	.0040391	.2031225	.0351798	.0510203
combined	5,513	.2934881	.0061334	.4554014	.2814643	.305512
diff		.462597	.0106161		.4417852	.4834088

Ha: diff < 0	Ha: diff != 0	Ha: diff > 0
Pr(T < t) = <b>1.0000</b>	Pr( T  >  t ) = <b>0.0000</b>	Pr(T > t) = <b>0.0000</b>

Coding  
Blank Coding Sheet  
Article #:  
Date Published:  
Newspaper:  
Type of Article: Editorial  
Word Count:

Depth of Coverage: 1 (opinion oriented) 2 3 4 5 (political process)

## Coding Instructions

### 1. Opinion vs. Political Piece

An article can be either an opinion or political piece, or both an opinion and political piece. As long as the article provides the author's opinion regarding impeachment and/or the politics of impeachment, it receives a 1 for the category which it falls in. In cases where the article is both opinion and political, assign each category a 1, regardless of if one is more dominant than the other.

### 2. Tone

Positive articles – anti-impeachment of either President Clinton or President Trump, positive perceptions of the President or the President's party

Negative articles – pro-impeachment of either President Clinton or President Trump, negative perceptions of the President or the President's party

### 3. Salience

If the article is on the front page of the newspaper, it is assigned 1. If it appears elsewhere, 0 is assigned. However, because these sources are electronic, it may be difficult to tell what page the article is on, so leave the salience blank.

### 4. Depth of Coverage

If the article is more about impeachment as a political process, the article should receive a 5. If the article is more about the author's opinion on the validity of the charges, and not about the political process, it gets coded as a 1 (more of an op-ed). For articles that focus on both the political aspect and the author's personal opinion, the article receives a 3 (more of an editorial).

## Sample Positive Article Coding Sheet

Article #: 94

Date Published: 1/8/1999 (Clinton Period 2)

Newspaper: The Washington Post

Type of Article: Editorial

Word Count: 523

Opinion piece? Yes (1) No (0)

Political piece? Yes (1) No (0)

Tone of Article: positive (+) negative (-) neutral (+/-)

Salience/Placement of Article: 0 (not front page) 1 (front page)

Depth of Coverage: 1 (opinion oriented) 2 3 4 5 (political process)

The Article:

“THE SENATE trial of President Clinton began yesterday amid continued confusion over the sort of format that would govern it. The White House and Senate Democrats are seeking a procedure that would prevent the calling of witnesses before an early vote on whether a full trial should take place at all. The House impeachment managers and many Senate Republicans, meanwhile, are insisting on a fuller trial that would include witnesses. The partisan lines that are forming early around these procedural questions are dispiriting, although last night Senate leaders still held out hope of a compromise. Still, the reality is that both sides raise real concerns that, if unaddressed, could undermine the ultimate legitimacy of whatever the Senate finally achieves.

Those who favor calling witnesses argue accurately that the Senate owes the House of Representatives the respect of considering seriously the articles of impeachment it has sent over. The House, in our opinion, erred in its decision to impeach Mr. Clinton. But an impeachment by the House demands of the Senate a proceeding of sufficient rigor to satisfy the more moderate of Mr. Clinton's political foes -- should the president ultimately be acquitted -- that the Senate, at the least, did not shirk its obligation to face up to his odious conduct. For this reason, House managers should be given an opportunity to present senators with the case against Mr. Clinton in a manner that does not trivialize his behavior by trivializing its presentation. While we believe that the allegations against Mr. Clinton -- even if proven -- should not trigger his removal, many people legitimately disagree with this view. The facts that could be developed more fully at trial are, therefore, no mere sideshow. As long as a majority of senators believe that additional testimony is necessary in order to inform their final votes, it seems reasonable to permit whatever witnesses the House wishes to call. (Mr. Clinton's lawyers, of course, must have the opportunity fully to cross-examine any witnesses who do appear.)

But this does not mean the Senate should hear lots of testimony that, while embarrassing to the president, is not necessary in order to inform its final judgment. Just as the trial's legitimacy depends on whether senators give a fair hearing to the House, it also depends on whether they refrain from dragging out the trial in order to beat up on the president for political reasons. The Senate can and should end the trial as soon as a majority of senators become convinced that hearing from more witnesses will not aid them in their determinations of how to vote.

