

**Personality and Political Leadership Explored:
Richard Nixon and the Family Assistance Plan**

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Abstract:**Personality and Political Leadership Explored:
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This thesis explores the notion of personality as it impacts presidential behavior. Relying on the arguably fragmented field of personality and policymaking, the paper offers a case study of President Richard Nixon's experience with the Family Assistance Plan, a landmark piece of welfare reform. In contending that character is most evident in situations that are less structured or that permit individual expression, I argue that President Nixon's personality greatly impacted his rhetorical style and was also evident through his reluctance to conduct bargaining with members of Congress.

To add rigor to the analyses, I borrow heavily from the work of Erwin Hargrove (1998) who, in putting forth a model of political leadership that draws upon elements of moral commitment, character, integrity and cultural discernment, holds that effective democratic leadership combines strong personal aptitude with a coherent assessment of what action history will permit.

Furthermore, this thesis contends that President Nixon failed to discern the grains of history that had characterized past welfare reform; the proposed major overhaul of welfare, commenced in the aftermath of the War on Poverty, was attacked from both the left and right, and thus failed to make it intact through the 91st Congress.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

The administration of President Richard M. Nixon, which lasted from January 1969 until its abrupt conclusion in August 1974, was successful on many fronts. In the foreign policy arena, for which the President is most favorably remembered, the détente and the arms negotiations with the Soviet Union, and the opening of substantive discussions with Maoist China, were examples of how a bold president, coupled with an amenable context, produced persevering change in East-West relations. Complementing his international policies, revisionist historians have suggested that certain domestic proposals both anticipated future reforms and revitalized the fading efforts of the Johnson administration. Joan Hoff posits that Nixon's

Domestic programs may be remembered longer than his currently better-known activities in the realm of foreign policy....they represent the most positive characteristics of the Nixon phenomenon. In fact, the Age of Nixon that would end in the denouement of disgrace actually reached its climax in the area of domestic reform.¹

During his first term in office, Nixon pushed for reform in five domestic areas: welfare, civil rights, economic policy, environmental policy and reorganization of the federal bureaucracy. One of the greatest battles was fought over the Family Assistance Plan, which sought to provide a "guaranteed income" to all heads of poor households, thus replacing the emphasis on discounted or free services favored by Nixon's predecessors.

Given the relative failures of the Great Society and the War on Poverty, both of

which resulted in a welfare state that was falling far short of heavy expectations, welfare reform was not entirely unexpected. The announcement of the Family Assistance Plan proposal was, however, given that it seemingly conflicted with the value of economic self-reliance one would expect from a Republican president.²

The original Family Assistance Plan, proposed in August 1969, would be rejected some two years later (subsequent versions were passed by the Senate). The intervening period was characterized by strong presidential rhetoric, internal divisions and recriminations, widespread congressional and media opposition, and, ultimately, a coalition of left and right that could not be defeated.

This thesis proposes two research questions. Firstly, why did President Nixon choose such a controversial issue to address in the early stages of his administration? Conventional political wisdom would contend that the honeymoon period usually enjoyed upon obtaining office would encourage the passage of non-controversial actions referred to in the preceding election campaign. President Clinton found to his chagrin that defeating a Republican incumbent was no guarantee that a Democratic Congress would support another large-scale welfare bill.

The concept of a negative income tax (which formed the basis of the Plan) was proposed first by Milton Friedman in 1943, while working in the U.S. Treasury Department. Friedman noted that people with fluctuating annual earnings were liable for greater marginal tax rates than those people earning similar yet more stable incomes, and that this was especially prevalent among the low-income population who typically moved back and forth between the zero and positive tax brackets. He suggested that income could be paid back to individuals whose earnings never entered the positive bracket—by

doing so, poverty would be eliminated. Friedman's conservative ideas did not fit in with the traditional liberal thought of the 1940's and 1950's and the proposal was not taken seriously in political circles.³

In 1966, President Johnson's Council of Economic Advisors reported that a negative income tax "could be administered on a universal basis for all the poor and would be the most direct approach to reducing poverty."⁴ However, the idea lay dormant until the Family Assistance Plan was formally announced (a polished proposal was not specifically referred to during the 1968 election, nor highlighted in the period leading up to President Nixon's inauguration).

The second question is that of how President Nixon sought to convince the various constituencies (the public, the media and Congress) that such a program, one that would bring into question an American culture of economic individualism, could succeed without imposing prohibitive federal costs.

The majority of the argument contained within this thesis approaches these questions from the perspective of presidential leadership as a derivative of individual personality. Jean Blondel writes that

First it must be established that leaders do make a difference which...is fraught with considerable difficulties; second, one must attempt to see to what extent that 'difference' is due to the personal characteristics of leaders rather than to the structural conditions of the offices they hold or the institutional arrangements within which they operate. Only where personal characteristics have been found to be a significant factor in themselves in accounting for at least part of the variation is it permissible to move to the next plane and ask, if personal qualities are important, what, in turn, accounts for the existence of a given set of personal qualities in a particular leader.⁵

Reversing this statement, I ask what were some of President Nixon's personal qualities that were reflected through his own particular style of leadership. Secondly, I evaluate the extent to which Nixon's personality impacted his behavior during the period in which the Family Assistance Plan was winding its way through Congress. Finally, I consider whether Nixon's character did indeed make a difference in the failure of the Plan to successfully pass into legislation.

To construct an analysis of President Nixon's character and behavior, I utilize a model of political leadership devised by Professor Erwin Hargrove. The model is not designed to be exhaustive of all of the qualities necessary (and otherwise) to be an effective leader. However, Hargrove elucidates some basic ideas about American political and social culture and offers an illustration of how different presidents have molded personal and contextual factors into unique styles of leadership. Hargrove writes that

Political leadership must contain a moral element if it is to fully effective. The talented politician must also be artful in using strategies and tactics that appeal to the interests of others as they understand them. But craft dissolves into cleverness without a clear sense of moral purpose. And significant achievements in politics and policy require a sense of shared values and goals. The same relationship between art and morals holds for the character of politicians. A good man is not necessarily a good politician. A clever politician is not necessarily a good man. But a full and complete political leader must combine elements of craft and moral purpose in his character as well as his work. Neither is sufficient in itself. This is not to deny the imperfections and flaws of character that attend political ambition. It is to affirm that moral character is itself a skill and thus a component of effective leadership.⁶

At the heart of the model, therefore, is the assumption that democratic leaders ought to possess a moral commitment to (or vision for) the nation which is reflected both through their general demeanor (rhetoric, interpersonal relations, conduct in office, etc.)

and policy initiatives that seek to bring improvements to the general quality of life. In order to be moral leaders, presidents should be prudent discerners of the political climate, such that a permanent, positive change can only be effected through a realization of one's political strengths and constraints.

The following chapters commence with a literature review of presidential personality to date. A discussion of Erwin Hargrove's model in greater detail is presented in Chapter Three. Chapters Four through Seven take each component of the model (character as a skill, cultural leadership, teaching reality and skill in context) and blend in evidence of President Nixon's childhood, early political experiences and actions, culminating in efforts to secure passage of the Family Assistance Plan.

Chapter Two: Presidential Personality

Introduction

In order to provide a clear and reliable understanding of how presidential personality interacts with institutional, contextual, and environmental forces that serve to bound the presidency, it is first necessary to define both what conceptions exist of leadership and the purposes for which it is desired in a democracy. To do so, I begin by citing the work of Dean Keith Simonton who suggests two problems facing contemporary leadership scholars. The first is the lack of an operational definition of leadership. The second is the resistance of the subject matter to quantitative analysis.⁷ In this chapter, I will consider the former problem and offer alternative interpretations.

Furthermore, in order to study presidential personality, scholars must believe that leaders are able to make a difference. Why does it matter who is the chief executive if, as is so frequently argued, the individual with whom power lies is but one actor amongst many who are competing to realize their own particular goals? The development of the presidency as an institution performing multiple tasks in a routinized and predictable organizational manner certainly contributes to the perspective that the engine will function regardless of who holds the keys to the car. Why, then, do individuals enter the office with the belief that their experience as president will be significantly different from their predecessors', and that they have the abilities to overcome the considerable constraints that face the modern president?

The second part of the chapter enters into a discussion of the presidential

personality literature that exists to date, noting that the field is a fragmented one, responsible as it is to different schools of thought. I will show that presidents, under favorable circumstances, do indeed make a discernable difference to political outcomes and that it is possible to explain an individual's actions and decisions by a combination of insight into the development of personality and the identification of recurring patterns surrounding prior experience. Finally, this chapter will serve as an introduction to my research design and hypotheses contained in Chapter Three.

Political Leadership

Numerous interpretations of leadership exist. A simple literary definition would hold that leadership is the 'act of guiding by influence'.⁸ In this example, the leader, therefore, is merely the facilitator of such guidance. No overriding goal or purpose of leadership is described nor is it required. However, what is suggested is that the pivotal component of what constitutes leadership is the philosophy that leadership is, by definition, a strategy of influence.

Joseph Rost, in his work *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*, criticizes his fellow academics for the lack of a widely accepted conception of what constitutes leadership, without which intellectual discourse remains constrained.⁹ Positing that leadership may be a twentieth century phenomenon, Rost offers his own definition which he claims is suitable for a post-industrial era that brings with it contemporary challenges. Leadership, according to Rost, is "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes."¹⁰

This definition supposes that mutual purposes within a collective exist and that they are identifiable both to leaders and their followers in a manner that permits substantive action to proceed. Whilst the ability of contemporary leaders to assess public opinion has increased significantly in the modern multi-media generation, the post-modern society of which Rost speaks tends to encourage individualism and self-expression while reducing the scope for collective aspirations.

A more complex definition of leadership and one that relates leadership to politics is provided by James MacGregor Burns, who suggests that political leadership in a democracy "is the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by leaders and followers."¹¹ One of the fundamental tasks of a leader is, therefore, to move others towards a specific goal or course of action. Where Rost depicts the leader/follower relationship as one of *primus inter pares*, or first among equals, Burns discerns the leader as a more powerful and proactive initiator of action.

Democracy may be portrayed as a mechanism more concerned with equitable process than fair results but I would hope that the goals of the process are ones shared both by leaders and the masses. As discussed above, however, this is contentious. Although leaders may possess a vision that is not reflective of collective desires, Burns implies that during the process of realization, leaders must persuade followers that they, the initiator, are correct and should be supported. This is a worthy task not well suited to the reality of a fragmented and dynamic American political system that offers multiple leadership challenges, thus making the identification of "followers" and their desires an

exercise in strategic contemplation of alternative courses of action.

Presidential Leadership

Modern political leadership takes many forms, founded on a myriad of perspectives and treatises. Presidential leadership is no less complex but at this point I wish to consider two specific conceptions of presidential predominance. One—grounded in the prior discussion of Burns but owing most to Richard Neustadt—is the notion that presidents must persuade their followers if they are to lead legitimately. The other is a conceptual model rooted in the notion of the "textbook" president, one who does much more than persuade, and is perceived by others as embodying a more symbolic role. The latter perspective, a more rounded theory of leadership, introduces the theoretical framework guiding this research and which will be elucidated in the following chapter.

In a democracy such as the U.S., presidential power has consistently been portrayed as the power to persuade. Opportunities for the use of formal authority are extremely limited, one exception being the use of executive orders to circumvent, or respond to, fresh challenges to executive preponderance. This is due in large part, according to Jeffrey Tulis, to formal constitutional authority promising presidents' powers that it cannot provide.¹² Presidential commands are never self-executing. The president cannot force Congress to pass his agenda, nor can he dictate how public opinion will react to a policy. Even control over the bureaucracy is limited to political appointees who often defer to career bureaucrats entrenched from a prior administration. For the purposes of effective leadership it is critical that the leader utilize a strategy of intelligent persuasion

to overcome these hollow promises and initiate change.

As previously discussed, the art of leadership implies that some magnitude of consensus regarding the course of action that will be pursued should be identified if the president is to have any chance of realizing his objectives. The next step is to determine the appropriate method for achieving such a goal. Multiple factors may be of concern to the leader. These may be institutional; for example the powers invested in the presidency by the Constitution; environmental or situation-specific constraints, such as public opinion; or personal beliefs which structure decision-making alternatives consistent with politically-relevant convictions about the correct procedure to follow. Regardless of the form these challenges take, however, they should be considered when setting out a course of action.

The second conception relates to the American system of government that places the presidency at the helm of political activity, in a position that has unequivocally seen greater demands and pressures brought upon it since its creation. As the responsibilities of the office have altered so has the public's perception what presidential leadership entails.

This "public perception" of the president as the leader begins at an early age. As Edwards and Wayne note, implicit in the political socialization of schoolchildren is the knowledge that, historically, the president is responsible for the preservation of values and liberties that exist to the present day.¹³ The focus is such that children tend to associate the president with the possession of sole power and authority over the nation; it is a simplification of the system that is gradually eroded with further education. The public presidency theme continues into adulthood. As noted by Paul Brace and Barbara

Hinckley, the blanket media coverage and continual dissemination of both actions and statements affords the chief executive little respite from the public's gaze.¹⁴

Constitutionally, power is separated between the three branches, and within those branches amongst the agencies, departments, courts, and committees that constitute the governing institutions. In reality, the existence of the single executive image further solidifies the perception that the president is both head of the executive branch and government itself. As Lyn Ragsdale puts it

[H]e professes compassion for the average American and passion for the American dream. He is the nation's principal problem-solver, the one who identifies its most daunting challenges and offers solutions. He presses his leadership to ensure that the proposed solutions become law. In times of crisis, he single-handedly protects the nation. The image of the president is thus of a person who is omniscient (able to do all things) and omnipresent (working everywhere).¹⁵

This image resonates with the model of the president as the "savior" of the nation, a view most pervasive during the era of the "textbook presidency" prior to the late 1960's.¹⁶ In times of crisis, such as economic recession or war, the nation looks to the president to master the immediate problem in a manner that reflects inexorably on the wisdom and ability of the incumbent and the strength of the office. In the domestic policy-making sphere, the opportunity for innovative leadership is more difficult but can be achieved under favorable political circumstances, or where a lack of definitive public opinion or precedent exists.

For example, Jeremy Moon, developing the work of Marmor and Fellman, suggests that a combination of strong political will and political capacity will likely assist the creation of lasting policy redirection.¹⁷ The former refers to the commitment to a

particular course or policy beyond those that arise by circumstance alone. The latter assumes an understanding of how cause and effect in the policymaking process will determine the best way to approach a problem and the appropriate action to take. The innovative leader, it is believed, possesses a purposeful policy vision that is proactive rather than reactive, supplemented by an acute understanding of the system of which he is part.

Critiques of Presidential Personality

If it can be assumed that effective leadership requires political actors to meld institutional and environmental factors with personal skills and abilities to achieve specific outcomes, one must therefore ask to what extent does personality impact presidential behavior? Given the uncertainty over the relative importance of personality as an explanatory variable in presidential behavior, the literature that exists to date is highly diffused and fragmented. Incorporating elements of political science, psychology, sociology, and history, in an attempt to establish general theories and frameworks, studies often produce findings that are considered controversial or imprecise because of the inability to establish causation or consistency over time and space.¹⁸ Greenstein and Lerner concur, stating that the area of personality and politics (of which presidential personality can be considered a sub-category) is one in which the greatest number of efforts have been made to connect psychology and political science.¹⁹

Norman C. Thomas notes that analyses that focus upon personality and leadership have attempted to prescribe the types of personality and behavior that are most likely to

encourage political success. Presidential failures can therefore be explained away as the consequence of possessing an undesirable personality or the inability to follow prescribed behavior.²⁰ Such analyses therefore consider personality to be highly influential in determining overall success, irrespective of institutional or environmental considerations.

In contrast, alternative bodies of research have focused even more on identifying and explaining institutional or environmental determinants of presidential behavior in specific situations. For example, Stephen Skowronek in *The Politics Presidents Make* writes that, while the president may use personal and environmental strengths to assist in governing, a "president's political authority turns on his identity vis-à-vis the established regime; warrants for exercising the powers of the office vary depending on the incumbent's political relationship to the commitments of ideology and interest embodied in pre-existing institutional arrangements."²¹ Thus, the politics a president pursues is firmly established in his relationship to the regime in which he operates, discounting the ability of individuals to manipulate the political situation into a favorable context for action, if that is the goal.

However, Skowronek's discussion of Abraham Lincoln poses a question which, in order to be fully answered, merits further consideration. In keeping with Skowronek's definition of the Politics of Reconstruction, Lincoln entered office in opposition to the dominant regime, but as a party compromise rather than a leader of a collective call for change. It is surprising that, given his marginal support within his own party and the strength of the ousted Democratic Party, he was able to engineer substantive reform. How, given the overwhelming institutional and ideological constraint, did Lincoln manage to become a president of action, effecting the establishment of such a remarkable

legacy?

Skowronek posits that Lincoln's pragmatism in the face of ideological hostility ultimately rewarded him. How does this fit into a model that uses the perceived structural viability of an ideological regime as its dominant framework of analysis? Skowronek states that

Some rather ordinary men have wielded extraordinary authority, and some men of great reputation have failed miserably. Political wizards have self-destructed, and successful incumbents have not always had the most salutary effects. The characters and talents of the incumbents themselves tell us so little about the political impact of presidential leadership precisely because leadership has not been a standard test in which each in his turn is given an equal opportunity to secure his place in history.²²

The ability of individual leaders to transform the politics in which they exist, through personal adroitness or political skill, is thus heavily dependent on the regime they face. The argument made here is not that personality is obsolete as a primary determinant of presidential behavior. Rather, the difficulty exists in determining the extent to which personality is a contributing factor in any specific case given the contrasting political circumstances Skowronek depicts. However, I would argue that in assigning action structures to administrations there is a need to take into account the role of personal characteristics, as mentioned by Jean Blondel earlier in the chapter, where it can be confidently ascertained that such traits or attributes did indeed make a difference.

