Richard M. Nixon at the Bar of History:
Oral History and the Four Schools of Watergate Thought

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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October 2014
Abstract

Although it is generally accepted that the presidency of Richard Milhous Nixon broke down as a result of the Watergate Affair (1972–1974), there is no definitive consensus on the causes of the Watergate break-in or the extent of Nixon’s role in the scandal. This study investigates the various ways significant Watergate actors and prominent observers of the drama perceived and assigned meaning to Watergate and the Nixon presidency’s role behind it by examining the recorded views of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library Oral History Project.

The Nixon Library interviewed 141 participants between 2006 and 2011, including Nixon administration officials, politicians during the Nixon era, officials from other presidential administrations, media and entertainment figures, and Nixon’s family and friends. As a data source, the Nixon Library’s oral history collection contained the most current and widespread compilation of views about Nixon, his presidency and Watergate, open to the public at the commencement of this research. Since many of the participants involved in the project passed away shortly after being interviewed, the examination of these materials allowed for the assessment of the last words they publicly stated on the topic of the affair, and reflect on how their views of Watergate have evolved over time. As these oral histories had not been studied in depth before, their analysis provided an opportunity to obtain invaluable insight into the lasting legacy of the Watergate Affair, permitting me to outline fresh and original perspectives on the event decades after it occurred.

Through the synthesis and organisation of the various themes within Watergate’s historiography, this research outlines the development of a new theoretical framework to examine the meanings behind the Watergate Affair—a lens categorising differing views into four schools of thought. These schools are distinguished by their perception of the causes of the Watergate scandal and Nixon’s role in the affair, and have been characterised as: Nixon at Centre, Power and Personality, Precedent and Context, and Nixon as Victim. This framework was used as an analytical tool to examine the Nixon Library’s oral histories. This resulted in the development of the four competing narratives outlined and discussed in this thesis, ultimately suggesting that the history and meaning of Watergate continues to be contested four decades after Nixon’s resignation.
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Signed: ....................

Krystle Gatt

Dated: October 2014
Acknowledgements

This research was funded by an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA).

I would like to thank the staff of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum for their assistance in getting this project off the ground by directing me to their Oral History Collection. In particular I am grateful to Meghan Lee-Parker, Melissa Heddon, Craig Ellefson, Pamla Eisenberg, Ira Pemstein, Yoli Gonzalez, Ryan Pettigrew, Jason Schultz and Dr Timothy Naftali for their kindness and support whilst visiting the library. I would also like to thank Gloria Newell, Karen Hibbitt and Toni Short for welcoming me into their homes whilst conducting my research in the United States. You were all gracious hosts, and I will always think of my time in California and Washington D.C with fondness because of your thoughtfulness and generosity.

To my colleagues and staff at RMIT University who have provided endless assistance, I sincerely thank you for always making yourselves available to lend an ear and help me navigate my way through my PhD journey. Rohan Davis, Kim Hong Tran, Lee Kofman, Kate Phelan, Anita Samardzija, Jessie Pomeroy, David Trainham, Kath Lynch, Brian Walsh, Pavla Miller and Suellen Murray never once turned me away in a moment of PhD induced crisis, which is testament to their unfaltering integrity as collegial scholars.

To my dear friends and family who have read sections of this thesis, helped me develop my skills, and have been a limitless source of stimulation and reassurance—Sara Kingston, Carina Nandial, Fiona Pace, Kat Daly, Claire Miller, Belinda Tamburro, Brad and Tarryn Abraham, Brad Astbury, Kenneth and Catherine Gatt—thank you for your support in shaping and steering the direction of the work with your careful and instructive comments and kind encouragement. Many thanks to Dr Diane Brown and Dr Angela Dipasquale for assisting me to copyedit this thesis. Angela, the skill you have instilled in me during our time working together will surely last me a lifetime. I truly thank you.

Robert Cugno, it was you who planted the PhD seed in my mind all those years ago. Thank you for believing in me at such an early stage in my academic career, and always being there to guide me whenever I called on you for support.
Michael Benes, I could not have asked for a nobler, more intelligent, motivating, or caring mentor. You have always been my biggest supporter, and I can safely say I would not be the person I am today if it were not for your attentiveness, unwavering support and true friendship. I have learned so much from you, and I am eternally grateful.

I am indebted to my supervisors, Dr Binoy Kampmark and Professor Joseph Siracusa. It is certain that I would not have begun a PhD if it were not for Joe’s suggestion and belief in me from the very beginning. Binoy, I am extremely thankful for all the time you made for me to provide intellectual discussion. I am especially appreciative of the encouragement, direction, editing and advice you have both provided, towards the completion of my PhD. Together you have made an invaluable contribution to this thesis and to my development as a researcher.