The search for an adequate trial procedure is proving divisive, but the animating principle that would guide a good Senate trial is hardly subtle. The Senate trial, whatever procedure it uses, will be seen as legitimate if senators end up hearing the House's case adequately to make an informed judgment on its merits without letting partisan concerns -- or, for that matter, concerns about convenience to the Senate or the country at large -- artificially lengthen or shorten its deliberation” (The Senate Trial, 1999).

Sample Neutral Article Coding Sheet

Article #: 56

Date Published: 9/21/1998 (Clinton Period 1)

Newspaper: The Washington Post  
Type of Article: Editorial  
Word Count: 646

Opinion piece? Yes (1) No (0)  
Political piece? Yes (1) No (0)

Tone of Article: positive (+) negative (-) neutral (+/-)

Salience/Placement of Article: 0 (not front page) 1 (front page)

Depth of Coverage: 1 (opinion oriented) 2 3 4 5 (political process)

The Article:

“THE IMPEACHMENT process on which the House is now embarked can never be divorced entirely from partisan political considerations. But it ought not be an exercise in naivete to urge the leadership of both parties to try. The credibility of the proceedings, and thus their ultimate worth, will depend not just on whether they are fair but on whether they are perceived as having been so.

The Republicans bear the larger share of this responsibility because it is they -- in particular House Speaker Newt Gingrich -- who are in control. The responsibility is the greater because of the impact the proceedings may have on the November elections, and the fact that those in turn could affect control of Congress and national policy for years to come. The Republicans have no obligation to shield the Democrats from the possible electoral consequences of the president's challenged behavior. But it is their responsibility not to twist the proceedings to accentuate that fallout. Their own long-term reputations are at stake in this, no less than Mr. Clinton's.

The proceedings thus far in the Judiciary Committee seem to us to fall short of this latter standard. We have no way of gauging whether the committee Republicans were right or wrong in deciding as they did to release today the videotape of the president's grand jury testimony and 2,800 other pages of evidence; we haven't seen any of it. Our instinct is to favor disclosure, and the committee's earlier decision to release the full report of independent counsel Kenneth Starr was absolutely correct. But the committee has a duty to function as something more than a conduit between Mr. Starr and the Internet. Is its only intention before the election to make available the prosecutor's brief? Committee Democrats said the release of the new material was piling on, that a transcript would have done just as well as the videotape and been less susceptible to use in campaign ads -- quite true -- and that material in the 2,800 pages should have been cut. The Judiciary Democrats are themselves a partisan group with an interest to protect, and they inspire no automatic confidence. But the committee Republicans who smirked afterward that they were just trying to keep the public informed inspired none either.

These are not court proceedings. The only real check against abuse is thus the committee's own discretion, which is to say, the discretion of the leadership to which the committee, on the Republican side particularly, seems wont to respond. The thing needs to be done better -- on a more principled and deliberate basis -- than it seems to us to have been done thus far. There needs to be some agreement between the parties on the process to be followed in the inquiry. The Democrats must seek to be something more than a bloc of objectors; the Republicans need to find a way to avoid the kind of party-line majoritarianism that distinguished last week's deliberations.

The Republicans have let at least two investigations of administration conduct in recent years degenerate into inconclusive name-calling contests. This one is too important to be allowed to go down the same path. After Richard Nixon's resignation, the House voted with only a few dissenters to accept the impeachment report of the Judiciary Committee and to commend the committee for the manner in which it had conducted its impeachment inquiry. That is the kind of bipartisan respect to which the committee again must aspire. Here's a test. Each time the committee acts, members of both parties -- and the rest of us -- should ask the question: Would they have done the same thing if Mr. Clinton were a Republican president? If the answer is no, as it almost surely was last week, they need to go back to the drawing board” (So Far, Not So Good 1998).

#### Sample Negative Article Coding Sheet

Article #: 39

Date Published: 1/31/2020 (Trump Period 2)

Newspaper: The Washington Post

Type of Article: Editorial

Word Count: 547

Opinion piece? Yes (1) No (0)

Political piece? Yes (1) No (0)

Tone of Article: positive (+) negative (-) neutral (+/-)

Salience/Placement of Article: 0 (not front page) 1 (front page)

Depth of Coverage: 1 (opinion oriented) 2 3 4 5 (political process)

The Article:

“SENATORS FACE a historic decision Friday: whether to shut down the trial of President Trump without hearing what they know would be essential evidence. Mr. Trump has denied for months that he withheld military aid and a White House meeting from Ukraine's president in an effort to force politicized investigations, including of former vice president Joe Biden. The president's lawyers have insisted that there is no firsthand testimony to the contrary. Yet, now, senators know that former national security adviser John Bolton can supply that testimony and that he is prepared to appear if called.