Therefore, this thesis is written with the view that presidential personality and behavior do make a significant difference to policy outcomes and that there are both specific situations and certain presidential actions where one might expect to see the influence of personal characteristics over and above institutional or environmental

determinants.

However, it is often difficult to ascertain for certain the extent to which a causal relationship exists or that of a range of independent variables (a,b,c) it is variable (b) that demonstrates the greatest explanatory power for the change in the dependent variable. Furthermore, Fred Greenstein offers a cautionary note when attempting to separate out personality components from structural or environmental determinants. Greenstein writes that in the study of the psychology of leadership it is important to be alert to how an actor's behavior may affect their environment that may then impact future behavior by the actor.²³

For example, President Nixon's decisions to surround himself with particular associates and staff contributed to an immediate environment of his own making which may have exaggerated certain Nixon personality traits. For example, the choice of Henry Kissinger as his Assistant for National Security Affairs likely reinforced Nixon's desire for secrecy of decision-making. In addition, the adoption of a formalistic hierarchy of access headed by Chief-of-Staff H. R. Haldeman served to isolate Nixon from the day-to-day running of the executive branch, leaving him free to address what he considered to be more important matters.

Both the demand for secrecy and a lack of interest in routine bureaucratic or administrative matters were examples of how behavior (personnel selection) impacted the environment (secret meetings, isolation from lower staff members). What is difficult to demonstrate is how these environments then influenced Nixon's subsequent behavior. However, it is plausible to hypothesize that were it someone other than Henry Kissinger giving advice to the president, key foreign policy decisions might not have been shrouded

in such secrecy nor products of the competition between Kissinger and Secretary of State William Rogers for presidential favor.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined stages in the development of a coherent definition of political leadership. In general, leadership is founded on the ability to persuade others that the proposed direction is the correct one for the intended consequences. A sense of purpose is required by the leader in order to move others towards the collective goal or ideal. Leadership necessarily entails the creation of a vision that can then be communicated to the masses with the objective of common pursuance.

The second part of the chapter discussed different approaches to the study of presidential personality, noting that it continues to be a fragmented field drawn from many perspectives. The next chapter outlines the research questions I intend to answer. However, I will return to leadership and personality issues in Chapter Three when I introduce Erwin Hargrove's model of political leadership.

Chapter Three:
Theory and Methodology
Research Questions

Two general research questions will be outlined here to frame the argument to be elucidated later in the thesis. Using the work of Fred Greenstein as a theoretical foundation I offer two propositions which are combined to form a hypothesis pertaining to President Nixon and his behavior in relation to the Family Assistance Plan. Concluding the chapter is a description of the model of leadership I intend to use as a framework to analyze Nixon's leadership style. The remainder of this thesis will seek to explore the hypothesis and the research questions through analysis of relevant evidence.

The first research question I pose is why did President Nixon choose the Family Assistance Plan as the policy to reform the system of welfare provision in the United States? Conventional political wisdom would contend that the honeymoon period enjoyed upon obtaining office would encourage the passage of non-controversial programs specifically referred to in the election campaign, rather than contentious or radical proposals. Edwards and Wayne state that newly-elected presidents must "establish their own priorities and thereby shape public expectations of what they hope to do. These priorities need to be consistent with their election campaign and in accord with the public mood."²⁴

The Family Assistance Plan was a major step forward in an attempt to change the public's perception of welfare provision but one that was not a component of Richard Nixon's 1968 election manifesto. Lewis Gould writes that the two most prominent issues

on the eve of the 1968 campaign were the Vietnam War and the escalation of racial tensions in the aftermath of the bold legislative efforts of the mid-1960's.²⁵ President Johnson's War on Poverty and the Great Society programs sought to address economic and social inequalities through cooperative federalism, the primary tool of which were categorical grants to the states. The infusion of federal funds alleviated many of the most compelling problems; the percentage of children living in poverty, for example, halved from 1959 to 1969.²⁶ However, the programs eventually foundered on a lack of direction and progress combined with a reduction in funding as the Vietnam War escalated. The disintegration of Johnson's reforms did not appear conducive to the new approach heralded in the first year of the Nixon administration.

In fact, Richard Nixon said little publicly about welfare during the campaign until the very end. Two addresses late in October proposed general solutions to specific problems. In the first, on October 25, Nixon discussed the adoption of national welfare payment standards that differed from state to state. In a radio address on October 28 he suggested two propositions. Firstly that the government must help "the poor, the disabled, the aged and the sick" in a way that "preserves the dignity of the individual and the integrity of the family" and secondly that "it should offer opportunity and incentive for those who can, to move off welfare rolls and onto private payrolls."²⁷ Despite these two statements, there is little evidence to support the claim made by Daniel Patrick Moynihan that the issue of welfare dependency was making its way to the center of national politics, given the scarce attention paid to it by the major candidates leading up to the November election.

To understand why President Nixon chose to pursue the Family Assistance Plan, it

is appropriate to study his upbringing, education and early political life, in order to understand his ideology. In particular, contemplating the extent to which his views regarding the role of the federal government in welfare provision and of contemporary welfare system issues were publicly known will allow me to ascertain the origin of Nixon's beliefs and values and the extent to which these were reflected in his political choices.

The second question is how did President Nixon attempt to convince both the public and the Congress that such a plan could succeed and that it was consistent with American values? Critics on the political right argued that the proposal would question the American culture of economic individualism, infringing on the cherished conservative ethos of individual self-reliance. Opponents on the left were irritated that Nixon had 'stolen their ground' in choosing an approach more in common with Democratic ideology than Republican. Two methods, rhetoric and interpersonal bargaining with members of Congress, are highlighted in the subsequent discussion.

Two Propositions and a Hypothesis

I wish to propose two assumptions which, using the model of political leadership, will be tested. These derive from a series of propositions presented in Fred Greenstein's book *Personality and Politics*.

Firstly, Greenstein writes that the greater a political actor's affective involvement with a policy, the greater the likelihood that his or her psychological characteristics will be exhibited through behavior.²⁸ Therefore, the extent to which behavior is a reflection of

personality is positively related to the level of personal involvement with an issue. This suggests that the more involved President Nixon became in seeking to pass the Family Assistance Plan, the more likely it is that his behavior reflected personal beliefs about welfare reform. It is a common perception that President Nixon's first love was foreign policy. His experience as a member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities in the late 1940's, his role as President Eisenhower's Vice-President and the subsequent writing whilst in private life solidify the perception that whilst capable in many fields he was most confident when conversing with, and about, foreign leaders.

However, revisionist historians such as Joan Hoff have suggested that Nixon's creative domestic policies anticipated current reforms and revitalized the fading efforts of the Johnson administration to secure civil rights and equality of opportunity.²⁹

The creation of a pre-inaugural task force to study the problem of welfare and report back to the President-elect with its recommendations implied that Nixon, on assuming office, would make welfare reform one of the priorities of his 1969 domestic program. As I will show later, Nixon's interest in welfare stemmed from his personal experience growing up in Whittier, California and a discernment of the political environment in 1969 that was conducive to innovative leadership in this policy area.

Secondly, even where there is little room for personal variability in the instrumental aspects of actions, there is more likely to be variability in the expressive aspects of actors' behavior.³⁰ Although the instrumental aspects may not vary greatly from one president to the next in that each seeks to pass legislation through Congress or maintain U.S. leadership of the world, the manner or personal style in which each conducts these responsibilities and others certainly does.

For example, in his book *Going Public*, Samuel Kernell discusses the ways in which presidents promote themselves and their policies to the public through speeches, public appearances, and political travel.³¹ Noting that that the purpose of these strategies is to convince politicians back in Washington that the president can mobilize public opinion in favor of his policies, not necessarily to persuade the public themselves, Kernell draws on examples of how twentieth century presidents have adapted to the age of mass communications and broadcast media and, consequentially, the greater opportunity for public presentations. Woodrow Wilson's tour across America to promote the League of Nations, Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chats preaching activism, and John F. Kennedy's live press conferences conveying his civil rights agenda are examples of how presidents with similar instrumental aims (to work with Congress to address historical problems) used their skill and the opportunities afforded them to address the public in very different styles.

For President Nixon, the aim of the Family Assistance Plan was to overhaul the inadequate system of welfare provision that was believed by some to be the catalyst for encouraging dependency amongst the poor. To do so would first require that the Democratic Congress overcome its skepticism of Nixon's aims and enact legislation enabling the reforms to begin. Behavior designed to achieve these purposes is likely to be a reflection of one's character such that President Nixon's style of political leadership, as depicted through rhetoric and relations with Congress was likely to be an expression or reflection of his personality. The task of later chapters is to identify the key traits of Nixon's personality and how they influenced his style of leadership.

These two propositions suggest that the more involved one becomes in particular

expressive aspects of leadership, such as rhetoric, the more one's personality is reflected in the form of which that aspect is displayed. Thus, the more control the president has over speeches, for example, the more likely they will incorporate or reflect personal idiosyncrasies or perspectives.

Therefore I would hypothesize that Nixon's personal character traits would most likely be reflected through the expressive aspects of leadership with which he had the most personal involvement.

A Model of Political Leadership

Modern approaches to presidential personality tend to take the form of either typologies which replicate or revise James David Barber's character model or personality trait theories that attempt to account for individual presidential style or performance. Developing his own work with respect to the latter, Erwin Hargrove has constructed a model of political leadership as a framework in which issues of personality, role and context can be addressed.

Hargrove posited that "[T]o be successful, presidents must use skills and embrace goals that are congruent with the historical context"; the model depicts leadership as combining the identification of shared ideals with the use of political skill to realize these hopes.³² Such ideals are the foundation of the American political system and are the most important resource available to presidents.

For Hargrove, associating contemporary issues with historical ideals in such a way that will appeal to the collective values of the nation is the central task facing the modern

president. Successful leaders must be able to discern the historical climate before pursuing goals that are not compatible with what is possible. To do so effectively leaders must use the "political skills" they possess in a multitude of ways, the principal one being that of communication with the public through rhetoric.

In the previous chapter I outlined two alternative conceptions of presidential leadership. The first was derived from the work of Richard Neustadt who stated, famously, that presidential power is the power to persuade. The task of leadership is therefore to convince others to follow the leader in pursuit of a specific objective.

The second view, which this model reflects, depicts the president as possessing a purposeful vision that transcends politicking; although persuasion may be necessary to achieve legislative success, the role of the president is much more than that of an administrator or public opinion representative. He is the leader of the nation, a proponent of American values, and must articulate a vision that resonates with the grain of history. Success is not measured simply by legislative production or presidential approval ratings, but also by symbolic leadership that identifies collective values and exalts the moral progress of the nation above that of partisan or individual accomplishments.

The individual components of the model—character as a skill, cultural leadership, teaching reality and skill in context—are discussed in greater detail in the following sections. It must be noted that the concepts presented here have undergone minor reconstruction from the variables published as part of the model in Hargrove's recent book. The major change I have made is to remove 'character as a skill' from its inclusion under 'skill in context'. This is for two reasons. Firstly, having worked with the model prior to the publication of *The President as Leader: Appealing to the Better Angels of*

Our Nature, I am more familiar with the original format, little though it differs from the published edition, and thus it is this version that I present here. Secondly, for the purposes of empirical analysis, the reorganization assists with the operationalization of the principal concepts involved, particularly when the time comes to perform a psychological profile of Richard Nixon as reflected through his political style. The importance of this will become apparent when testing the stated hypothesis later in the thesis.

The sections which follow attempt to expand upon notions of political skill, that is to say, how one's enduring personality and orientation toward their responsibilities and dilemmas is reflected in their general demeanor and behavior specific to political leadership. Each takes an expressive aspect of political life and describes the possibilities of leadership in the context of a specific policy direction or course. How presidents convince others that they should be followed differs greatly from one incumbent to another. Rhetorical leaders such as John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan differed significantly in their approach to governing from Lyndon Johnson, for example, whose political abilities primarily lay using his congressional experience to enact his vision of the Great Society.

Character as a Skill

A simple definition of how one's character may be transformed into a skill in the persuasion of others is that leaders who possess certain traits may be considered, by the electorate, more capable of governing than those who do not. This is not an absolute qualification, for the majority of personality traits are found in everybody. It is the degree

to which a person possesses particular characteristics that distinguishes them from others less suited to the demands of holding high office.

Hargrove's definition of character resembles that of Barber's predictive typological model that is based upon the interaction between psychological motivations inherent in the individual disposition and the context in which the individual works. Character, therefore, is crystallized in childhood and refers to qualities, or traits, which tend to be stable over time, such as moral or ethical principles, integrity, honesty and mental courage, and those that may fluctuate (e.g. self-confidence or self-esteem). These combine to form one's character. Particular traits are valuable for their appearance alone whilst others combine to form an overall picture of a person. The appearance of individual self-confidence can convince the public that the president is capable of resolving a problem or crisis without recourse to indecisive negotiations or conflict.

The belief that the president possesses integrity, honesty, and morality contributes to an image of trustworthiness that reassures the public that the office is in the hands of a leader who reflects their ideals of the position. The reverse of this is that negative perceptions of leaders based upon their personality will hinder their ability to govern effectively. Recurring indecisiveness, impatience, or the inability to properly orient oneself to the duties they must perform may lower public opinion of them in addition to reducing their bargaining power with Congress.

Within these discussions lie the obvious difficulty in determining which traits are considered appropriate for a healthy personality, other than the examples given, and skillful leadership. For example, possessing a modicum of ambition or a drive for power is crucially important for potential leaders if they are to overcome the political challenges

they encounter. However, if the president's demand for power exceeds the constitutional limits placed upon the role of chief executive, domination of the executive branch over the other two branches may, if only temporarily, exist, re-opening the debate over separate branches sharing power. Thus, a positive attribute becomes a negative one.

Character is a skill when positive traits assist the president in performing his duties and maintaining his credibility within the branches, whilst traits that are perceived by other actors in the political spectrum to be detrimental can only hinder the execution of these tasks.

Cultural Leadership

Despite their differences in methods, each president must first seek to understand the historical context in which his administration will propose new solutions for contemporary problems. Culture, from Hargrove's understanding, is both a fluid aggregate of individual imagination and hopes and a reflection of society's creative forces leading to the potential for action above what was previously thought possible. It is dynamic rather than static.³³ It is the task of leaders to identify what course of action is congruent with history and the political culture that frames leadership in America. This concept resonates suitably with Stephen Skowronek's concept of political time as discussed in chapter two, in the sense that the leader may be bounded by the regime or the era in which he governs. However, Hargrove leaves open the possibility that the able politician may transcend the realities of the situation and achieve accomplishments even without the favorable climate of support that Skowronek deems to be crucial for success.

Incorporating James MacGregor Burns' notions of transformational versus transactional leadership, Hargrove posits that the effective leader must be able to discern when political culture permits the purposeful pursuit of a vision or moral commitment and when he must show prudence, preferring instead to transact for incremental gains. The ability to discern does not require that one look into the future but that the leader must make reasonable judgements based on his interpretation of the prevailing culture. Discernment may encourage the proposal of grandiose schemes for collective betterment consistent with the leader's vision of society or require that the leader scale down when the political context changes for the worse.

The concept of cultural leadership, therefore, asks the leader to be aware of past opportunities, challenges, and events when choosing a path for future action. The leader may choose to react to cultural norms and either accept them or seek to modify them, or he may invoke dynamic comparisons between the present situation and those of his predecessors. For example, cultural history may be reinvented through the relating of current predicaments to economic, social and political challenges confronted and mastered in previous eras.³⁴

Therefore, the empirical study of President Nixon's cultural leadership must harness the theoretical concepts discussed above and begin with the question of what were the cultural norms that were prominent in American society around the time of the proposal of the Family Assistance Plan? Secondly, was the Plan congruent with what history would allow, in particular with respect to recent attempts at welfare reform by his two predecessors?

Teaching Reality

According to Knowles and Saxberg, no human skill is more important and less understood than the ability to communicate one's ideas through the written or spoken word.³⁵ Rhetorical skills are a fundamental aspect of leadership in the modern climate, whether the role is that of president or public figure.

Erwin Hargrove, writing in a book on entrepreneurs in organizations, studied the leadership skills of David Lilienthal, head of the Tennessee Valley Authority from 1933 until 1936.³⁶ The TVA Act, passed in 1933, gave the Authority control over crucial aspects of the valley's infrastructure, energy and agriculture. A major question facing the infant TVA was how to distribute the electric power it produced. Lilienthal's skepticism of the motives of private utilities fuelled a public versus private fight for power marked by his aggressive rhetoric and intense lobbying efforts.

In a speech in Memphis, Lilienthal linked the success of the TVA with both the New Deal and Franklin Roosevelt's fortunes in the upcoming 1936 election, saying

"We are proud to count among our leading enemies the whole Tory crowd concentrated in New York City and Chicago that always fights every move toward giving the average man and woman a better chance. The interests of this crew of reactionaries and your interests are diametrically opposed. There is a conflict here that cannot be reconciled. Either TVA has to be for you or his has to be for this other crowd. When that crowd begins to sing the praises of TVA it is time for you to throw us out."³⁷

Hargrove concludes that it was Lilienthal's skills as a rhetorical leader that were most needed to sell the merits of publicly provided electricity to the people of the valley. This skill was less effective when Lilienthal became chair of the Atomic Energy

Commission in 1946. The fledgling Commission, with a small research and development base and national security considerations in the wake of WW2, did not provide a favorable environment for Lilienthal's strategy of promoting the uses of atomic energy to the people.