To my mother Doris, and my father Denis—who have never failed to show their love and express their pride in me—I could not have achieved all that I have if it were not for the numerous sacrifices you have made throughout my life. The quality of my life and the opportunities I have been afforded are a testament to your decision to move to Australia to provide a better life for your children, at the expense of your own happiness, stability, and the loving families you left behind. I cannot thank you enough.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks goes to my partner, Mark Rapa, who apart from being my harshest critic, never hesitated to voice his firm belief that I had the skill and determination to succeed. Mark, you were always there to listen, empathise, care for me, and help me celebrate every milestone associated with this long and sometimes painful endeavour. But more importantly, it was your optimism, drive, ambition, and ‘never give up’ attitude you exemplify and embrace in your life, that showed me I could live my dreams, as you do, every day. You are an inspiration to me and everyone around you.
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Summary

Although it is generally accepted that the presidency of Richard Milhous Nixon broke down as a result of the Watergate Affair (1972–1974), there is no definitive consensus on the causes of the Watergate break-in or the extent of Nixon’s role in the affair. This study seeks to investigate the various ways significant Watergate actors and prominent observers of the drama perceive and assign meaning to the affair and the Nixon presidency, by examining the views of the subjects of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library Oral History Project. The Nixon Library interviewed 141 participants between 2006 and 2011, including Nixon administration officials, politicians during the Nixon era, officials from other presidential administrations, media and entertainment figures, as well as Nixon’s family and friends. As a data source, the Nixon Library’s Oral History collection contained the most current and widespread compilation of views about Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate. The collection was open to the public at the commencement of this research.

Since many of the participants involved in the project passed away shortly after being interviewed, the examination of these materials allowed for the assessment of the last words some Watergate actors and observers had publicly stated on the topic of the affair, and reflect on how their views of Watergate have evolved or changed over time. Furthermore, considering the Oral Histories had not been studied in depth before, the analysis of these interviews provided the opportunity to obtain invaluable insight into the lasting legacy of the Watergate Affair, permitting me to outline fresh perspectives on Watergate decades after it occurred, and make an original contribution to knowledge in the area of Watergate studies.

One of the major advantages that oral history research has over other data collection methods, such as archival research, is its ability to capture information, such as personal insights or anecdotes rarely found in official documents, thus providing the ability to tap into raw perspectives. Newspaper articles, speeches, and government documents may reveal significant and useful information, but these sources often neglect more personal and private experiences. Given this research project’s aim to develop knowledge about how major Watergate actors and well-known observers of the scandal view and understand the Watergate Affair, the examination of oral history is well suited to this research.
In the introduction I seek to contextualise this thesis by narrating a factual overview of Watergate that displays the specific ‘high crimes and misdemeanours’ in which the Richard Nixon presidential administration was involved, as well as the legislative and cultural affect that Watergate had in the United States and internationally. This portrayal will open up the discussion to be outlined in the remainder of the thesis, as it recounts specific events that research participants accentuate or understate in their respective Watergate storytelling.

Chapter one describes the research process undertaken in this study, including a review of the literature examining the topics of Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate. This discussion outlines the development of a new theoretical framework to examine the Watergate Affair—a lens which categorises differing views into four schools of thought. These schools are distinguished by their view of the causes of the Watergate scandal and Nixon’s role in the affair, and thus have been characterised as: Nixon at Centre, Power and Personality, Precedent and Context, and Nixon as Victim. This chapter also summarises the scope and data collection process undertaken by the Nixon Library in their efforts to gather oral histories, as well as the data analysis process I undertook. The following chapters present the findings from the analysis of the research questions, using the procedures outlined in the above discussion. Chapters two to five contain a discussion of the narratives which emerged for each school of Watergate thought from the data analysis process.

Chapter two examines the views of those who place Nixon at the centre of Watergate, highlighting his role as the primary cause of the affair. These oral history participants argue that Nixon possessed negative personality traits that stimulated his desire for political intelligence, and resulted in him setting a tone for his administration that encouraged misconduct, which constituted a consistent pattern of malfeasance that spawned throughout his entire presidency. Those who see Nixon as Watergate’s central agent contend one can understand Nixon’s disposition by analysing his upbringing and personal history. It is the connection that has been made between Nixon’s persona and the downfall of his presidency that is at the heart of this school’s Watergate rationale.

To explain the cause of the Watergate scandal, proponents of the Nixon at Centre view point to ‘Dead Mouse Theory’, a premise considered in detail for the first time in this research. This notion argues that Nixon’s lack of trust, affinity for control, and negative views of the bureaucracy led the Nixon administration to choose expediency over process, and employ
loyal inexperienced youth to carry out tasks. This effort resulted in the Nixon administration’s old political hands being eased out of the White House, leaving those that remained to vie for Nixon’s attention and generate more power for themselves in the administration by giving Nixon exactly what he wanted.