Polls show that Americans overwhelmingly want the senators to hear witnesses. There is no precedent for an impeachment trial without testimony. If the Senate refuses, it will ratify a coverup, making any acquittal of Mr. Trump meaningless.

Mr. Bolton is not the only witness who could enlighten the Senate, and the country, about the Ukraine affair. Acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney also has direct knowledge of Mr.-Trump's intention in withholding the Ukraine aid. Vice President Pence knows why Mr. Trump suddenly ordered him not to attend the inauguration of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last May. Rudolph W. Giuliani, the president's personal lawyer, and his former sidekicks Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman know in detail how Mr. Zelensky and his top aides were pressured. Republicans argue that an attempt to subpoena Mr. Bolton or other witnesses would lead to court battles with the White House 'even as they fault the House for not undertaking the same fight. One of the president's lawyers has advanced the extraordinary defense that Mr. Trump was entitled to trade official acts for help with his reelection' a position, that, if ratified, would grant Mr. Trump and future Presidents' vast powers to rig elections.

GOP leaders vow that if the Senate votes to call witnesses, they will move to summon Mr. Biden, his son Hunter and others. That would be shameful: By forcing the Bidens to testify, senators would be handing Mr. Trump what he was seeking all along, the chance to sow bogus questions about the probity of a leading Democratic presidential candidate. Democrats, however, should not be intimidated by this threat into backing away from the demand that Mr. Bolton and other relevant witnesses appear.

Ironically, senators who support a coverup now will only limit their acceptable options as the trial ends. Serious arguments have been made against conviction. One is that, because the president's extortion scheme never bore fruit 'no investigations were announced, and U.S. aid was eventually delivered' removal from office is an excessive remedy. Another is that a verdict on Mr. Trump's tenure should be rendered by voters nine months from now.

But if Republicans muzzle potential witnesses and suppress relevant documents, senators who respect the Constitution will be left with only one honorable choice. Mr. Trump tried to use his office to force Ukraine to intervene in the 2020 election. He and his lawyers have not only refused to admit wrongdoing but have brazenly asserted the president's right to engage in such manipulations. If that proposition is the one to be decided, and what should be a full and fair trial is aborted on the president's orders, the only justifiable vote will be for conviction" (The Consequences of Coverup, 2020).