Politics is a forum for debate between competing factions with conflicting perspectives regarding the form society should take and what the role of government should be in a contemporary democracy. The dominant philosophies in America, liberalism and conservatism, have tended to approach the task of governing from divergent beliefs about society. However, the task of leaders, irrespective of ideology, is to identify the problems that must be addressed and offer solutions to them in a way that is credible and comprehensible to the public. Hargrove identifies three styles of rhetoric which leaders may employ to convince the public that their solutions are consistent with the values upon which America is founded and therefore compatible with the reality of the situation they face.³⁸

Leaders may choose to educate their followers through rhetoric that emphasizes alternative courses of action and includes contemplation of the inherent uncertainty of the future. Whilst both informative and at times a simplification of the truth, the teaching of reality does not seek to distort the facts, nor does it offer grandiose solutions that are inconsistent with the principles of democracy or freedom; in short, teaching reality does not involve the manipulation or coercion of the public in order to realize the leader's own objectives. Instead, the rhetoric is designed to inform listeners of the situation that faces them, the solutions that exist to deal with major problems, and the course that the leader wishes to pursue on the basis of this appraisal. It is a style of rhetoric that emphasizes

accuracy, rationality, and instruction.

Aside from teaching reality, leaders may seek to preach to the public the virtues of better citizenry rather than simply proposing solutions to specific empirical problems that exist. Normative views of the presidency, backed up by recurring examples which are faithfully referred to by incumbents, promote the perspective that ordinary citizens from Hope, Arkansas; Whittier, California; and Independence, Missouri, can become president. Furthermore, recent presidential rhetoric has exhorted such themes as the "building of bridges" to the past and the future, for example, in the hope that the public can become "better angels" by using past experience to counter future dilemmas. By appealing to the shared values of followers, the leader may also create a collective purpose with which all can identify. As with teaching reality, the language of preaching must be conveyed in a style that is politically realistic, for appeals made in terms which are not easily recognizable or understandable will not generate the support they require to succeed.

Finally there is the language of the demagogue. Demagoguery involves the intentional distortion of truths and the creation of falsehoods designed to manipulate the public. The competition for ideas in the political marketplace will offer the demagogue the opportunity to express his views without censorship. However, such demagoguery will not work if the moral values, such as honesty, trust, and belief in human kindness, that oppose it are strong enough to overcome demonic appeals founded upon the creation of stereotypes and scapegoats. Therefore, demagogic appeals cannot be the foundation of stable governing coalitions due to the transient and precarious nature of support they accumulate.

Rhetorical styles vary between those who seek to teach the public the truth

through contemplation of real problems and solutions; those who appeal to the greater goals of self-actualization, shared beliefs, and moral purposes; and those that use the bully pulpit for manipulation and distortion of the truth for their own intents. The question is, therefore, what style of rhetoric did President Nixon favor when orating the virtues of the Family Assistance Plan to the public. On one hand, he could have focused on the problems associated with welfare provision and the solutions which he would later propose. It is also conceivable that Nixon could have continued the positive rhetoric of his two predecessors and preached a philosophy of individual responsibility and personal morality. Finally, a demagogic Nixon could have intentionally distorted the facts to serve his own interests and those of the Republican party through increased support based upon ideological warfare.

Skill in Context

The ability to build broad coalitions for political action require the political actor to possess a "keen sense of how others perceive their interests and the ability to fashion a coalition of such interests usually one issue at a time."³⁹ The detailed discussion of contemporary conceptions of leadership in Chapter Two highlighted two important criteria for leadership: firstly that leadership reflects the existence of a relationship between leaders and followers, and is by definition, a strategy of influence; secondly, that although collectively-held purposes may not exist in a diverse society, the challenge of leadership is to move elites and the public alike towards a particular vision independently or mutually held by the leaders and followers. In this case, therefore, leadership is

concerned more with the process or strategy of collective progress than concern with the specific objectives themselves. This is not to say that the task for which leadership is desired is not important. Indeed, the effectiveness in achieving goals is likely to be enhanced if the skill and the task are congruent such that the context facilitates the exercise of particular leadership strategies and that the leader possesses the required skill. Thus, individual skills must be matched with the situation in which they are exercised in order to be most effective.

Therefore, whilst the concept of skill in context refers to a general theory of political leadership which derives from the interaction between environment and personality, it also relates to a specific situation: the interplay between the president and Congress through strategies of control or persuasion.

Persuasion may occur in the form of individual quid pro quo bargaining whereby favors are exchanged for the promise of support on a specific measure or bill.⁴⁰ The offering of selective incentives therefore differs from collective benefits offered to groups of legislators, such as the opportunity to announce support for a collective goal or share in publicity generated by a presidential initiative. In both instances the president uses his influence to persuade legislators to join him and support his objective.

Pure strategies of control or manipulation (such as the threat of violence) are highly unstable alternatives and are subject to recurring opposition or dispute. Such motives are less common in a democracy than in autocratic or totalitarian regimes where force may replace persuasion as a political tool. The issuing of executive orders and vetoes are two of the closest examples of how presidents use their power to threaten or coerce legislators into shifting their position (although it must be noted that these options

are significantly more stable than pure strategies of control, given their legality).

A negative tool such as the threat of veto could be considered a bargaining strategy, such that the threat may induce changes in behavior as desired by the president. However, the concept of bargaining outlined here depicts persuasion as a positive force in which through the trading of favors or promises, a compromise is reached. Therefore, the threat of veto does not conform to the notion of bargaining inherent in this model.

Attempts at control tend to arise as strategies of persuasion weaken or are exhausted, and as such are a form of last resort. However, and as discussed in Chapter Two, strategies of influence are synonymous with the art of persuasion such that "persuasion, in all the guises already presented, is a far more effective approach to leadership than control, because persuasion is based on willing assent. Trickery is slippery and is not the stuff of enduring coalitions. Attempts to lead by control will therefore prove unsuccessful, since those subject to force will fight back. Of course, some control is always present in persuasion, and some persuasion is always present in strategies of control."⁴¹

Therefore, skill in context refers in one sense to strategies of persuasion and control in the context of executive-legislative interaction. Using this as a framework, the task is to identify which strategy President Nixon chose to pursue, assuming that one such method was dominant and clearly identifiable from the evidence available. If this is not the case, it may be appropriate to study which of the two was more favored.

Conclusion

This chapter began by outlining the research questions that govern this thesis. Firstly, why did President Nixon choose the Family Assistance Plan, and secondly, how did he attempt to convince Congress and the public that such a plan was feasible and consistent with America's values? Two propositions were also considered, deriving from the work of Fred Greenstein. He posits that the greater a political actor's affective involvement with a policy, the greater the likelihood that his psychological characteristics will be exhibited through his behavior. Furthermore, even where there is little room for personal variability in instrumental (e.g. passing legislation) aspects of actions, there is more likely to be variability in expressive (e.g. personal style, rhetoric) aspects.

Finally, I suggested the hypothesis that Nixon's personality would most likely be reflected through the expressive aspects of leadership with which he had the most personal involvement. The remainder of the work will seek to test this hypothesis with qualitative data. The next four chapters will serve to take the discussion of the model's theoretical components (character as a skill, cultural leadership, teaching reality, and skill in context) and apply them through a case study of President Nixon and the proposal of the Family Assistance Plan in 1969-70.

Chapter Four:

Character as a Skill

"Now, in evaluating experience, I don't need to say anything about my own; that is for other people to evaluate."

—Richard Nixon, Canton, Ohio, October 1, 1960.⁴²

The discussion in Chapter Three considered the definition of character; a perspective grounded in traditional psychological discussion and molded by the writing of Erwin Hargrove. Hargrove's conception, as it relates to political skill, resonates with James David Barber's character typology that describes the interplay between personal traits and environmental influences in understanding personal behavior in a political situation.

Barber's analyses of presidential behavior patterns have, for some, become a signature work for presidential personality scholars; others have derided his notions as "games academics play." In the 1972 edition of *The Presidential Character*, Barber describes Richard Nixon as a man who, on the continuum of energy exertion, gravitated towards "activity" and whose insatiable ambition, aggressive pursuit of greatness and emotionally-punishing work habits and political career would feasibly culminate in a rigid adherence to a failing policy or course of action.⁴³

With the benefit of hindsight, this prediction appears to have been borne out by the continuing war in Vietnam. The frequency with which National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger was covertly dispatched to Paris, to meet with representatives of the

North Vietnam government, and the firm belief that there would be no "peace without honor," belied the statements made by the administration that an honorable peace, one that was a strategic improvement on the terms offered to date, could be brokered. The declaration of peace in 1973 with terms similar to those proposed in 1970, brought to full awareness the lack of progress that had been made by prolonging the war.

The rigidification of policy was complemented by the rigidification of action during the cover-up of the Watergate affair, ending in the ignominious resignation of the president and prison sentences for Bob Haldeman, John Erlichman, former Attorney-General John Mitchell and others. Watergate was a classic illustration of deception descending into recrimination, of how a "third-rate burglary" morphed into a complex web of deceit, passing of the proverbial buck and bipartisan condemnation. If Nixon did, deep down, fundamentally believe that what had occurred was nothing more than political gamesmanship, and that he was only following the precedent of covert political action established by his Democratic predecessors, then the question of who was the real Nixon becomes even more intriguing.

The Barber Typology-Activity

Barber identified two themes that were ominously recurrent in Nixon's pattern of behavior.⁴⁴ The first, a drive for power, is, as written previously, likely to be found in most candidates for political office. The typically long campaigns with their emphases on raising funds, establishing name-recognition and, as recent years have shown, responding to negative attacks from opponents and the media alike, suggest that participants view the

opportunity to hold office as being worthy enough to endure all that precedes it. Initially a positive characteristic, it may have a negative connotation if the drive exceeds the legal or moral standards that society deems appropriate.

Whereas the possession of such a behavior-defining drive is a trait of one's character, an ambition to succeed, for example, represents one instance of how the internal condition (drive) is manifested in an observable, external, capacity (ambition). Although President Nixon was highly ambitious (returning from several crushing defeats in the early 1960's to win in 1968, for example), ambition alone is not enough to succeed. There must be a belief from within, a drive, that the unattainable can be reached; an inner confidence that transforms a defeat into a barrier to be overcome. There must also be a sense of purpose that defines the ambitious behavior. Being ambitious for ambition's sake is an unusual concept. People usually want to succeed for a reason.

His determined nature, coupled with a natural inquisitiveness, existed even in the formative stages of his childhood. The drive to accumulate the knowledge and power that would eventually enable him to pursue his dreams, and in the process fulfill the ambitions that had eluded his father, began at an early age. Even before he knew how to read he could be found lying on the floor with the local newspaper, pretending to absorb the information that lay before him.⁴⁵ Sensing his potential, Hannah Nixon taught her son Richard to read before he attended elementary school.

Young Nixon also took an early interest in politics, a surprising pursuit for a child in his formative years. He was ten years old when the Teapot Dome Scandal erupted, allegedly compelling Nixon to comment to Hannah that "I would like to become an honest lawyer, one who can't be bought by crooks."⁴⁶

His reflections on childhood and schooling indicate the pride he took in winning debates, overcoming the initial criticism of his oratorical style, and excelling in class. The interest and skill in debating increased during the course of his education. This type of formal, structured argument appealed to his logical mind and gave his serious personality a chance to shine.⁴⁷ However, as Bruce Mazlish contends, there were two major reasons for Nixon's competitiveness. One was economic (the necessity to win a scholarship in order to go to college) and the other personal. In *Six Crises*, the candid Nixon writes

The personal factor was contributed by my father. Because of illness in his family he had had to leave school after only six years of formal education. Never a day went by when he did not tell me and my four brothers how fortunate we were to be able to go to school. I was determined not to let him down. My biggest thrill in those years was to see the light in his eyes when I brought home a good report card. He loved the excitement and battles of political life. During the two years he was bedridden before his death (which came just at the start of the 1956 campaign) his one request of me that I send him the *Congressional Record*. He used to read it daily, cover-to-cover, something I have never had the patience to do. I have often thought that with his fierce competitive drive and his intense interest in political issues, he might have been more successful than I in political life had he had the opportunity to continue his education.⁴⁸

Biographers have speculated that the obvious delight Nixon took in presenting his report card to his father overshadowed any amount of satisfaction he took himself. This trait, indicative of a person who takes little personal reward from hard work and a sign to barber of low self-esteem, suggests that Nixon would continue to demand greater accomplishments without fully acknowledging or accepting the emotional reward that success conferred.

Through his high school years, split between the Fullerton and Whittier high schools, Nixon involved himself in a myriad of activities. His early experiences on the

debating team were described as a combination of the lack of platform presence with little natural speaking ability, observations that would become hallmarks of his political speaking career.⁴⁹ Nixon also played on the football team and involved himself in campus politics at Whittier.⁵⁰

The discipline and hard work it took to manage his academic responsibilities and extra-curricular activities certainly prepared him for a career practicing law. The more mature Nixon's ambition became not just to work at a "big city law practice" but one in a city on the East Coast, thereby proving to all concerned that he could succeed in the financial and political power centers—literally, and figuratively, a significant distance from sleepy Whittier.⁵¹

As noted, the desire to leave Whittier behind, to traverse the country in search of education and in some way redeeming his father's lost opportunity, inspired Nixon to study hard. Long nights in the Duke Law School library earned him the nickname "iron butt."

It is not to say that Nixon did not take any satisfaction from his achievements. However, the pleasure derived from success tended to manifest itself less in personal fulfillment and more in the knowledge that others would know of his accomplishments.

For example, Nixon's first serious political campaign resulted in the unexpected victory over Jerry Voorhis in the 1946 U.S. House elections. In Gary Allen's biography of Nixon, he alludes to a remark made by Nixon to an acquaintance of his. Allen views this as a telling illustration of how Nixon viewed his place in society. It also reflected how hard he believed he had worked to escape the economic hardship of his youth and that because of this, future success would be entirely deserved. Upon arriving at a political

function, Nixon quipped, "Look, you drove up to this meeting in a beautiful new Cadillac. I came here in a battered, second-hand Chevrolet. But all of that is going to change. I'm going to get mine, no matter what it takes."⁵²

It would be shortsighted, however, to conclude that Nixon's determination to succeed in life was solely economic in nature. John F. Kennedy was many things that Nixon was not; he was handsome, had attended good schools and in his father, possessed an enviable locus of support and money. Losing the election in 1960 convinced Nixon that he had been cheated out of the presidency that he deserved for his efforts as Eisenhower's vice president. This, coupled with Nixon's perception that the public viewed Kennedy as the "golden boy" of politics, was a far greater spur to Nixon than just the disparate backgrounds.

For evidence to support the accusation that Nixon was indeed a man obsessed by an overwhelming need for triumph, as made by Henry Spalding in *The Nixon Nobody Knows*, one could look no further than *Six Crises*.⁵³ By viewing his life to 1962 as a series of critical personal crises, Nixon recounts his feeling that overcoming a challenge requires dedicated planning, rational contemplation of alternatives, forceful action and keen awareness of the aftermath.

The second theme described by James Barber, in addition to that of a drive for power, is that of Nixon's personal self-control. When confronted with aggression or conflict, the resisting of temptation to lash out at enemies, broken in a few well-publicized moments of abject hostility, reflected the stern Quaker nature of his mother and enabled him to largely prevent the kind of emotional outburst that would likely end his presidential aspirations. That said, this was not always the case and Nixon was acutely

aware of when the time called for an immediate and full-bodied response to criticism, either overtly or implied. Rather than letting the moment pass, the chance to launch into a rebuttal, laced with intent and dramatic overtones, was one that he seldom avoided. As noted in the excerpts presented below, Nixon reacts to allegations of smearing by political opponents with threats to retaliate in full.⁵⁴

"We can anticipate charges of smear...if the dry rot of corruption and Communism which has eaten deep into our body politic during the past seven years can only be chopped out with a hatchet—then let's call for a hatchet."

—Bangor, Maine, September 2, 1952.

"You can be sure that the smears will continue to come, and the purpose of these smears is to make me, if possible, relent in my attacks on the Communists and the crooks in the present administration...what I intend to do is go up and down this land, and the more they smear me, the more I am going to expose the Communists and the crooks and those who defend them until they throw them all out of Washington."

—Marysville, California, September 19, 1952.

"I don't intend to come back to my home state and allow a bunch of political assassins to smear me and my family. When they attack my integrity, I am going to hit back very, very hard."

—Esquire Magazine, February, 1962.

"In the next five days [Governor Brown] will launch the most massive campaign of fear and smear in the history of California elections...but it is time to fight back and rip off the grotesque Halloween mask that my opponents have designed to frighten voters."

—Lodi and Santa Rose, California, October 31, 1962.

While full of hyperbole and forced rhetoric, the tales of campaign and congressional battles cast a light into the very private world of Richard Nixon. For example, whilst campaigning in California in September of 1952, a heckler in Marysville, referring to allegations of a private slush fund, hailed "Tell us about the \$16,000." Nixon's

response was dramatic. It was also indicative of a politician who believed himself to be a fighter, one who revered strong statements of intent.

"That did it. Despite all of our plans to ignore the attack, I could not see myself running away from a bunch of hecklers. I wheeled around and shouted, 'hold the train'. The train stopped a hundred yards down the track and the crowd pressed forward while I collected my thoughts. Instinctively I knew I had to counterattack. You cannot win a battle in any arena of life merely by defending yourself. I pointed my finger at the man who called out, directing the crowds attention to him, then I let him have it."⁵⁵

The television address that followed, delivered to the nation with relatively little preparation (unusual, given Nixon's preponderance for repetitive micro-management and rehearsal of speeches) or thoughts of how to channel the expectations of support for the candidate, reestablished Nixon's place on the Eisenhower ticket. In Nixon's eyes, the allegations of a secret fund became an "acute personal crisis" that would impact his family, Dwight Eisenhower, the millions of Republicans who had pledged their support to the ticket, the future of the country and "peace and freedom for the world".⁵⁶

Nixon's own doctor of many years, Dr. Arnold Hutschnecker, characterized him as possessing "deep-seated inhibitions...an excitatory type who released his aggression so as to feel better...[a state which was] healthy for an individual who cannot live with inner tension, but mature it was not."⁵⁷

The petulant response of "you're not going to have old Nixon to kick around any more" to reporters' inquiries following his defeat in the 1962 California gubernatorial campaign, and the criticism he received for it, made him more determined to keep his emotions in check in the later presidential campaign. Indeed, a "new Nixon" could be found in 1968, one who was more thoughtful, self-assured and calmer than previously.⁵⁸

The combative spirit instilled in him at a young age was evident during the course of the investigations that would bring the Nixon name to the lips of many. As a junior member of the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1948, Nixon pursued accusations that Alger Hiss, a state department official was a member of the American Communist party and had spied for the Soviets. The accusations came from Whittaker Chambers, an editor of Time Magazine, whose testimony that he was a former member of the Communist party and a close friend of Hiss, laid the basis for the subsequent denials by Hiss.