# Coding of all Clinton Articles:

Article #	Date Published	Newspaper	Type of Article	Word Count	Opinion Piece	Political Piece	Tone (t-, t/-)	Saliency	Depth of Coverage			
1	12/19/98	NYT	Editorial	398	1	1	(v)	0	3			
2	12/19/98	WashPost	Editorial	611	1	1	(v)	0	4			period 1
3	12/18/98	NYT	Editorial	576	1	1	(v)	0	2			period 2
4	12/18/98	WashPost	Editorial	482	1	1	(v/-)	0	3			period 3
5	12/18/98	WashPost	Editorial	726	1	1	(v)	0	3			
6	12/16/98	NYT	Editorial	1610	1	1	(-)	0	3			
7	12/15/98	NYT	Editorial	604	0	1	(v/-)	0	5			
8	12/15/98	WashPost	Editorial	857	1	1	(-)	0	2			
9	12/14/98	NYT	Editorial	487	0	1	(v/-)	0	5			
10	12/13/98	NYT	Editorial	557	1	1	(v)	0	4			
11	12/13/98	WashPost	Editorial	458	1	1	(v)	0	3			
12	12/12/98	NYT	Editorial	482	1	1	(-)	0	2			
13	12/12/98	WashPost	Editorial	331	1	1	(-)	0	1			
14	12/11/98	NYT	Editorial	484	1	1	(v/-)	0	3			
15	12/11/98	WashPost	Editorial	652	1	1	(v)	0	4			
16	12/10/98	NYT	Editorial	576	1	1	(v)	0	2			
17	12/9/98	NYT	Editorial	557	1	1	(v/-)	0	4			
18	12/8/98	NYT	Editorial	501	1	1	(v)	0	3			
19	12/6/98	NYT	Editorial	423	1	1	(v/-)	0	4			
20	12/6/98	WashPost	Editorial	783	1	1	(v)	0	3			
21	12/2/98	WashPost	Editorial	476	1	1	(v)	0	3			
22	12/1/98	NYT	Editorial	611	1	1	(v/-)	0	2			
23	11/25/98	WashPost	Editorial	306	1	1	(v/-)	0	3			
24	11/24/98	NYT	Editorial	549	1	1	(v/-)	0	4			
25	11/24/98	WashPost	Editorial	516	1	1	(v)	0	2			
26	11/22/98	NYT	Editorial	679	1	1	(-)	0	1			
27	11/20/98	NYT	Editorial	1175	1	1	(v/-)	0	4			
28	11/18/98	NYT	Editorial	1075	1	1	(v)	0	3			
29	11/16/98	WashPost	Editorial	488	1	1	(v)	0	4			
30	11/16/98	WashPost	Editorial	600	1	1	(-)	0	4			
31	11/15/98	NYT	Editorial	678	1	1	(v/-)	0	5			
32	11/15/98	WashPost	Editorial	510	1	1	(v/-)	0	4			
33	11/11/98	NYT	Editorial	368	1	1	(-)	0	3			
34	11/11/98	WashPost	Editorial	397	1	1	(v/-)	0	4			
35	11/6/98	NYT	Editorial	670	1	1	(-)	0	2			
36	11/6/98	WashPost	Editorial	369	1	1	(-)	0	2			
37	11/5/98	NYT	Editorial	1676	1	1	(v/-)	0	5			
38	11/1/98	NYT	Editorial	719	1	1	(v/-)	0	5			
39	10/30/98	WashPost	Editorial	448	1	1	(-)	0	1			
40	10/29/98	NYT	Editorial	740	1	1	(-)	0	1			
41	10/15/98	NYT	Editorial	501	1	1	(-)	0	2			
42	10/15/98	WashPost	Editorial	510	1	1	(v/-)	0	1			
43	10/12/98	WashPost	Editorial	1087	1	1	(-)	0	1			
44	10/9/98	NYT	Editorial	643	1	1	(-)	0	3			
45	10/9/98	WashPost	Editorial	527	1	1	(-)	0	2			
46	10/7/98	WashPost	Editorial	422	0	1	(v/-)	0	5			
47	10/6/98	NYT	Editorial	596	1	1	(v/-)	0	3			
48	10/4/98	NYT	Editorial	603	1	1	(v)	0	4			
49	10/2/98	WashPost	Editorial	620	1	1	(v/-)	0	4			
50	9/30/98	NYT	Editorial	698	1	1	(v)	0	2			
51	9/28/98	WashPost	Editorial	1050	1	1	(v/-)	0	1			
52	9/27/98	NYT	Editorial	728	1	1	(v)	0	3			
53	9/24/98	NYT	Editorial	847	1	1	(-)	0	4			
54	9/24/98	WashPost	Editorial	756	1	1	(-)	0	3			
55	9/22/98	NYT	Editorial	776	1	1	(v/-)	0	2			
56	9/21/98	WashPost	Editorial	646	1	1	(v/-)	0	3			
57	2/12/99	WashPost	Editorial	542	1	1	(v)	0	2			
58	2/11/99	NYT	Editorial	758	1	1	(v)	0	3			
59	2/10/99	WashPost	Editorial	455	1	1	(v)	0	3			
60	2/9/99	NYT	Editorial	491	1	1	(v)	0	3			
61	2/7/99	NYT	Editorial	573	1	1	(v)	0	3			
62	2/7/99	WashPost	Editorial	841	1	1	(v)	0	2			
63	2/5/99	NYT	Editorial	586	1	1	(v/-)	0	4			



63	2/5/99	NYT	Editorial	586	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
64	2/3/99	WashPost	Editorial	265	0	1 (v/-)	0	5
65	2/2/99	NYT	Editorial	535	1	1 (v)	0	3
66	2/1/99	WashPost	Editorial	1059	1	1 (v/-)	0	3
67	1/31/99	NYT	Editorial	309	1	1 (v/-)	0	2
68	1/28/99	NYT	Editorial	684	1	1 (v)	0	1
69	1/27/99	WashPost	Editorial	561	1	1 (-)	0	1
70	1/26/99	NYT	Editorial	494	1	1 (v)	0	3
71	1/25/99	NYT	Editorial	582	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
72	1/24/99	NYT	Editorial	762	1	1 (v)	0	3
73	1/22/99	NYT	Editorial	477	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
74	1/22/99	WashPost	Editorial	374	1	1 (v)	0	2
75	1/21/99	NYT	Editorial	403	1	1 (v)	0	3
76	1/20/99	NYT	Editorial	498	1	1 (v)	0	3
77	1/20/99	NYT	Editorial	634	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
78	1/20/99	WashPost	Editorial	717	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
79	1/19/99	NYT	Editorial	657	1	1 (v)	0	4
80	1/19/99	WashPost	Editorial	529	1	1 (v)	0	3
81	1/17/99	NYT	Editorial	615	1	1 (v)	0	4
82	1/16/99	NYT	Editorial	483	1	1 (-)	0	2
83	1/16/99	WashPost	Editorial	295	1	1 (v/-)	0	3
84	1/15/99	NYT	Editorial	634	1	1 (-)	0	3
85	1/15/99	WashPost	Editorial	334	1	1 (v/-)	0	3
86	1/14/99	NYT	Editorial	507	1	1 (v)	0	1
87	1/14/99	WashPost	Editorial	413	1	1 (v/-)	0	2
88	1/13/99	NYT	Editorial	405	1	1 (v/-)	0	2
89	1/12/99	NYT	Editorial	551	1	1 (v/-)	0	3
90	1/12/99	WashPost	Editorial	401	1	1 (v)	0	3
91	1/10/99	NYT	Editorial	712	0	1 (v/-)	0	5
92	1/10/99	WashPost	Editorial	596	1	1 (v)	0	3
93	1/8/99	NYT	Editorial	653	1	1 (v)	0	2
94	1/8/99	WashPost	Editorial	523	1	1 (v)	0	3
95	1/6/99	NYT	Editorial	488	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
96	1/3/99	WashPost	Editorial	488	1	1 (-)	0	3
97	1/1/99	WashPost	Editorial	647	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
98	12/31/98	NYT	Editorial	626	1	1 (v/-)	0	3
99	12/28/98	NYT	Editorial	621	0	1 (v/-)	0	5
100	12/28/98	WashPost	Editorial	308	1	1 (v)	0	2
101	12/25/98	NYT	Editorial	451	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
102	12/23/98	NYT	Editorial	511	1	1 (-)	0	4
103	12/23/98	WashPost	Editorial	488	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
104	12/22/98	WashPost	Editorial	627	1	1 (v)	0	2
105	12/22/98	WashPost	Editorial	368	1	1 (v)	0	2
106	12/21/98	NYT	Editorial	609	1	1 (-)	0	3
107	12/20/98	NYT	Editorial	647	1	1 (v)	0	3
108	12/20/98	WashPost	Editorial	648	1	1 (v)	0	3
109	12/20/98	WashPost	Editorial	547	1	1 (v)	0	3
110	2/25/99	NYT	Editorial	410	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
111	2/18/99	WashPost	Editorial	478	1	1 (v)	0	2
112	2/14/99	NYT	Editorial	641	1	1 (v/-)	0	4
113	2/13/99	NYT	Editorial	1619	1	1 (-)	0	3
114	2/13/99	WashPost	Editorial	629	1	1 (v)	0	3