The dearth of concrete evidence linking Hiss to the Soviets and his response that he had not "to his knowledge" met a man by the name of Whittaker Chambers, prompted President Truman to call for the investigations to cease. Even his fellow committee members suggested that the case be handed over to the Department of Justice, thus wiping the slate clean. In a meeting with his fellow committee members, Nixon persuaded them that the investigation should continue.

Nixon's hard work and excruciating attention to the details of the interviews conducted by the committee resulted in a conviction of perjury against Hiss, with the invaluable assistant of discovery of microfilms that proved Hiss was lying. Nixon was fortunate but victorious. Against the odds, he had continued the investigation, effectively putting his short career as a Washington politician on the line. According to Volkan, et al, many people, including former president Herbert Hoover, credited the conviction of Hiss "solely to the patience and persistence of Richard Nixon."⁵⁹

In a memorandum to Dick Howard, John Andrews, a Nixon speechwriter, citing the opinion of Special Counsel to the President Charles Colson, wrote that,

RN attributes much of his own success to self discipline—a quality he also assesses carefully in taking the measure of other men. Recently, when the name of a certain prominent politician, with obvious presidential aspirations, came up in conversation, RN commentated "he just doesn't have the self-discipline to make the grade as a presidential candidate. He is the kind of man that can't turn down that third drink on the night before an important meeting." The reference, of course, was not to any weakness for alcohol, but simply to the man's inability, as the President judged, to sharpen himself and "point for the big ones"—to marshal all his actions toward a chosen goal.

Andrews continues with the remarks that,

The President has said that he derives most enjoyment these days from activities that relate directly to the presidency...even during the Nixons' January 1971 stay in the Virgin Islands, RN could only swim, relax and chat on the beach for limited periods—then he would abruptly turn to the telephone or papers for a "workbreak."⁶⁰

Through his early life and into his years in the political arena, Richard Nixon exhibited a ferocious level of activity, matched only by his determination not to fail in the eyes of others. The examples cited on the prior pages typically illustrated how Nixon approached events he considered to be worthwhile of his attention: academic achievement, political vindication, etc. There is less evidence of his demeanor when impacted by events that he deemed to be irrelevant or cursory. The self-discipline Nixon exuded was legendary; indeed it compensated for his introspective, brooding personality and turned him into a successful politician.⁶¹

Observers who followed Nixon from the start to end of his career have "wondered if any man who drives himself to the peak of power in America can arrive at his goal and remain entirely-however inadequate a word-normal."⁶² As James David Barber himself

states, the high level of activity shown by Nixon implied a character troubled by self-accusation and seeking through extraordinary effort, to get rid of the pain.⁶³ This is discussed in greater detail on the following pages.

The Barber Typology-Negativity

Complimenting the ambitious trait was a narcissistic personality that emphasized negativity, envy, rage, entitlement and devalued grief remorse and empathy.⁶⁴ The desire to be "number one" in both his mind and the minds of others fed Nixon's actions as politician and president. The feeling that he would "get his," either through proactive achievement or by others' rewarding his exertions, is a common theme in his life.

Volkan, et al describe several characteristics of Nixon that they consider to be indicative of a narcissistic personality, one in which the individual is preoccupied with feelings of self-importance and fantasies of endless success and lofty rank. Exhibiting airs of grandiosity, narcissists exploit others to realize ambitions, often to the detriment of existing relationships or friendships.⁶⁵ Walter Trohan of the *Chicago Tribune* (and a long-time friend of the Nixon family) echoed the sentiments of others when concluding that "from the very beginning...I found Nixon more calculating than warm, more self-centered than outgiving, more petty than generous, and more inclined to say what a listener might want to hear than frank enough to reveal his own stand."⁶⁶ Additionally, noting that he had a penchant for collecting titles (of 13 elections for various "titles," Nixon lost only three, the greatest being the 1960 election defeat), Volkan, et al. argue that Nixon was driven to attain high office for the "intrinsic pleasure he derived from

titles that stirred his...superiority."⁶⁷ Actions taken whilst holding office naturally fed this feeling of superiority.

Unlike Ronald Reagan, who James Barber categorized as a passive positive (one who enjoys his role as president but who exerts a relatively low level of energy), Nixon did not view the presidency as a position to enjoy. In a conversation with Monica Crowley included in *Nixon Off The Record*, Richard Nixon recalls that,

"People often asked me a silly question: Was it *fun* to be president? Were you happy?"

Nixon's reply ignored the question and instead focused on how the office should be used.

"That's not the point. Leaders take on the office to accomplish something, not to be happy or to have fun. Great leaders, anyway. Leadership requires a view to the future, to bring people up."⁶⁸

Henry Kissinger once remarked that Nixon was not a "happy warrior...on the contrary, he made his major decisions with a joylessness verging on despair, as if he was doomed by some malign destiny to have some much anguish brought to naught despite meticulous reflection."⁶⁹

Despite the election night cry of wanting to "bring America together," Robert Shogan is one of many writers who conclude that Nixon did just the opposite. In his defense of the middle class interests that Shogan sees as the key to his political success, Nixon polarized the country, pitting the protest movement against the silent majority, the figurative group whose interests were used by Nixon to justify his continuing conduct in Vietnam. Depicting the protestors as threats to the middle class, he injected himself as a rallying point around which the embattled middle class could huddle.⁷⁰

A speech by Vice President Agnew, to which no rebuttal was offered by the White House, claimed that "if, in challenging, we polarize the American people, I say it is time for a positive polarization...it is time to rip away the rhetoric and to divide on authentic lines. When the President said "bring us together, he meant the functioning, contributing portions of the American citizenry."⁷¹

Nixon's response came a few days later, on November 3rd. Noting that an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam would be a popular and easy course, Nixon stated that "After all, we became involved in the war while my predecessor was in office. I could blame the defeat, which would be the result of my action, on him—and come out as peacemaker."⁷²

As Jonathan Schell explains well, the speech defined two groups of Americans, a minority who opposed the war and were seeking to impose their views through demonstrations, and a majority who presumably supported the continuation of Nixon's efforts to obtain an honorable peace. Identifying the groups was one thing; appealing to one of them for support while disregarding the voices of the other was another. "So tonight, to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans, I ask for your support." Nixon as peacemaker did exist but only if it exceeded his need to be "number one" and to be seen as superior.⁷³

Richard Nixon admitted that he was an introvert in an extrovert's role. His tendency towards isolation compounded with his frequent withdrawal from situations requiring confrontation or tacit negotiations annoyed and frustrated those who governed in his shadow. A reluctance to confront issues or personalities directly, other than through angry outbursts, was something that certainly frustrated his colleagues, notably Henry

Kissinger, who frequently pushed a president who “abhorred face-to-face disagreements” into taking more decisive action.⁷⁴ The periods of introspective deliberation were "maddening" to Henry Kissinger, who, writing several years after Nixon's death, recalled that

Every significant foreign policy decision was preceded by weeks of solitary reflection and apparent indecision. Sequestered in his hide-away in the Old Executive Office Building with the curtains drawn, Nixon would work out on a pad of yellow sheets permutations of the options I had generally submitted to him. And since, in any major decision, the pros and cons are closely balanced and unanimity among advisers is rare, he would muse endlessly about how to overrule fractious subordinates. But once he had overcome his premonitions of catastrophe and found someone (usually Bob Haldeman or John Mitchell) to bring the bad news to the overruled associates, Nixon would almost invariably take a big leap. Afterward, Nixon would retire to Camp David for a few days, to recover from the ordeal but also to make it that much more difficult for opponents of the decision to reach him.⁷⁵

Kissinger concludes that this process, when repeated often, was hardly the decision-making style recommended in public administration textbooks. Then again, Richard Nixon was hardly the type of person recommended to be president either. Nixon's tendency towards isolation was not limited to his professional life. He found it difficult to express genuine warmth or emotion, or was reluctant to do so for fear of rejection. For a man whose education saw him attend six institutions of learning, whose wartime experience near the front-lines would typically forge human bonds never to be broken and whose political career came in a year (1946) in which a large freshman class entered Congress for the first time, there were relatively few people he could call friends.

Conclusion

As one would expect with such a well-publicized and notorious figure, authors from many diverse backgrounds have sought to assess Richard Nixon's personality and account for his behavior. Many depict him as a paradox; an individual whose political success compensated for internal contradictions and emotional shortcomings.⁷⁶ The drive for success and the desire to leave behind a legacy that would (in his eyes) be worthy of the ideals placed before him by his mother, Hannah, inspired the man to seek offices increasing in stature and responsibility.

However, this would come at a price. The insecurity, bouts of depression, and inability to control his temper shocked those close to him.

For a political figure such as the president, such inconsistencies make for interesting contemplation. On the one hand, Richard Nixon expended great levels of energy and emotion when pursuing a goal he deemed important; his decisiveness, aggression and determination characteristic of a person who would campaign continuously for a cause he believed in.

On the other hand, Nixon was introspective, often depressed and cowardly in his actions towards others. When the fight was not worth fighting, Nixon could shut himself off from those around him; his attention being diverted to the next great battle.

The three chapters that follow put Nixon's character into an observable context: political philosophy, rhetoric and personal relations.

Chapter Five:

Cultural Leadership

Introduction

"However much at odds on specific issues, the major political traditions have shared a belief in the rights of property, the philosophy of economic individualism, the value of competition; they have accepted the economic virtues of capitalist culture as necessary qualities of man."⁷⁷

American political culture is permeated by a number of competing philosophies or themes that have emerged over the course of history to become essential frameworks for political discourse and deliberation. To further understand President Nixon's cultural interpretation it is pertinent to offer some theoretical perspectives on the role of ideology, the individual, and the state with respect to public welfare, followed by an analysis of Richard Nixon's concept of pragmatic idealism.

The sphere of modern democratic politics has come to be defined by the two dominant ideologies of the twentieth century: conservatism and liberalism. The broad coalitions they represent oscillate around the axis of contemporary problems and solutions. The dynamic fluidity of the two ideologies allows them to continually change and respond to the issues of the day in a manner that preserves their position at the center of political life.

Conservatism, in essence, promotes institutional stability over transition, the maintenance of the status quo over the radical divergence from accepted practice, and transactional rather than transformational politics. This is not to say that the conservative tradition rejects progressive ideas and policies. Such a position would surely result in the

antithesis of conservatism, namely stagnation, and lead to its demise as a mainstream ideology. In contrast, modern liberalism tends to embrace the culture of change, promoting it through identification with the philosophy of respect for individual autonomy in decision-making and the unbounded possibilities for social improvement through collective action.

Numerous events in the twentieth century have offered the opportunity for radical solutions without, or in contradiction to, historical precedents. The progressive trust-busting era at the turn of the century was followed by the haunting years of the Great Depression in the 1930's and the emergence of the civil rights movement in the post-World War Two era, for example. Democratic presidents with liberal remedies have been rewarded for their boldness in leadership whilst conservative presidents, with the probable exception of Ronald Reagan, have tended to institutionalize the efforts of their predecessors, maintaining the process of change rather than reversing it.

The growth of the welfare state as a set of institutions or mechanisms geared to overcoming market inequities or personal misfortune through its complex array of social programs, is a prominent feature of the twentieth century. The advent of unemployment insurance and old age pensions, for example, have reduced the consequences for those unable or unwilling to provide for themselves and their families. Accordingly, Gareth Davies suggests that the emphasis on individual self-achievement has been challenged by the emergence of an entitlement culture whose dependency on the state for support has enlarged the scope of welfare beyond all expectations.⁷⁸ According to Davies, the "individualist tradition" is the dominant social philosophy in the United States. It is founded on the existence of a Calvinist work ethic that regulates personal moral conduct

and finds expression through hard work and the production of surplus capital, and an aversion to dependency on others that can be found throughout American history.⁷⁹ However, a new culture has emerged, founded on the premise that many individuals cannot adequately support themselves and that one of the roles the government must perform is that of safety net.⁸⁰

One such method for establishing a minimum level of economic security was the guaranteed income proposal formally introduced via the Family Assistance Plan. Noting how this notion would seemingly conflict with historical experience, Wildavsky and Cavala stated that "policies that provide unearned income run counter to widely held and deeply felt American values, such as achievement, work, and equality of opportunity."⁸¹ Therefore, Nixon's proposal to change the face of welfare provision would almost certainly entail overcoming widespread opposition to the principles of the Family Assistance Plan, opposition that was based both on political ideology and on the cultural values the Plan appeared to challenge.

President Nixon's cultural leadership and interpretation of history were a product of numerous influences, not least his own personal ideology grounded in pragmatic realism with a conservative hue. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to exploring why he selected the Family Assistance Plan based upon his personal ideology and the assessment of the political environment as he entered office.

Nixon's Ideology

Richard Nixon was a Republican president fighting a Democratic Congress over a proposal that was primarily liberal in nature. The rest of the story is unclear and certainly open to speculation and interpretation. In fact, one could legitimately question why Richard Nixon joined the party of the rich rather than, as his economic circumstances would suggest, electing to become a Democrat. As will be shown, it is likely that his firm belief in the value of individual self-reliance dissuaded him from aligning with the party responsible for the great expansion of government activity and of the welfare state in the 1930's.

In *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, for example, the author sums up the differences between John F. Kennedy and himself that were apparent during the 1960 Presidential campaign:

Our differences were distinct. He preached the orthodox Democratic gospel of government activism, making sweeping promises and issuing rhetorical challenges to leap ahead into an era of new leadership and social welfare. I carried the banner of constructive post-war Republicanism, bred of conservative beliefs that a healthy private sector and individual initiative set the best pace for prosperity and progress.⁸²

Speaking in 1965, Nixon appealed for a move towards the center stating that "If being a liberal means federalizing everything, then I'm no liberal. If being a conservative means turning back the clock, denying problems that exist, then I'm no conservative."⁸³ Immediately after the 1968 election, as the new president assembled his cabinet, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) Robert Finch remarked to his undersecretary, John Veneman, "You watch that man, he's going to surprise people. He

wants to be remembered in history and, as a student of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, he knows only presidents who come up with progressive social programs are likely to make a name."⁸⁴

Formative Influences

Richard Nixon was born in 1913 in Yorba Linda, California, to Quaker parents. Upon moving to Whittier, his father, Frank, opened a small gas station, later to be expanded into a grocery store, serving the needs of customers driving between Whittier and Los Angeles. By all accounts, it was a thriving, family-operated, business that required the young Richard to travel to Los Angeles each morning at four a.m. to purchase fruit and vegetables for the store. In his memoirs, Nixon writes "I chose the best fruits and vegetables, bargained with the farmers and wholesalers for a good price, and then drove back to East Whittier to wash, sort, and arrange the produce in the store and be off to school by eight. It was not an easy life, but a good one, centered around a loving family and a small, tight-knit, Quaker community. For those who were willing to work hard, California in the 1920's seemed a place and time of almost unlimited opportunity."⁸⁵

The 1930's brought a significantly different climate to Whittier. Nixon's speech to the decennial White House Conference on Children, scheduled for December 13, 1970, was originally prepared by Ray Price. Nixon instead wrote his own, voicing the feelings that had remained private for much of the bill's slow progress through Congress. He spoke of his family's experience, of the suffering of those around him and of the wish that present day children should not have to face such stark awareness of their situation.

"I remember back in the Depression Years of the nineteen thirties, how deeply I felt about the plight of those people my own age who used to come into my father's store when they couldn't pay the bill because their fathers were out of work, and how this seemed to separate them from the others in the school. None of us had any money in those days, but those in families where there were no jobs, where there was nothing but the little that relief then offered, suffered from more than simply going without. They suffered a hurt to their pride that many carried with them for the rest of their lives. I also remember that my older brother had tuberculosis for five years. The hospital and the doctor bills were more than we could afford. In the five years before he died, my mother never bought a new dress. We were poor by today's standards. I suppose we were poor even by Depression standards. But the wonder of it was that we didn't know we were poor. Somehow my mother and father with their love, with their pride, their courage and their self-sacrifice were able to create a spirit of self-respect in our family so that we had no sense of being inferior to others who had more than we had. Today's welfare child is not so fortunate."⁸⁶

His father possessed a firm belief in the "little man" of America, opposing the political machines and system of vested interests that emerged in the early part of the century and which were exemplified during President Harding's Teapot Dome scandal.⁸⁷ Whittier was a small town in the shadow of Los Angeles, and despite the financial incentives to buy his stock from the big city companies, his father preferred, where possible, to deal with independent traders and firms. President Nixon's appeals to the "Silent Majority" and the "average American" in his speeches resonated with his father's philosophy that America's social foundation was not that of the corporate enterprise but of family and community. Politicians, according to Frank Nixon, would do well to remember this.

His father also believed strongly in the "dignity of labor" even to the extent that during the prolonged illness of Richard's brother, Harold, Frank refused to admit him to the county hospital for treatment of tuberculosis, citing that to do so would be accepting

unnecessary charity. Prior to owning the gas station and general store, Frank had toiled in a multitude of temporary jobs, none of which provided enough income to live even relatively comfortably. The long hours the family put in at the store cemented the Quaker belief that there was no substitute for sheer hard work even if it appeared that the material rewards were to be negligible.

Whilst his father taught Richard the value of learning and of hard work, his mother taught him the determination that was to become the hallmark of his subsequent career in politics. The deaths of his brothers Harold and Arthur, both from tuberculosis, almost broke the Nixon family apart. Hannah remained strong, however, helping Richard overcome his feelings of guilt that he should have been the one spared by the disease and encouraging him to pursue his academic interests at Whittier High and, later, at Whittier College.

Richard Nixon's childhood and adolescence were marked by tragedy, honest toil, and simple living. His father's convictions that hard labor was preferable to handouts and charity and that the average American must not be forgotten in the name of progress evidently rubbed off on Richard.

His proposal to reform the welfare system in 1969 bears the hallmarks of these values, with its work requirement and commitment to aiding not only the unemployed poor but those in low paid jobs whose income did not meet the national standards for subsistence. It is clear that although the Family Assistance Plan was conceived elsewhere, and by others whose ideology differed significantly from the president's, its values resonated with Richard Nixon's experience as a child and the influence of his father.

Nixon as President

"One of the reasons that I do not accept, and at the present time I do not see a reasonable prospect that I will recommend, a guaranteed annual income or a negative income tax, is because of my conviction that doing so, first, would not end poverty, and second, while it might be a substitute for welfare, it would have a very detrimental effect on the productive capacity of the American people."⁸⁸

—Richard Nixon, speaking one month prior to the 1968 election.

In his book *In The Arena*, Nixon writes of his support for the capitalist economic system that produces wealth with such ruthless efficiency that it is impossible to describe capitalism as immoral if it encourages people to work to improve the quality of their lives. It is the task of capitalism to generate wealth but the moral duty of individuals and government to determine the allocation of resources in a manner that permits equality of opportunity for all. Social programs, therefore, reduce the harshness of capitalism whilst maintaining the incentive to produce wealth which is cornerstone of a free market economy.⁸⁹ Nixon's faith in the values of hard work and perseverance are reflected in the economic principal that wealth is the result of the ability to turn the ownership of resources into marketable, wealth-generating, commodities.

His vision of a limited role for government was consistent with a conservative agenda that sought to reverse recent history and redistribute decision-making control back to those on the ground. The maxim that the best way to get people to behave responsibly was to give them responsibility over their actions would necessarily require a significant redirection of policy. The next question was would the new direction be conservative or

liberal in essence?

Pragmatic Idealism

The ability to translate his ideology into words and actions that appealed to Middle America as well as the Eastern Establishment was one of Nixon's political strengths. For a man with such a complicated personality, his leadership strategy consisted of many recurring patterns; ambiguous and convoluted ideas supported by straightforward rhetoric and a view of politics as a zero-sum enterprise, founded upon the competition between "good and evil", of "right and wrong", and of "black and white." Whilst significant features of his administration (his interaction with the Washington press, often leading to the withdrawal of privileges and the habitual conflict between advisors competing for his attention) reflected Nixon's aggressive and unforgiving nature, his political philosophy softened in his presidential years from that of fiery conservatism as a member of Congress to the adoption of a more centrist position founded on political realism.

For example, he once stated that "idealism without pragmatism is impotent. Pragmatism without idealism is meaningless. The key to effective leadership is pragmatic idealism," an indication that the capacity for the discernment of reality must be coupled, if not initiated, by a vision of what one wishes to achieve through action.⁹⁰ Interpretations of this statement vary. Raymond Price, one of Nixon's speechwriters, described him as a "relatively conservative pragmatist," whilst Howard Phillips, former director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, suggested that Nixon's opinions were tempered by his

conscious desire to avoid criticism from either side of the spectrum. The term Phillips uses for this trait is the possession of "brokerable" convictions.⁹¹ Joan Hoff offers a more conclusive definition, that of a president who was "apricipled" when the time was right.⁹²

This pragmatic stance infused his political ideology. Tom Wicker writes that the right wing of the Republican Party, coupled with his conservative instincts, would not let Nixon become a "thinly disguised New Deal liberal" as had befallen other Republicans of the era. His political realism, founded on his experience of poverty and resentment of the privileged, meant that to become a "standpat" president was not a viable choice either.⁹³ This was echoed in his statement on House approval of the Plan, suggesting that "there is no proposal I have sent to Congress more central to my own philosophy of fairness and progress for all the American people...it combines realism with idealism."⁹⁴

Furthermore, Nixon had been elected to office as a compromise (centrist) figure; in the middle of Reagan and Rockefeller in the primaries, and between Wallace and Humphrey in the general election. Room for political maneuvering would be limited. The election pledge that he would bring the divided country together further solidified the perception that his administration would likely include both conservative and liberal staff members. Howard Phillips believed that although Nixon's rhetoric was conservative, his actions and his administration were a reflection of the liberal influence of such figures as Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Robert Finch.⁹⁵

The Nixon Advisors: Burns and Moynihan

The prevalence of presidential advisors recruited from academia was certainly greater in the days prior to established Washington "think tanks." Presidents Kennedy and Johnson sought advice from leading academic figures such as James Tobin, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Richard Neustadt. President Nixon continued the trend, asking two individuals with starkly different ideologies to study the issue of welfare.

Arthur F. Burns, a former Columbia University professor, was a conservative economist appointed by President Eisenhower to chair the Council of Economic Advisers in 1953. Burns favored a restrained role for government in the economy, less than that proposed by the dominant Keynesian school of economic thought. However, in line with John Maynard Keynes, Burns believed that in times of sluggish private investment, such as that experienced during the Great Depression, the government should stimulate the economy and develop programs designed to alleviate the worst suffering.⁹⁶ Burns and Nixon developed a working relationship that would eventually lead to Burns becoming Counselor to the President for Domestic Affairs in 1969.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a New York liberal, served as the Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations before becoming an important figure in Johnson's War on Poverty program. His support for a system of welfare provision that would offer a guaranteed income to families failed to draw Johnson's attention and, given the financial strain of the Vietnam War and the Great Society, was not likely to warrant serious consideration in the near future. The War on Poverty alone cost a total of \$77 billion a year, of which \$6 billion was spent of direct welfare payments to the 33 million

recipients classed as poor.⁹⁷ Rising welfare costs and the gradual escalation of American involvement in Vietnam therefore forced additional reforms to languish within the confines of the bureaucracy.

John Osborne, a reporter, claims Nixon came to the presidency with a genuine conviction that the welfare system was an utter disaster and required fundamental change, a feeling shared amongst conservatives in general.⁹⁸ Solutions chased problems, so much so that Nixon categorically denied that he would propose a guaranteed income (one of the alternatives) in the near future. However, Osborne's support for his proposition that such a solution was entering the political debate was to be found in the establishment of a pre-inauguration task force to study the welfare predicament, with Moynihan as its chairman.

Although pre-inaugural committees were relatively common, this one differed in that it did not include current members of Congress on its staff. For example, John F. Kennedy had his top advisors prepare reports in twelve areas, including defense policy (headed by Senator Stuart Symington) and health and social security policy (chaired by Wilbur Cohen). The task forces convened to discuss present problems in each field and propose initiatives that were presented to the president-elect.⁹⁹ As will be discussed in greater detail later, by not consulting with congressional representatives, Nixon's task force may have inadvertently alienated some of the President's potential allies.

The appointment by Nixon of a man known for his support of a guaranteed income, with a negative income tax schedule to increase incentives to work, could be seen as a conscious decision to explore Moynihan's latent proposal. Indeed, as Nixon wrote in his memoirs, "our [with Moynihan] shared conviction that the current welfare system had to be totally reformed helped cement the rapport I immediately felt with

him."¹⁰⁰

In January 1969 the task force reported that to raise the income level of those in poverty, the administration should increase payments to existing AFDC recipients, a significantly different proposal than the one announced seven months later on August 8th. The spectacular increase in the unpopular AFDC costs in the 1960's were not accompanied by a significant reduction on welfare rolls or a decline in dependency, however, and long-standing failure of the policy was beginning to persuade policy elites and economists alike that a welfare overhaul was required. Upon Nixon's inauguration, Moynihan became the director of the Urban Affairs Council, the closest domestic counterpart to the National Security Council.¹⁰¹ Moynihan and Burns soon became Nixon's closest advisors on the issue of welfare reform.

The first draft of the Family Assistance Plan was presented to the Urban Affairs Council on March 24, 1969. The struggle between left and right was pronounced. Arthur Burns recommended to the President that the new administration focus on inflation by curbing domestic spending, rather than proposing complex new programs that would undoubtedly fuel price rises. Instead of reducing poverty, Burns sought to reduce welfare payments through job placement and training. The president went against the advice of Burns and concluded that welfare reform in the guise of the Family Security System (as the Family Assistance Plan was originally titled) would be a major component of his domestic program.¹⁰²

The Family Assistance Plan: Conservative or Liberal?

The Family Assistance Plan was a unique proposal in the sense that it drew criticism from both sides of the ideological spectrum. Conservatives claimed that the proposal to establish a minimum income level with an as yet ambiguous work requirement stifled individual opportunity and challenged the capitalist ethos so pervasive in American society. Liberals argued that President Nixon and his domestic advisors had stolen their ground and that the proposal did not go far enough to address the fundamental problems of poverty and dependency, calling it "punitive and medieval."¹⁰³ The reduction in welfare services and ineligibility for pre-existing benefits, such as food stamps, that compliance with the proposal required, meant that in the eyes of some, families were being punished further simply for being poor.

On the surface, each side had a valid point. The guaranteed income did appear to contradict the traditional conservative belief of self-reliance whilst encouraging individuals to accept dependency on government assistance as a way of life. In addition, rather than reducing the exorbitant cost of AFDC and decreasing potential eligibility, forecasts predicted that the proposal would cost \$4.4 billion for fiscal year 1971 and double recipient eligibility over that of AFDC.¹⁰⁴

This was further underlined by the fact that AFDC was a product of the New Deal liberalism that had spawned the Social Security Act in 1935. Abolishing it but replacing it with a income safety net would pacify liberals, Nixon believed, and would garner the support of the same average American that Nixon was to appeal to in his Silent Majority speech on November 3, 1969.¹⁰⁵

Norman Barry makes the argument that the concept of a negative income tax was actually a classic liberal notion because the income supplement was not tied to any desirable form of expenditure.¹⁰⁶ The notion that redistributed income should be spent by the recipient in a manner that increases their overall welfare rather than on goods and services deemed to be socially undesirable is consistent with other forms of welfare provision, such as AFDC and food stamps, but less applicable to cash transfers such as the one proposed in the Family Assistance Plan.

The arguments above suggest that the fundamental principles of the Family Assistance Plan were liberal in nature. In contrast, and in line with his conservative view of limited government, Nixon held the desire to reduce federal power by increasing executive power. Greater control over how the welfare system would be organized would allow the president to eventually hand over overall control of the programs to the states and localities, freeing a majority of the federal government's responsibility for poverty. The plethora of social welfare programs instituted in the 1960's significantly extended the power of the federal government to the detriment of those who were closest to the problems they were designed to alleviate.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Plan adhered to both ideologies in part. In the short term, it would appear to be more liberal than conservative, with its income safety net and government-sponsored training programs. However, in the long term, the proposal was clearly designed to appeal to conservatives with the prospect of falling welfare rolls as household heads entered into employment, generating larger tax revenues and shifting the burden of financial responsibility away from government and back to the families.

There are numerous reasons why President Nixon chose to pursue the Family Assistance Plan. The failure of AFDC to address the issue of family breakdowns whilst enlarging the welfare rolls certainly hastened debate over the welfare system. Associated with this was the belief that federal funds were not reaching those for whom they were appropriated. Instead, the money was lining the pockets of the middle-class bureaucrats responsible for implementing the Great Society programs and who Nixon despised. Replacing AFDC would return decision-making to those on the ground and drastically reduce the size of the welfare civil service.

Intellectually and practically, the proposal seemed realistic enough to warrant further debate and critique, which it certainly received during the long congressional process. It has also been posited by supporters loyal to Arthur Burns that Nixon was transfixed by Moynihan's tales of the welfare crisis in New York City and the argument that a welfare reform victory would yield extravagant plaudits for the newly-elected president.

The last reason is partly true in that Nixon became convinced that he could make a real dent in the problem. To "hit the ground running," with his advisors and priorities in place, would take advantage of what momentum remained from the close election victory. What better way, therefore, to make a splash than by overhauling the degenerating welfare system put in place over the previous three decades? However, to do so would require bipartisan support in Congress that would be unrealistic without a proposal that appealed to both sides. Therefore, Nixon's pragmatic idealism superceded his ideological principles and the hybrid proposal, containing incentives designed to court the favor of all concerned, was born.

Cultural Leadership: Did Nixon Effectively Discern the Environment?

The public's response to suggestions of welfare reform, measured in a series of opinion polls conducted in the late 1960's, was lukewarm at best. Although surveys, conducted in 1969, indicated that 45 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that "one of the main troubles with welfare is that it doesn't give people enough money to live on," and 84 percent of respondents agreed that "there are too many people receiving welfare money who should be working," the support tended to evaporate when a more specific question was asked. For example, in 1965 Gallup found that 67 percent of the population sampled were opposed to a guaranteed income, should it be proposed. In 1969, this figure had dropped slightly, to 62 percent, but the ramifications were similar.¹⁰⁷

In spirit, the public was in favor of the government creating the right conditions for the equality of opportunity. However, the feeling was that this would be best achieved through job creation and state-sponsored training schemes rather than the financial handouts it was perceived that a guaranteed income proposal would generate. When questioned, 79 percent of respondents in the 1969 poll stated that they were in favor of the government guaranteeing work so that a family could earn enough money to relocate themselves above the poverty line, rather than through public assistance alone.¹⁰⁸

Discussed at length above was the view that Nixon had a tendency to compromise his principles if the political environment so desired it, and that the pragmatic style of leadership he thought important would be best served by a proposal that brought together left and right. To be successful would require that Nixon understood that the environment (historical precedent, public sentiment, and congressional prerogatives) in which he

operated was conducive to innovative reforms. This is the essence of cultural leadership.

The relative failure of the Great Society programs to complete the legacy of the New Deal prompted Nixon to consider making welfare reform his highest domestic priority if he were elected president in 1968. What Franklin Roosevelt began had reached a point where the myriad of welfare services (the majority of which were instituted by Johnson) were simply not effective in achieving their aims.

It is unclear whether the public would stand another set of reforms given their experience of recent years, even ones which professed to simplifying the benefits system and which would eliminate the primary problems of AFDC (i.e., the lack of a work incentives and the encouragement of family breakdown). The Gallup polls suggest that whilst the current welfare system was inadequate in providing a level of income deemed fair, according to those sampled, a guaranteed income was not the solution.

However, the lack of stable public opinion on an issue which did not feature prominently in the 1968 election seemingly provided Nixon with the chance to offer leadership of his own in a situation fraught with ambiguous definitions of the means and the ends of reform. By setting the political agenda full of domestic reforms, Nixon may have sought to take the initiative from the outset and therefore mould public opinion in his favor and on his own terms.

The response of those in Congress, as noted, was not enthusiastic. Nixon predicted that the greatest threat would come from those on the right but as it transpired, it was an alliance of left and right that subsequently ended the possibility of the original proposal being enacted.

Nixon's cultural leadership suffered through his inability to interpret the public's

sentiments as reflected in opinion polls and during the recent election campaign. As noted, welfare reform was considered a relatively minor issue at that juncture in time, incomparable to the more salient issues of the Vietnam War, civil strife, and even inflation. To test his political capital on a controversial proposal so early in his first term, in light of the political environment in which he took office, was likely to result in a prolonged battle with an opposition Congress that could inhibit his desire to take an activist role on other domestic matters, such as school desegregation.

It could be confidently inferred that the proposal resonated with some of the cultural values that it was designed to reassert: equality of opportunity, individual responsibility, and a limited role for the state in a market economy. However, the public did not necessarily agree with this; rather they took the approach that this was indeed a handout wrapped in conservative rhetoric, furthering the concern that the Family Assistance Plan would instead reward laziness. This ultimately makes leadership an even more difficult task when the leader finds that his or her goals are not communicated effectively enough to persuade, or that they must be tempered by prudence if the followers are to be convinced of their viability.

In conclusion, President Nixon believed that his discernment of historical precedent would allow him to pursue a radical solution to the problem of welfare. However, despite the inconclusive opinion of the public which offered the possibility of innovative leadership, the opinion of those who played the central role in rejecting the proposal, liberal senators, decreed otherwise. Suggestions that "the time was right" were not borne out by the defeat of the bill in the Senate and the fact that subsequent welfare reforms, similar to that envisaged by Nixon, were implemented by Presidents Reagan and

Clinton. Effective cultural leadership requires that the leader understand what the possibilities for action are and govern accordingly. President Nixon's Family Assistance Plan was ahead of its time and suffered as a result.

Chapter Six:
Teaching Reality
Introduction

Language, according to Robert Denton, is the means of passing cultural and political values, through concepts and symbols, to a general public that possesses little tolerance for complex problems, detailed solutions or complicated rationales.¹⁰⁹

Communication of one's hopes, dreams, and fears occurs with the desire to educate, influence, and even manipulate those that are the target of presidential rhetoric through the creation of a "reality" designed to achieve a particular goal. In one sense, reality is a symbolic construct of the rhetorician; its modus operandi is to heighten the persuasion of others. Whether or not the reality conforms to accepted cultural norms or created with values of its own, however, is certainly of concern to the leader who should be aware of the context in which he speaks. Additionally, it is important that the rhetoric employed resonates suitably with the ends one is trying to achieve, whether it be incremental economic reform or support for retaliatory incursions abroad.