# Coding of all Trump Articles:

Article #	Date Published	Newspaper	Type of Article	Word Count	Opinion Piece	Political Piece	Tone (t, -, t/-)	Salience	Depth of Coverage			
1	12/17/19	WashPost	Editorial	597	1	1	(-)	0	2			
2	12/15/19	NYT	Editorial	1670	1	1	(-)	0	1			period 1
3	12/13/19	WashPost	Editorial	552	1	1	(-)	0	2			period 2
4	12/11/19	WashPost	Editorial	1398	1	1	(-)	0	3			period 3
5	12/9/19	NYT	Editorial	1085	1	1	(-)	0	4			
6	12/8/19	WashPost	Editorial	537	1	1	(-)	0	2			
7	12/5/19	NYT	Editorial	1134	1	1	(-)	0	3			
8	12/5/19	WashPost	Editorial	460	1	1	(-)	0	5			
9	12/4/19	WashPost	Editorial	532	1	1	(t/-)	0	5			
10	12/3/19	WashPost	Editorial	498	1	1	(-)	0	4			
11	11/25/19	NYT	Editorial	1705	1	1	(-)	0	3			
12	11/21/19	NYT	Editorial	1415	1	1	(-)	0	4			
13	11/18/19	NYT	Editorial	814	0	1	(t/-)	0	5			
14	11/16/19	NYT	Editorial	1008	0	1	(t/-)	0	5			
15	11/14/19	NYT	Editorial	1261	1	1	(-)	0	3			
16	11/13/19	WashPost	Editorial	584	1	1	(-)	0	2			
17	11/12/19	NYT	Editorial	1244	1	1	(-)	0	4			
18	11/11/19	NYT	Editorial	1622	1	1	(-)	0	2			
19	11/8/19	NYT	Editorial	940	1	1	(-)	0	4			
20	1/5/19	WashPost	Editorial	471	1	1	(-)	0	3			
21	11/1/19	WashPost	Editorial	549	1	1	(-)	0	3			
22	10/31/19	NYT	Editorial	1001	1	1	(-)	0	4			
23	10/25/19	WashPost	Editorial	458	1	1	(-)	0	4			
24	10/24/19	NYT	Editorial	1150	1	1	(-)	0	3			
25	10/19/19	NYT	Editorial	1047	1	1	(-)	0	4			
26	10/12/19	WashPost	Editorial	555	1	1	(-)	0	4			
27	10/10/19	NYT	Editorial	1490	1	1	(-)	0	3			
28	10/10/19	WashPost	Editorial	510	1	1	(-)	0	3			
29	10/4/19	NYT	Editorial	770	1	1	(-)	0	3			
30	9/30/19	NYT	Editorial	1231	1	1	(-)	0	4			
31	9/26/19	NYT	Editorial	737	0	1	(t/-)	0	5			
32	9/25/19	NYT	Editorial	927	1	1	(t/-)	0	4			
33	9/25/19	WashPost	Editorial	709	1	1	(-)	0	2			
34	9/19/19	NYT	Editorial	708	1	1	(-)	0	1			
35	9/18/19	NYT	Editorial	779	1	1	(t/-)	0	3			
36	2/5/20	WashPost	Editorial	458	1	1	(-)	0	3			
37	2/4/20	WashPost	Editorial	541	1	1	(-)	0	3			
38	2/3/20	NYT	Editorial	1311	1	1	(-)	0	1			
39	1/31/20	WashPost	Editorial	547	1	1	(-)	0	2			
40	1/30/20	WashPost	Editorial	585	1	1	(-)	0	3			
41	1/28/20	NYT	Editorial	1026	1	1	(-)	0	4			
42	1/28/20	WashPost	Editorial	515	1	1	(-)	0	4			
43	1/22/20	WashPost	Editorial	527	1	1	(-)	0	3			
44	1/18/20	WashPost	Editorial	544	1	1	(-)	0	3			
45	1/17/20	NYT	Editorial	1121	1	1	(-)	0	2			
46	1/16/20	WashPost	Editorial	547	1	1	(-)	0	2			
47	1/15/20	NYT	Editorial	710	1	1	(-)	0	4			
48	1/7/20	NYT	Editorial	1764	1	1	(-)	0	3			
49	1/6/20	WashPost	Editorial	466	1	1	(-)	0	4			
50	1/2/20	WashPost	Editorial	465	1	1	(t/-)	0	4			
51	12/28/19	NYT	Editorial	989	1	1	(-)	0	3			
52	12/20/19	NYT	Editorial	1180	1	1	(-)	0	3			
53	12/19/19	NYT	Editorial	1303	1	1	(-)	0	5			
54	12/19/19	WashPost	Editorial	550	1	1	(-)	0	2			
55	2/13/20	NYT	Editorial	952	1	1	(-)	0	1			
56	2/6/20	NYT	Editorial	1419	1	1	(t/-)	0	1			
57	2/6/20	WashPost	Editorial	510	1	1	(-)	0	3			