To reiterate the theory of rhetorical persuasion discussed in Chapter Two, it is the task of leaders to identify the problems that must be addressed and offer solutions in a manner that is both credible and comprehensible to an audience with little patience for long-winded diatribes or complex analyses. Erwin Hargrove identifies three styles of substantive rhetoric which leaders may utilize to convince the public that their solutions are consistent with the "reality" they perceive to exist and the task that lies before them. Rhetoric differs among those who seek to teach the public the truth through

communication of empirical problems and solutions (teaching reality); those who appeal to the greater goals of shared beliefs and moral purposes within society (preaching); and those that use oratory for manipulation and distortion of the truth for flagrant self-promotion or personal profit (demagoguery).

Jeffrey Tulis contends that it has become accepted that presidents must constantly use public rhetoric to defend themselves from criticism, promote policy initiatives or inspire the population with statements of intent or emotion. Mass rhetoric, according to Tulis, has become an increasingly significant tool at the disposal of presidents, for those that wish to employ it, have the ability to harness its power, and can use it effectively.¹¹⁰ I would suggest, however, that the rhetoric of domestic policy tends to be more conventional and less profound than the language associated with foreign policy, which tends to allow for more frequent recourses to grandiose speech interspersed with recurring symbols. A notable exception was the civil rights rhetoric of the 1950's and 1960's that combined the communication of contemporary obstacles to progress with emotive appeals to moral, religious, and spiritual guidance.

The subject of welfare reform would not immediately appear to encourage the opportunity for such flamboyant rhetoric. However, the proposals of the Johnson and Nixon administrations were founded upon values of work and responsibility that the American public could identify with and as such could be communicated in a manner that incorporated references to historical precedent and experience. Indeed, the hyperbolic title of the so-called “War on Poverty” would frame the urban crisis in terms of a battle to be fought.

This chapter will study President Nixon's rhetorical style during the course of

speeches he made to the general public, messages delivered to Congress and other speeches made to specific audiences on the subject of welfare reform. In contrast to Johnson's War on Poverty program that featured a massive rhetorical campaign to instill a sense of urgency, Nixon's welfare reform strategy involved few public statements of policy intent, save for the major speeches that addressed a variety of substantive issues.¹¹¹ Finally, President Nixon's press conferences did not invoke the welfare reform issue prior to 1972, tending instead to concentrate on Vietnam, and are therefore not discussed here.

Rhetorical Style

President Nixon signaled his intent with his inaugural address on January 20, 1969. In it, he reflected upon the achievements of predecessors, the role of America as it entered its third century of existence, and the challenges that must be faced by all if peace and progress, both domestic and foreign, are to be realized. His administration pledged to listen to everyone and to adopt a style of presidential communication that all can understand and identify with. He continued with the statement that

"In these difficult years, America has suffered from a fever of words; from inflated rhetoric that promises more than it can deliver; from angry rhetoric that fans discontents into hatreds; from bombastic rhetoric that postures instead of persuading. We cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another-until we speak quietly enough so that our words can be heard as well as our voices."¹¹²

The promise of a presidential style that would place the focus more on communicating realistic goals rather than empty promises, and solutions rather than speculation, reflected in part Nixon's Quaker heritage and experience of the high school

and college debates he participated in. Although the subject of such debates was known in advance to both sides, the position they would take was allotted immediately prior to commencement of the contests. Consequentially, the young Nixon prepared methodically, gathering information relating to both perspectives and rehearsing until he felt confident to speak in public without the aid of notes.

Interestingly though, Nixon's high school debating coach, Mrs. Clifford Vincent was disturbed by his ability "to slide round an argument, instead of meeting it head on."¹¹³ Avoiding directness where possible was to become a feature of Nixon's relationship with his staff, preferring instead to operate through a system of memoranda and orders transmitted through his "Berlin Wall" of Haldeman and Ehrlichman to cabinet members and others further down the Nixon hierarchy. However, his welfare reform speeches do not bear this criticism out, as will be illustrated in due course.

The key to his ability to appear confident and adept when addressing foreign dignitaries, for example, was the preparation and rehearsal he conducted in private. Relying both on personal hand written notes and formal briefs prepared by his team of associates, Nixon would often appear nonchalant prior to a major speech, frustrating his advisors who were becoming increasingly nervous as the moment approached. Alexander Butterfield, special assistant to the President, in a lucid account of the minutes leading up to an state address, conveys an insightful impression of Nixon's unorthodox method of preparation, writing:

I used to get nervous, because it is eleven-twenty, and he [President Nixon] is still at his desk, and he hasn't looked at the material the speechwriters have prepared for him; it's in a little folder. With five minutes to go, he uses the bathroom for a minute, and then looks at the folder. He already knows essentially what he is going to say; he worked on

it the night before. He did homework all the time. He has no hobbies; his hobby was the presidency. Now he looks at the folder material. There are some points he likes. He is fitting them in mentally; he knows right where to slide in this line that [William] Safire wrote. It takes him about two minutes to do that...he gives this nice little talk, and I hear him using some of the lines from the folder. He is very proud that he gives talks without notes.¹¹⁴

Butterfield was amazed that without recourse to the written briefs for the day's meetings, Nixon would be "totally inept and tongue-tied."¹¹⁵

Hal Bochyn suggests that Nixon matured to become an effective orator rather than an eloquent one due to his desire for a simple style.¹¹⁶ This is echoed by Theodore White, who declared that Nixon's style combined a powerful system of straightforward, declarative sentences that were both simple and yet forceful.¹¹⁷ Rather than reflecting his training as a lawyer, and the convoluted language that often characterizes courtroom debate, Nixon's rhetorical style harked back to his experience as part of a poor, working class family that struggled even to send him to college. His desire as president to appeal to average America, as noted in the previous chapter, through language they would understand, was not a political choice but a way of life.

As president, Nixon continued the trend begun by Lyndon Johnson of employing specialized writers, each offering a different style or perspective. For moderate, policy-related speeches and State of the Union addresses, Nixon worked with Ray Price, former chief editor for the *New York Herald Tribune*; for conservative "fire and brimstone" rhetoric he turned to Pat Buchanan, a former editorial writer for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*; for assistance with centrist speeches the President used William Safire. Nixon usually had considerable input throughout the writing process and maintained control

over the final draft of all major speeches. He wrote most of the important ones himself; the "Silent Majority" Vietnam Speech given in November 1969 being a primary instance where Nixon preferred to construct the message without significant input from his team.¹¹⁸

An early example of the speechwriting dynamic was the drafting of the Inaugural Address. President-elect Nixon asked all three to supply separate drafts of the inaugural speech with the intention of selecting parts from each and combining them to create a speech that appealed to, and reflected, a wide range of interests and perspectives. Prior to his inauguration, Nixon read all the inaugural addresses given by his predecessors and decided that the speech of James Polk, given in 1845 and noted for its brevity, should serve as a model for the team of writers. Nixon and Price collaborated on the final draft, soliciting input from Daniel Moynihan and Billy Graham as necessary. It was Price who came up with the "lowering of voices" concept which appealed to Nixon's heritage, for example, but it was Nixon who determined the overall style and content of the speech and his decision to proceed with the final document.¹¹⁹

Public Speeches

The principal public statement Nixon made on plans to reform the welfare system was delivered on August 8, 1969 to a nationwide radio and television audience. The address announced a series of proposals designed to alleviate the urban crisis, reapportion the responsibility for public assistance between the federal and state governments, and help American people get off welfare and onto payrolls.¹²⁰ In addition to the Family

Assistance Plan, it also outlined proposals for revenue sharing, manpower training, and the reorganization of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

In the opening paragraphs of the speech, President Nixon clearly attempted to convey to the audience the situation that faced the nation; that is, the reality as he perceived it. He continued with an interpretation of America's recent welfare history, stating that

"A third of a century of centralizing power and responsibility in Washington has produced a bureaucratic monstrosity, cumbersome, unresponsive, ineffective. A third of a century of social experiment has left us a legacy of entrenched programs that have outlived their time or outgrown their purposes. A third of a century of unprecedented growth and change has strained our institutions and raised serious questions about whether they are still adequate to the times."¹²¹

The task of teaching reality is to inform one's listeners of the major problems that must be addressed and outline rational solutions compatible with what American culture will permit. Inferring that the contemporary welfare system was a significant failure, Nixon spoke of the predicaments that his administration was working to alleviate:

"Our States and cities find themselves sinking in a welfare quagmire, as caseloads increase, as costs escalate, and as the welfare system stagnates enterprise and perpetuates dependency...It breaks up homes. It often penalizes work. It robs recipients of dignity... In the past eight years, three million more people have been added to the welfare rolls. If the present trend continues, another four million will join the welfare rolls by 1975. The financial cost will be crushing; and the human cost will be suffocating."¹²²

To combat these problems Nixon proposed the Family Assistance Plan, founded upon three principles of equality across the nation (as opposed to AFDC payments which differ between States); a work requirement (all those able to work must do so or accept

training); and a work incentive (a family's benefits would be reduced by only 50 cents for each dollar earned from outside employment). The rest of the welfare reform speech outlined components of the Plan, pausing to deny that this proposal constituted a "guaranteed income" regardless of ability to work, a charge which would beset the Family Assistance Plan as it proceeded through Congress.

Although there are elements of Nixon preaching to his audience a moral vision located in shared purposes, these are contained in his Inaugural Address more so than speeches specifically concerned with welfare reform. For example, Nixon spoke of building "a great cathedral of spirit-each of us raising it one stone at a time, as he reaches out to his neighbor, helping, caring, doing" and having "endured a long night of the American spirit. But as our eyes catch the dimness of the first rays of dawn, let us not curse the remaining dark. Let us gather the night."¹²³ These symbolic statements, urging others to act, were the exception, however, to rhetoric more concerned with addressing specific problems and laying out his administration's intended course of action.

President Nixon's August 8 address reflected the rhetorical strategy of teaching reality much more so than preaching or demagoguery. Its language was straightforward and, rather than urging better citizenry or appeals to the common morality of the nation, it was compatible with the principle of rhetoric that offers rational solutions to specific problems. Beginning with the introduction, Nixon methodically constructed a reality of social and urban unrest, followed by brief discussion of the challenges the Family Assistance Plan was prepared to overcome, and its intended consequences. Other speeches, although less detailed, follow a similar template.

For example, the theme of teaching reality is continued with two statements

acknowledging approval of the Family Assistance Act of 1970, first by the House Ways and Means Committee and subsequently by the full House. Both speeches commend the respective bodies for their prompt and forward-looking action.

"It is often said that nothing in this world is as powerful as an idea whose time has come. In my view, the family assistance program is an idea whose time has come-and the welcome action of the Ways and Means Committee confirms that judgment."¹²⁴

Reiterating the problems America faces, the statements reflected upon each in turn before concluding with an appeal to those who are to receive the bill next. The appeals, couched in such terms as Congress possessing a "historic opportunity...to act with responsiveness and responsibility" rise to the level of preaching to the legislature the moral virtues of the motion they are contemplating.¹²⁵ The dominant language, however, is that of an orator seeking to elucidate upon his aims through rhetoric which teaches the audience the value of the proposal on offer, rather than inspiring those listening to better themselves or preaching to shared values and morality.

Messages to Congress

A measure of the greatness of a powerful nation is the character of the life it creates for those who are powerless to make ends meet.¹²⁶

So begins the Special Message to Congress given by President Nixon on August 11, 1969, only three days after his speech to the nation announcing the Family Assistance Plan. The rhetoric of the remaining text was rather formal and repetitive as Nixon communicated a series of proposals supplemented by statistics and financial predictions.

As with the public speeches, the fundamental goal of the message was to address each of the current problems with the welfare system, as perceived by the President and his staff, and convey the merits of the Plan to the audience in a style that was unobtrusive and yet coherent. For example,

"The present welfare system has failed us-it has fostered family breakup, has provided very little help in many States and has even deepened dependency by all-too-often making it more attractive to go on welfare than to go to work. I propose a new approach that will make it more attractive to go to work than to go on welfare, and will establish a nationwide minimum payment to dependent families with children."¹²⁷

This statement, and two subsequent speeches to Congress in 1970, one of which concerned the Administration's budget and the other a review of the legislative program, appear to focus less on persuading the listener that the proposals should be supported and more on communicating that they are theoretically sound and should not be unduly criticized. Statements such as "this administration, after a careful analysis of all the alternatives, is committed to a new departure that will find a solution for the welfare problem...I urge the Congress to begin its study of these proposals promptly so that laws can be enacted and funds authorized to begin the new system as soon as possible" may have clarified the Administration's position but they would have appeared to do little to inspire a relatively hostile Democratic Congress to work with the President.¹²⁸

Aside from the content of the speeches to the public and to Congress, it is interesting to note their timing, particularly when considering that the Nixon Administration did not significantly engage members of Congress in discussions about FAP either prior to Nixon's inauguration or in early 1969. By announcing the proposal to the people before Congress, it could be argued that Nixon employed a strategy of "going

public" (although the term was not conceived of in 1969) that often violates the essence of the bargaining relationship entered into by the president and Congress. According to Samuel Kernell, the strategy is intended to place presidents and their messages before the public in a way that enhances their chances of success in Washington; the consequences of doing so include undermining the legitimacy of other politicians and increasing public posturing, thus decreasing the likelihood of compromise.¹²⁹

Although he may not have been aware of it at the time, by excluding members of Congress from pre-announcement deliberations and then choosing to air the proposal in a message to the public rather than solely to Capitol Hill, President Nixon may have inadvertently increased opposition to the plan.

Messages to Specific Audiences

The discussion prior to this point has concluded that Nixon's speeches and statements tended to embrace formal, straight-forward language designed primarily to shield the Plan from future criticism through the offering of rational solutions to a series of complex welfare problems, rather than to inspire or arouse passionate debate. President Nixon preferred to teach reality as he saw it rather than preach to his audiences when speaking of the Family Assistance Plan. This may be due in part to the nature of welfare reform as an issue unlikely to capture the attention of the public, or, as mentioned in his inaugural speech, because the time was not right for inflamed or misleading rhetoric.

However, when speaking to specific groups in a setting that was more low-key than the formal public or congressional addresses considered earlier, Nixon tended to

incorporate more expressive language, humor, and conversation into his rhetoric. It is at these gatherings that President Nixon had greatest control over his speeches, preferring to work on them himself rather than delegating to his team of speechwriters the task of preparing statements he would later redraft. Naturally, the speeches he gave would be more likely to incorporate certain beliefs or important moments in his life that he was unable or unwilling to include in the formal addresses.

His early life during the Depression was recalled in a speech given to the White House Conference on Children in 1970:

"I remember back in the Depression years-and if this dates me, if you can remember, you can remember, too-of the 1930's, how deeply I felt about the plight of those people my own age who used to come into my father's store when they couldn't pay the bill, because their fathers were out of work, and how this seemed to separate them from others in our school. None of us had any money in those days, but in those families where there were no jobs and there was nothing but the little that relief then offered suffered from more than simply going without. What they suffered was a hurt to their pride that many carried with them for the rest of their lives."¹³⁰

Nixon was, undoubtedly, was one "those" people whose pride was irrevocably damaged, even though his family did not experience the abject poverty of those without long-term employment. Illustrating the point that many of the welfare programs created in the 1960's stigmatized children by branding them as welfare recipients, Nixon used the example of how, at the school where his daughter Tricia tutored, welfare children received their free lunches in the auditorium whereas the rest brought lunches with them and dined in the classrooms.¹³¹ The divulgence of personal experience will often make a point better than if it were based on theoretical example alone, and Nixon's use of it in this speech is in contrast to his more formal statements considered earlier.

Furthermore, President Nixon tended to align his values with those of his listeners to create a sense of the collective purpose. "I" became intertwined with "we," particularly when speaking of the American Dream, a dream that Nixon himself lived. In his remarks at Longview, Texas, during the off-year campaign of 1970, Nixon spoke in detail of the proposal, suggesting that "every good Texan" could identify with what it seeks to achieve and that,

"We in this country, because it is a rich country, do want to provide assistance for any family that needs assistance...if a man is able to work, if a man is trained to work, and then he refuses to work, that man should not be paid to loaf by a hardworking taxpayer in the United States of America. That is the program we stand for...we need that kind of reform. It is something that all of us want."¹³²

Earlier in the year, at the 50th Anniversary Convention of the United States Jaycees in St. Louis, Missouri, Nixon reiterated the themes that America was prosperous, that the present welfare system was failing individuals and taxpayers, and that his proposal would place a floor under the income of every family in America such that "it means that a man and his wife and, most important, his children can stand on that floor with dignity. That is what we can do in America because we have what we have."¹³³ By speaking of a shared sense of values, Nixon used rhetoric designed primarily to teach his listeners the nuts and bolts of the proposal. As a form of preaching, he inferred that the proposal also represented the shared belief in human dignity and the feeling that America must help those who cannot help themselves if the nation was to progress.

Conclusion

President Nixon's welfare reform rhetoric was limited to a few important nationwide speeches and occasional remarks to specific audiences. From the texts of the speeches obtained it is evident that Nixon preferred wherever possible to employ the teaching of reality as a strategy of communication. The reality of welfare, as described by Nixon in recurring rhetorical statements, was that welfare rolls and costs were excessive, requiring whole-scale reorganization rather than piecemeal modification. The speeches tended to reiterate the theme of a critique of contemporary America followed by specific criticisms of the present welfare system and, finally, the proposal itself.

Less attention was paid to symbolic speech (although, as noted, it was present at times) than the establishment of a common bond between speaker and listener founded upon collective values. This did not rise to the level of preaching due to the lack of inspirational or moral rhetoric and because rhetoric of this character was often contained in passages concerned with soliciting support for the proposal's components rather than any overwhelming sense of asking individuals to become "better angels of their nature."

The final question to be asked, therefore, is why the emphasis on teaching reality? Richard Nixon was a man of humble foundations, of "Main Street" rather than "Big City" America, that molded his belief that, as Congressman then as President, he should speak for the average American and for those that could not speak for themselves. Despite his legal training, Nixon seldom adopted the rhetoric of the lawyer in political speeches; particularly those addressed to target audiences whose electoral support he desired. Another reason may be relevant. As noted, welfare reform was not an issue that is

commonly associated with symbolic, grandiose rhetoric, and as such, may have been the perfect situation for President Nixon's oratorical skill of educating the public and offering rational solutions to contemporary problems. The outlining of successive points of contention that were immediately followed by relevant rebuttals contained in the Family Assistance Plan proposal was an example of his methodical approach to the technique of communication. For a public looking for hard answers to the issue of welfare rather than the convoluted or generic re-hashing of party lines, of which Nixon had been guilty of in the 1968 election campaign, the style employed may have been suited to the issue more so than one would expect.

With respect to the hypothesis stated in Chapter Three, it was acknowledged at the beginning of this chapter that President Nixon preferred, where possible, to write his own speeches. However, the trend towards employing a team of speechwriters to cope with the demand for multiple speeches, statements, and messages meant that Nixon usually worked with one or more of his writers to draft his words. Retaining considerable input during the process and authority over the final draft allowed him to shape speeches to suit his style without the need for constant supervision of the team.

Thus, President Nixon's welfare reform speeches, although tending to follow a formal structure with unmistakable language, reflected both his personality and political style. As noted, the predominant characteristic of the rhetoric was its unquestionable simplicity. Nixon sought to convey his message not in the "inflamed" or "bombastic" rhetoric of his contemporaries but in a fashion that would appeal to those it was designed to touch. It certainly resonated with his working class upbringing but it may also have been a slight on the Eastern Establishment (consisting of the media and the political elite

such as the Kennedy family) whose respect he sought but never quite received. He was not one of them and nor would he ever be. Instead, Nixon constructed and directed his rhetoric towards the constituencies who twice elected him to the presidency, with the exception of blacks who voted overwhelmingly for the Democrat nominees, and for whom the Family Assistance Plan would benefit the greatest. To use the convoluted language of the law and of the intellectual would only complicate the message he was sending.

Richard Nixon came to the presidency with a deep distrust and long memory of those whom he perceived had mistreated him during his vice-presidential and campaign years. His propensity to over-personalize politics, categorizing associates and critics as "friends" or "enemies," did not fully surface until the second term. However, the welfare speeches did contain a sense of "them" and "us," especially when Nixon was referring to the values that he possessed, such as the ethic of hard work, in contrast to those were unwilling to work and settled instead for dependency on the government for handouts. The tendency to perceive situations as black or white was a constant feature of his presidency.

The rhetoric was a precursor to the most important task that lay ahead. The Republican President had to face a Democratic-controlled Congress and persuade them his proposal should become the latest welfare law. The next chapter studies how President Nixon sought to achieve this.

Chapter Seven:

Skill in Context

Richard Nixon returned to Washington in 1969 confident that the narrow victory secured in the election of the previous year would not hinder or constrain his ability to govern effectively. Despite winning with only 43.4 percent of the popular vote to Hubert Humphrey's 42.7 percent, he felt that being elected from a national constituency, as opposed to the districts or States of his congressional counterparts, enabled him to claim a mandate from the people for his reformist agenda.¹³⁴

Opposition to a radical departure from the economic policies of his predecessor was likely to be strong on Capitol Hill. For the first time since 1848, the party winning the presidential election failed to win control of at least one house of Congress. Moreover, Nixon faced the prospect of a House in which Republicans were heavily outnumbered 189 to 245 and a Senate that was solidly in favor of the Democrats. If the president was to enact legislation, it would require a bipartisan coalition of members from his own party and those conservative Democrats willing to compromise and vote with him.

Welfare reform was President Nixon's "highest domestic priority." It was also one of three major battles with Congress in his first year in office. The other two, the ABM system funding proposal and Nixon's nominations for the open seat on the Supreme Court, were perhaps indicative of what the President would likely encounter as his Family Assistance proposal began the passage of enactment.

The White House's ABM strategy entailed the blanketing of Capitol Hill with

staff, phone calls, and bipartite meetings with individual senators. As the vote on the proposal neared, Nixon's feeling was that the expenditure of presidential capital was not conducive to the preservation of prestige, and that to conserve influence would be more beneficial in the long run.¹³⁵ Accordingly, Nixon scaled down his visibility and the ABM vote in the Senate on August 6th ended in a deadlock, requiring Vice-President Agnew to break the tie in the administration's favor. It was Nixon's contention that the vote was almost scuttled by liberals willing to exact a very public revenge for the Vietnam.¹³⁶

Nixon's nominations of Clement Haynsworth in 1969 and Harold Carswell the following year, for the Supreme Court seat vacated by Associate Justice Abe Fortas, foundered on Democrat allegations of the nominees either being too conservative (Haynsworth) or professionally incompetent (Carswell).¹³⁷ The choice of Haynsworth was motivated by political expediency and Nixon's personal belief in "strict constructionism." With only the liberal Hugo Black representing the South on the Supreme Court, Haynsworth would offer the conservative balance that Nixon sought and also appeal to white southerners. Stating that "The President is on the line for Haynsworth," Nixon proceeded to conduct a determined exercise in public relations combined with low-key congressional influence, primarily through the external influence of House Minority Leader Gerald Ford.¹³⁸

Despite continued pressure, in November 1969 the Senate voted 55-45 to reject Haynsworth in a defeat described by Raymond Price as a "shoddy display of political hypocrisy, sectional prejudice, and interest-group pressure."¹³⁹ Carswell's nomination process was marked by a similar effort by Nixon to that with Haynsworth but, with confirmation unlikely, Nixon's interest significantly deteriorated. This was certainly

construed as the President seeking to “get even” with the Senate through a perfunctory nomination, and led to the perception that Carswell was "hung out to dry" by the Administration.

These two examples of Nixon's interaction with the Senate in the first year of his term illustrate that Nixon came to the presidency determined, when necessary, to confront rather than collaborate with Congress over matters he deemed important to his prestige and administration. On one hand, Nixon was actively willing to cultivate support with members of both parties when he believed that such assistance was needed and likely to be forthcoming. The task of conducting interpersonal relations with those who possessed little connection to Nixon, save their strategic and short-term importance to his prevailing political prerogatives, was not something that Nixon excelled at but which he knew he was required to perform. The determination to be the victor, and especially to be accredited or legitimized for his actions, consumed the president to the extent that political issues would often become personal quests for recognition and acceptance. However, the tendency existed that when confronted by the inevitability of defeat to withdraw from the field of battle, leaving his foot soldiers to continue the fight in his name.

The role of the president as an interpersonal actor is one of the skills Barbara Kellerman denotes as central to the exercise of leadership.¹⁴⁰ The ability to skillfully maneuver in the world of other people, to the extent that discernable objectives are realized, is, according to Kellerman, the hallmark of a directive leader. The discussion in Chapter Two reflected the sense that leadership is a strategy of influence such that the relationship between the leader and the follower is founded upon the pursuit of

independent or mutual aspirations through the process of persuasion and collaboration. This supposes that the ends of action are compatible even if the means or reasons for obtaining them are not.

Richard Neustadt clarifies this, placing it into the context of the executive-legislative relationship, in writing that the

Separateness of institutions and the sharing of authority prescribe the terms on which a President persuades. When one man shares authority with another, but does not gain or lose his job upon the other's whim, his willingness to act upon the urging of the other turns on whether he conceives the action right for him. The essence of a President's persuasive task is to convince such men that what the White House wants of them is what they ought to do for their sake and on their authority.¹⁴¹

The art of persuasion is, therefore, a political skill that can greatly enhance the ability of the leader to manipulate the context in which the influence relationship exists into one that is conducive to a favorable outcome. As noted in Chapter Three, the effectiveness of action taken by the president is likely to be a reflection of such skills combined with a political situation which encourages their expression. The term "skill in context" therefore refers to the interplay between the president and Congress; the separation of powers requiring that the president use the bargaining skills he possesses to seek to influence members of Congress and persuade them that what he wants is also what they want.

Two such strategies of persuasion are considered here and briefly restated for the purpose of introducing what is to follow. The president may employ the method of "bargaining" with interested parties through a quid-pro-quo exchange of presidential favor for votes on a particular issue. Collective bargaining may also occur, such as a share

in publicity generated by supporting a presidential initiative. In both instances, therefore, bargaining occurs to facilitate congressional preponderance with presidential prerogatives.

The strategy of "control," i.e., the ability of one actor to exert pressure upon another such that the recipient is compelled to change positions, is less common in democracies and refers to a situation in which the president employs force through the promise of negative consequences; the primary objective once again being the achievement of support. The threat of the veto, for example, is a negative tool that is aligned with the concept of the executive seeking control over the choices or direction of the legislature. The threat to redistribute capital funds away from constituencies whose representatives are forcibly opposing the president is a tactic that, whilst unlikely given the potential for public retribution, may be employed, encouraging them to comply with the president's wishes for fear of a disapproving reaction from voters in their home districts.

The rest of the chapter will study President Nixon's personal involvement with the Family Assistance Plan as it progressed through Congress, paying particular attention to the two strategies mentioned above. Beginning with a brief analysis of the institutional and historical context in which Nixon began his pursuit of enacting welfare reform, I will study the level and type of involvement the President engaged in during the course of 1970.

August-October 1969: Announcement and Reaction

Congressional reaction to the nationwide speech given by President Nixon on August 8, 1969 was understandably cautious. The speech, containing multiple economic and administrative reforms designed to reorganize government and return certain powers to the States, was the first major statement of Nixon's domestic agenda for the second part of 1969.

The Senate Minority Whip, Hugh Scott, thought that most people "would support the welfare plan." In the House, Republican leader Gerald Ford stated that the plan represented the "true spirit of America." Responding to the belated State of the Union speech given in October that encouraged the Democratic Congress to engage in a working relationship with the President, Mike Mansfield the Senate Majority Leader, described Nixon's message as "restrained, understanding, in good taste and in good form." Scott replied that Nixon was acting "in a spirit of co-operation with Congress and a desire to work together with the Democratic leadership."¹⁴²

The reaction of the Republican leadership was in marked contrast to the response received by Bryce Harlow, Nixon's liaison with Congress, the previous April. Reporting to a meeting of principal advisors and the cabinet, Harlow conveyed the impression that senior Republican figures on the Hill had displayed "absolute horror" at the prospect of a welfare reform proposal that did not include a work requirement.¹⁴³ The proposal was later amended to include both a requirement that recipients would be monitored in their efforts to work, and further incentives for them to do so.

Other than the President himself, Harlow was the man with whom members of

Congress were most familiar. His experience in the Eisenhower administration as a legislative assistant gave him an aura of respectability that was lacking among other members of the "inner circle"-Nixon's team of close advisors.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, because Harlow was so well respected, members of Congress frequently assumed that any problems emerging from the White House reflected the failings of the President rather than his assistant.¹⁴⁵

Wilbur Mills, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, announced that joint hearings on Social Security and welfare reform would convene on October 15, 1969. With his legislative team, including Robert Patricelli, Minority Counsel to the Senate Subcommittee on Manpower, Employment and Poverty; John Veneman, Undersecretary of the Department of Housing, Education and Welfare, and headed by Harlow, in place, President Nixon appeared ready to begin the arduous process of enacting his proposal.¹⁴⁶ The first task was to devise a strategy of attack.

Creating a Coalition

Simply placing a legislative package at the door step of Congress is not enough. Presidents must work to build support within and outside Congress. They must build coalitions. The office does not guarantee political leadership: it merely offers incumbents and invitation to lead politically.¹⁴⁷

To assist in the strategy of coalition building, it is usually necessary to begin with one's own party before courting those from the opposition. These increases the possibility that a stable majority can be formed without having to enter into a myriad of bargains

with members of different parties seeking presidential favors. According to Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, the task Nixon gave to Harlow was to construct a Republican majority on each issue, then pick up enough Democratic support to enable passage of his proposals. Depending on the issue at stake, the appeal would be tailored to those Democrats whose ideology was most compatible and therefore likely to support the motion.¹⁴⁸ For the Family Assistance Plan this meant cultivating support amongst conservative Democrats who formed part of the conservative coalition and had consistently voted with their Republican counterparts since the Truman era. The natural starting point for the courtship would be with their respective leaders: Senator Mike Mansfield (Montana) and Rep. John McCormack (Massachusetts), the Speaker of the House.

As Nixon was to find out later, this would prove to be a difficult task. Mansfield was certainly no conservative and both hailed from the Irish, working class, Democratic tradition which had consistently voted with the left on issues of social welfare.¹⁴⁹ To persuade these two prominent figures that the Republican welfare proposal should be legislated would be a highly significant coup for the administration and make the challenge of building a viable coalition somewhat easier.

In the spring of 1970, as the bill was under consideration in the House Ways and Means Committee, Nixon lobbied harder than at any time since announcing the proposal the previous August. The public plea issued to the nation's governors that his reform plan should be supported was followed by an intense period of negotiation and personal involvement. For example, the President asked Harlow for a list of Democrat leaders, chairmen, and ranking members of each committee in both houses, promising to

telephone each to solicit their opinion and convey the merits of the proposal further.¹⁵⁰ This led to the brokering of political deals with certain Democrats in exchange for the guarantee of support when the bill arrived on the floors of each.

Despite the desire to limit the frequency and availability of contact between the president and senior members of Congress that had risen dramatically under his predecessor, and the dislike of personal interaction with "outsiders," Nixon instituted a series of breakfast meetings with Mansfield designed to increase the communication between the White House and the Democratic leadership. By all accounts they were not especially productive, at times serving more as a "symbolic ritual than a mechanism for leadership".¹⁵¹

Mansfield's Senate management style was relaxed, preferring to allow senators the freedom to debate exhaustively rather than enforce timed debates in the hopes of forcing closure on issues before them. It was unclear whether he would or could supply the votes Nixon wished for. Moreover, Nixon had the tendency to avoid overtly pressing for votes when the situation required direct, uncompromising evaluation of who was with the President and who was not. Former congressional liaison, Bill Timmons, would write "ASK FOR HIS VOTE" on Nixon's talking papers when the President was to meet with members of Congress, but Nixon would not comply. "I think he felt it was somehow demeaning for the president to ask a member for his vote...it was not in his personality to do it," Timmons once remarked.¹⁵² The breakfasts were eventually discontinued.

A similar theme was ascertained from meetings between the President and members of Congress seeking selective benefits through co-operation with Nixon. John Pierson, in an article written for the *Wall Street Journal*, concluded that "Congressmen

have their own competing and parochial interests that make it hard for them to see the big picture. Often when Mr. Nixon has had a group in for a talk, White House staffers complain, the men from Capitol Hill just want to talk about their pet projects-dams or post offices."¹⁵³ Routine meetings with members were highly discouraged, particularly after the ABM and Haynsworth issues, where the President felt that his interaction with Congressmen had become too common and unproductive. Speaking to his liaison staff in late 1969 Nixon emphasized that "I cannot and will not intercede with individual senators in order to enlist their vote for Administration programs. I will see some of them in a group only when the stakes are high and when we feel there is a reasonable chance we can succeed."¹⁵⁴

To avoid contact all together was implausible and, placed in the context of the ambitious domestic reform agenda he proposed, would have been a significant example of political misjudgment. That said, Michael Genovese sums the brevity of contact succinctly, writing that in "each year of his presidency, Nixon's contact with Congress declined. He felt uncomfortable with the back-slapping, hand-holding, persuading element of the relationship, and as time went on he sought other avenues to achieve his policy goals".¹⁵⁵ Nixon's personal reluctance to deal directly with members meant that he constrained the options available to him, particularly as the likelihood of the Plan's successful passage decreased towards the end of 1970.

Public Relations

Instead, Nixon turned to public opinion as a temporary substitute for bargaining. Believing that good public relations would produce a popular president whom members of Congress would follow, he sought to largely bypass the Capitol Hill by taking his message to the public.¹⁵⁶ As noted in the previous chapter, Nixon's rhetoric on the issue of welfare reform was sporadic and simple, incorporating few direct appeals for the public to petition their representative in Washington. Opinion polls in 1969 placed Nixon's popularity at 60 percent to which he suggested, when informed, that these be shown to congressional opponents who would have to change their position because of the rising approval rate.¹⁵⁷ A figure of sixty percent, however, was not likely to scare many members of Congress into compliance; legislative success on other issues was not forthcoming and by 1973 the realization was that the strategy had not worked as intended.

Nixon and the Senate

On March 5th 1970, the Family Assistance bill passed through the House Ways and Means Committee, with the *New York Times* calling it "probably the most significant Congressional victory the Nixon administration has won in its 14 months in office."¹⁵⁸ The motion went to the full House in April, which, with the help of Gerald Ford and Wilbur Mills, voted 243 to 155 in favor of sending it forward to the Senate Finance Committee. The committee, with southern conservatives and liberals unwilling to help, took only two days to refuse to work on the proposal as it stood, requesting that

amendments be made before resubmitting it for consideration. For President Nixon, the delay may have been instrumental in the shift of his focus away from domestic to foreign policy considerations. As it entered its most crucial stage, the bill appeared to lose the interest of its most important supporter.

The resubmission took five weeks and the outlook was poor. Simply stated, whatever momentum had built up in the preceding months was lost by the time the bill finally reappeared in front of the Senate Finance Committee. Nixon himself was at the California White House in San Clemente as the committee deliberated, preferring to let Daniel Patrick Moynihan and John Ehrlichman provide the administration's response.¹⁵⁹

As Moynihan wrote

The onset of Senate hearings should have been perceived by the White House and by HEW [Department of Health, Education and Welfare] as a moment of great danger, requiring the closest attention. It was not. This being the fact, the Administration has to be charged with inattention...a combination of small failings and failures produced an attitude of insufficient concentration on these seventeen [Finance Committee] senators.¹⁶⁰

Whilst Moynihan did not mention the President by name, the lack of attention at such a crucial time probably began with the chief executive and filtered through to the legislative liaison and his staff, creating a leadership vacuum that proved decisive. In all consequence, part of the reason for Nixon's lack of focus was the common knowledge that his first love was foreign rather than domestic policy, and his belief that domestic affairs could be left to the cabinet, freeing the president to conduct a foreign agenda. Joan Hoff reasserts the suggestion that certain liberal domestic policies were submitted to Congress in the hope of placating members critical of Nixon's Vietnam conduct.¹⁶¹

Domestic support would therefore loosely translate into foreign policy support if the equation was to be believed. This would suppose a calculated cost-benefit analysis of the political process that would effectively blur the separation of domestic and foreign initiatives.

A more likely reason is that Nixon, still reeling from the public and congressional outcry over the Cambodia incursion, sought domestic success independently of, rather than in conjunction with, his foreign agenda. Welfare reform occupied President Nixon to the extent that he was willing to expend a significant amount of political capital proposing and legislating it in the hope that his domestic and economic proposals could restore some of the Administration's momentum heading into the off-year elections.

However the passivity that became apparent may have arisen because his interest in welfare reform was necessitated by the need for involvement rather than through a naturally-occurring curiosity in the plight of the poor. John Ehrlichman refers to this, suggesting that "passion issues (busing, school integration) engaged him because they call on his political skills and knowledge. Less emotional questions were too technical or administrative to catch his interest".¹⁶²

In August of 1970, as the revised proposal entered the deliberation stage of the committee's proceedings, Nixon reverted back to the strategy of personal involvement in the matter. Nixon entered into contact with minority Republicans on the Finance Committee in an attempt to gauge the political situation and determine what needed to be done to ensure passage of the proposal. A compromise was reached with Senator Abraham Ribicoff, the leading Democrat on the Committee, concerning the operation of the Plan, with Nixon agreeing to a series of welfare field tests that would be conducted

prior to the widespread implementation of the proposal.¹⁶³

Nixon even engaged in a strategy of selective bargaining, inviting six members of the committee to a State dinner to be held in honor of the Mexican president in San Diego. Two competing accounts of the function exist. According to Moynihan, Nixon took the opportunity at a highly publicized function to lay the Administration's demands on the line. According to the senators present, they talked and he listened, leaving the President with the feeling that he wanted the bill enacted but not badly enough to make them sorry if they didn't report it out.¹⁶⁴ Once again, the impression is received that Nixon was unwilling, or ill at ease, to confront his counterparts with his priorities, preferring instead to acquiesce and allow those present, other than himself, to determine the agenda and the overall tone of the meeting.

By mid-September, the President had virtually given up using personal contact as a method of persuading senators to accept the revised proposal and pass it on to the Senate floor. Numerous senators emphasized the point that Nixon had made little or no attempt to lobby for the bill, save for the occasional gatherings at San Clemente.¹⁶⁵

On October 8, 1970, the Senate Finance Committee voted 14 to 1 against the bill, with all six Republicans joining the majority of Democrats in a coalition opposing the Plan. Even though further amendments and concessions were offered in the subsequent months, this defeat essentially spelled the end of the Family Assistance Plan as proposed by Moynihan and Finch 18 months earlier.

Strategies of Leadership: Bargaining or Control?

The demise of the Family Assistance Plan was hastened by a staunch coalition of politicians willing to unite against a conservative president with a liberal proposal, and the inability of the president to convey the merits of the plan in the face of critics who would denounce it as a guaranteed income. However, Nixon's sporadic endeavors to persuade members of Congress to support him is a fascinating illustration of his penchant for the dramatic and the controversial.

Speeches made prior to sending the bill to Congress heralded welfare reform as the policy that would end the living nightmare of poverty and dependency for millions of hard-working American families. The reality was that once the proposal reached Congress and fell under the scrutiny of hostile politicians, Nixon's desire to see the Family Assistance Plan enacted declined significantly. His reluctance to engage in interpersonal negotiations infuriated his staff and alienated further the figures whose support was needed the most. Publicly condemned inaction was followed by enthusiastic and resolute discussions, and where necessary, concessions, that were designed to speed the passage of the bill through the respective committees. Ultimately, it was all to no avail.

From the analysis elucidated above, it is evident that Richard Nixon, wherever possible, utilized the strategy of bargaining with Congress which was supported by rhetoric urging successive stages of the legislative process to continue the good work of the preceding group. However, such was the infrequency of personal contact with committee members that efforts to encourage co-operation through the provision of

selective incentives, presumably had little or no effect upon individual senators' decisions to oppose the motion. In the House, Nixon's personal involvement in an effort to construct a conservative coalition did appear to have an effect, with the motion making it through committee and the full assembly largely unchanged. However, the evidence to demonstrate that this did indeed occur is at best speculative.

Using the literature that does reflect on Nixon's interaction with Congress, during a first term marked by controversy and confrontation, it can be inferred with certainty that the President did not play hardball politics with the legislature on this issue. This was not the case with the battle over his Supreme Court nominations. Nixon threatened retribution in the form of "opposition in their next primaries, a cutoff of national campaign funds, elimination of public works and grants, and an end to their access to the White House" for Republicans who planned to vote against his choice for the vacant seat.¹⁶⁶ It is plausible to suggest that such antagonistic threats would remain in the minds of Republicans when they were faced with voting on the welfare reform bill later in the year, but whether they would remain a deterrent or would encourage retaliatory voting is unclear.

Conclusion

The notion of "skill in context" relies on the premise that leaders such as President Nixon employ their political skills in a manner that they deem to be the most effective methods of achieving a specific goal. From the evidence that exists pertaining to the performance of the Family Assistance Plan as it wound its way through Congress, it would be unfair to unduly criticize Nixon's poor legislative skills. Using one's skills in a

political context supposes that the leader enters the arena and actively participates in the deliberation that ensues. The experience of the welfare reform proposal was highlighted by Nixon's general continual reluctance to involve himself personally with members of Congress and, when the crucial votes were needed, to engage in compromise and negotiation.

Therefore, it is difficult to assess Nixon's bargaining performance because his participation was so infrequent and, particularly towards the conclusion of the Senate's Finance Committee debate when the outcome was not likely to be favorable, half-hearted. The Family Assistance Plan, an idea ahead of its time, was thus doomed to failure in the Finance Committee even before it reached the Senate, based on the gradual decline of the President's interest in the issue.

Conclusion:

Richard Nixon and the Family Assistance Plan

This thesis set out to examine how personality and context combine to influence political behavior in a given situation. Using as a case study Richard Nixon and his role in the welfare reform deliberations over the period from 1969 until 1971, I studied four areas: his character, his discernment of the political climate, his rhetoric and, finally, his interpersonal relations with members of Congress.

Earlier, I depicted several consistently recurring character traits possessed by Richard Nixon. From even an early age, Nixon exhibited a strong desire to learn and equip himself with the knowledge required to succeed in academic and political life. From his formative years, in which he learnt to read before attending elementary school, to his pinnacle as the pre-eminent foreign policy statesman in the 1960s and 1970s, Nixon's psyche is a study in determination and hard work.

However, the positive aspects of Nixon's personality were often overshadowed by a darker side; one that was latched onto by his many critics and that continues to be the subject of new exposes, such as Anthony Summers's recent book, *The Arrogance of Power*. Summers presents an intellectual man whose quest for power and love of intrigue belied a fragile ego characterized by deep-seated bouts of depression, paradoxical inhibitions and emotional reticence. The struggles his family faced in surviving the Depression and the death of two children, the disappointment of not being able to accept an Ivy League scholarship, the modest living that the naval and legal careers had afforded him, gave rise to expressions that "he would get his."

Several of the reasons for adopting the Family Assistance Plan as the vehicle for ensuring change were admirable: reducing the number of working families in poverty, leveling out the inconsistencies in benefits eligibility, and affording many the opportunity to train for new careers. Others believed that underlying the proposal was a feeling that by radically altering the way welfare was administered, the numbers of middle-class, Democratic-administration holdover, bureaucrats that the President despised, would be significantly reduced. Couched in less antagonistic appeals, the message was the same: that Nixon could claim a historical first by ending poverty for millions of working-class Americans (thus achieving a milestone that neither of his Democratic predecessors could lay claim to) and spare many families these same indignities that his own family experienced a generation ago.

Despite this, Nixon's attempt at cultural leadership largely disintegrated in the face of mounting criticism from both left and right. Accusations that the state would be counteracting the cherished ideals of self-reliance and economic individualism with a "guaranteed income" came from conservatives, while liberals in the media, Congress, the executive branch and many interest groups thought that the proposal did not go far enough in addressing the situation. The public reaction was mixed. While a sizeable majority of the surveyed public in one 1969 poll thought that there were "too many people receiving welfare," other polls indicated that a minimum income for working families was not terribly popular.

From the material gathered in the chapters that precede this conclusion, it is evident that the forum in which President Nixon had most involvement was in speechwriting and speechmaking. Although little evidence exists that describes how the

major welfare reform speeches were constructed, it can be inferred that they probably followed the usual laborious process with drafts of speeches being sent back and forth between the President and his writers. If, as with most policy speeches, this was indeed the case, Nixon would have had a significant influence on the final wording and emphasis of his messages.

President Nixon had greatest control over his speeches to specific audiences, rather than to the public or members of Congress. Typically, he wrote these messages rather than one of his speechwriters. As such, they possessed the most significant indications of how Nixon's personality and experiences factored into his thought process. For example, many messages contained elements of "them" and "us," with "them" being those unwilling to work and "us" being hard-working families (a respect for whom was probably borne out of the effort Nixon himself directed towards improving his position in society and in the eyes of others) who were prevented from leaving poverty by the existing benefits system.

The speeches also reflected Nixon's distrust of elitist bureaucrats, his own feelings of inadequacy for being unable to help his family during the economic and medical crises of his formative years, and an appeal to different constituencies, similar to the silent majority who were deemed to support his Vietnam policy. Thus, the majority of his welfare reform speeches relied on the teaching of reality to communicate the message. Frequently, the text and style of the President's speeches reflected his poor upbringing (and especially the experience of living in poverty during the Depression); empathy with those families in situations similar to his own was mixed with damning assessments of the present welfare system.

Although President Nixon had the opportunity to meet with members of Congress and argue in support of his legislation, the evidence suggests that he engaged in few personal appeals, giving the impression that he was "above" the work needed to convince others to support his administration's policies. Up until 1970, President Nixon delegated considerable authority to his legislative liaison, Bryce Harlow, whose experience and familiarity with Congress often made up for Nixon's reticence.

Examples of presidential interactions with congressional representatives are few; Nixon did pledge to telephone each of the Democratic leaders in the House to personally ask for their support for the Family Assistance Plan and held breakfast meetings with the Senate Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield, but without notable success. The President even discouraged members of his administration from meeting with members of Congress. Fearing he would be viewed as weak, Nixon refrained from asking for votes or trading favors. At the time of the full House vote on the Family Assistance Plan took place, Nixon was not even in Washington. His off-on involvement in speaking directly to members of Congress, and reluctance to allow others to speak on his behalf, was not received well by Republican Congressmen; charges that the Administration permitted the fading proposal to die without a serious challenge were well-founded.

The model of political leadership used to structure the case study of Richard Nixon and the Family Assistance Plan has, as presented on the previous three pages, yielded some interesting conclusions. It is apparent that Nixon's character impacted his behavior in such a way that it contributed significantly to the failure of FAP. The model also permits scholars to understand further the link between character, the environment and political outcomes. On a more general note, the model implies that the most

important skill available to political leaders is that of the ability to discern what action history and society will permit. A failure to do so will likely result in defeat. Furthermore, it heralds the importance of character as a predictor of political success, especially in situations where the president is able to impress his personality on the task at hand.

Naturally, the model also raises questions, several of which are discussed in brief below and on the following pages.

Introducing the model, Erwin Hargrove states that "to be successful, presidents must use skills and embrace goals that are congruent with the historical context."¹⁶⁷ However, measures of success typically differ from one president to the next, and rely on multiple factors (the margin of victory in the election, which party controls Congress, the president's skills and character, the economy and the issues that dominate society. Is it possible for modern-day presidents to unify the fragmented publics and interests that exist and consistently achieve transformational success?

Breaking it down further, this is even more difficult in domestic policy; transformational leadership has occurred very rarely (usually at times of internal economic or military crises). Without these opportunities, it is difficult to envisage when transformational leadership will occur (even though proposing a plan that would largely eradicate poverty in the United States, President Nixon could not overcome opposition from multiple sources). Does this mean that future leaders require greater skills of rhetoric, persuasion and discernment to succeed or that the bar by which we determine success should be lowered?

Secondly, Hargrove discusses the strategies of bargaining versus control as two independent methods for achieving success. However, and as noted earlier, the existence

of pure strategies of control in a democracy is highly debatable (the veto and executive orders being two of the closest). Implicitly, both bargaining and control are used frequently in conjunction; for example, the threat of a presidential veto will often preclude a reassessment of each parties' respective positions and possibly force a compromise. Over time, presidents may prefer to conduct executive-legislative relations by favoring one method, but that the explicit use of one requires that the other strategy be also available.

Finally, the model sets out that character is a skill and is of greater value to presidents that often believed to be the case, and that the model of political leadership itself is a "theory at rest." Further research would take the components (character, cultural leadership, teaching reality and skill in context) and study whether there are similar situations/issues in which one component can determine the outcome, over the other three. For example, is culture always dominant? Can a highly skilled leader with the ability to discern the environment changed an entrenched culture or norm? In the long-term, this is surely difficult. Expressed differently; in a situation in which society is strongly in favor of the existing tradition, how often could a leader, even with a strong democratic character and the ability to cross partisan lines through public appeals and excellent bargaining skills, transform the public will and lead the nation into a new era?

The hypothesis elucidated in the opening chapters derived from the work of Fred Greenstein. It proposed that Richard Nixon's personal character traits would most likely be reflected through the expressive aspects of leadership with which he had most personal involvement. In the case of the President's rhetoric, this is supported. Nixon had close involvement in the writing of speeches and messages to the public, Congress and specific

audiences and both the style and themes of the rhetoric reflected his character and lifelong experiences.

With regard to relations with members of Congress, it can be concluded that President Nixon did not have a significant involvement in interpersonal relations; however, several of his personal character traits, in particular the tendency towards isolation and emotional reticence, prevented Nixon from appealing directly for members' votes in face-to-face meetings. As such, both Democrat and Republican senators, who would normally be willing to support the president in return for assistance with pet projects, formed a coalition that ultimately defeated the original Family Assistance Plan. As such, the hypothesis is not supported (especially as the strategy is less expressive) but it is certainly appropriate to infer that the President's character impacted his level of involvement (it decreased it significantly).

Although a revised Family Assistance Plan did make it through Congress at the end of President Nixon's first term, a lot of the momentum had been lost and the package lacked the spirit of the original Plan. For the Nixon Administration, the opportunity to change the face of welfare had disappeared.

Endnotes:

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- ⁶ Hargrove, Erwin. 1998. *The President as Leader: Appealing to the Better Angels of our Nature* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas) 2.
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- ⁹ Rost, Joseph. 1991. *Leadership for the 21st Century* (New York: Praeger).
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- ¹¹ Burns, James MacGregor. 1978. *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row) 23.
- ¹² Tulis, Jeffrey. 1987. *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 3-23.
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- ²³ Greenstein, Fred. 1987. *Personality and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press) xi.
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- ²⁵ Gould, Lewis. 1993. *1968: The Election That Changed America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee).
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- ³⁵ Knowles, Henry P. and Borje O. Saxberg. 1971. *Personality and Leadership Behavior* (Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley) 14.
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- ⁵⁰ Shogan, Robert. 2000. *The Double-Edged Sword: How Character Makes and Ruins Presidents, From Washington to Clinton* (Boulder: Westview Press) 133.
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- ⁷⁸ Ibid. 6-14.
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Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Overall GPA: 3.85/4.0

Master of Arts, Political Science
1997-1999

❖ *Thesis title:* Personality and Political Leadership Explored: Richard Nixon and the Family Assistance Plan

University of Leeds, England
Class: 2:1

**Bachelor of Arts, Economics, Politics
and North American Studies**
1993-1997

Pennsylvania State University
Overall GPA: 3.3/4.0

One Year Exchange
None-degree Program
1995-1996

Previous Work Experience

The Corporate Executive Board (Washington, D.C.), *Lead Research Associate* July 2000 to Present

- Maintain a pool of 25 member companies with more than \$1 million in annual revenue
- Establish, direct and edit approximately 10 short-answer research projects per week
- Work with Director of Custom Research to map statistics and staffing information for department
- Lead and participate in departmental initiatives such as database management, succession planning, knowledge management and information systems improvement
- Formulate and carry-out training of new research staff across the company
- Identify and upload research to the company web site

The Corporate Executive Board, *Research Associate* July 1999 to July 2000

- Researched, synthesized and designed reports for membership of *Fortune* 500 human resources executives
- Used internal and external databases to compile literature packs and author executive summaries

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, August 1997 to June 1999
Department of Political Science, *Graduate Teaching Assistant*

Taught classes in American Government and Comparative Politics

- Graded papers and exams for undergraduate students
- Used software database programs to compile and analyze grades

Additional Experience

New River Rapids Junior Soccer Coach
Department of Political Science, Graduate Student Assembly Representative
University of Leeds-Penn State University Exchange Representative

Blacksburg, VA 9/98-6/99
Blacksburg, VA 9/98-6/99
State College, PA 9/95-6/96

Skills

- Received a Regional Coaching Diploma from the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (1999)
- Computer skills include the following programs on both Macintosh and PCs: Microsoft Word, Outlook and Excel; Lexis-Nexis, Dow Jones Interactive, HTML, SPSS, Dreamweaver and other windows and web-based applications