Chapter three discusses the insights of contributors to the Oral History Project, who see Watergate as an abuse of power, arguing that the examination of how and where Nixon obtained his presidential power must be taken into account, rather than simply focusing on why he may have chosen to misuse such power. While Nixon’s actions are still seen as important to understanding why Watergate occurred, this view is coupled with the examination of the accruement of presidential power since the end of WWII, thus emphasising the connection between power and personality. Yet, although Watergate is depicted as an attempt by Nixon to subvert the Constitution and the American system of government, it has also been portrayed as an inevitable and necessary test of political power, to assess the resilience of the system, whilst establishing what the people will tolerate, and what the role of the presidency should be in relation to other branches of government. Considering this school’s views have been a dominant part of the way Watergate has been perceived for decades, the themes raised by such proponents are largely not innovative.

Chapter four assesses the way those who attempt to give a broader perspective to the analysis of the Nixon presidency understand the Watergate Affair. These interviewees ultimately seek to debunk Watergate myths via the consideration of precedents laid for Nixon by past presidents, and providing context for Watergate within the Nixon presidency, arguing that the actions of Nixon and his administration were not pioneering in terms of their venality and gravity. In seeking a refined view of Nixon, his presidency and Watergate; this cohort rejects generalisations and highlights how past characterisations have been exaggerated or distorted, whilst striving to provide a more realistic view of human nature and the presidency. In this sense, Watergate is seen as the product of the lack of understanding that existed within the Nixon White House and the nation about the type of person Nixon was, the way he operated as president, and the administration he created.

The ‘Devil’s Advocate Theory’ is cited as a causal factor for Watergate, and is an original contribution of this research to the field of Watergate inquiry, with a view that Nixon attempted to elicit competing responses from his staff to generate debate and weigh up all
of the available options before making a decision. It is argued that the failure of some to see both sides of Nixon’s personality, the good and the bad, led to inappropriate operations within the Nixon administration as his staff carried out orders when they thought the president had made a decision about a problem, when in fact those that knew him knew he was just tossing around ideas. The views of this school are becoming more popular as the animosity towards Nixon and his presidency has begun to fade. Prior to this study, as a group, their Watergate narrative has not been noted in depth.

Chapter five delves into the views of oral history participants who have sought to de-emphasise the role of Nixon in the Watergate Affair. They do so by looking at the actions of actors other than Nixon and groups outside the Nixon administration who have played a role in bringing it about. Those who may be seen to steer away from Nixon’s role in the Watergate scandal draw on the ‘Berlin Wall’ concept to highlight the causes of Watergate. This theory is outlined in a novel way within this thesis, highlighting the view that Nixon did not have ultimate control or authority over his administration, and that rogue decision making existed in the Nixon White House, which led to Nixon’s downfall. Those who see Nixon as a victim promote the rogue operation view. They argue that Watergate can best be explained by examining the motivations of Nixon’s presidential aides who broke into the Watergate Complex without any presidential authority. As a consequence, this category of Watergate insiders and observers move the scandal as far away from Nixon as possible. They depict the affair in a way that does not stem from Nixon’s attitudes or the culture or structure he created for his White House and administration.

This thesis concludes with an overview of this study’s original findings, reflecting on what the Nixon Library Oral History Project tells us about perceptions of Watergate and Nixon’s role in the affair. The competing views outlined in this thesis show that the history and meaning of Watergate continue to be contested four decades after Nixon’s resignation.
Introduction: What is Watergate?

On Tuesday November 5th 1968, Richard Milhous Nixon won the 46th quadrennial presidential election, carrying 32 states with 43.42% of the popular vote,\(^1\) making him the 37th President of the United States. Nixon came to power during one of the most divisive years in American history. The Vietnam War had reached a fatal peak, with 16,500 American soldiers killed by the end of 1968—almost twice as many as the previous year.\(^2\) Compulsory conscription was fostering antiwar sentiment among the nation’s youth, and the protest movement had gained momentum with violent demonstrations erupting on college campuses. 1968 saw the assassinations of African American civil rights leader, Dr Martin Luther King, and Democratic presidential candidate, Senator Robert F. Kennedy—only five years after his brother, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Additionally, race riots and arson broke out in several US major cities, including the nation’s capital, lasting days. The feminist and environmental movements were also beginning to force many to question their beliefs. For those watching these events on television, it would seem as if the entire social fabric of the country was unravelling at a frightening speed.\(^3\) It had become clear that Americans were fighting a war on two fronts, in Vietnam and on the nation’s streets.

But the social and political upheaval of 1968, in response to the war and civil rights concerns, was not confined to the US, but spread to Paris, Berlin, London and Mexico City.\(^4\) The year was also marked by North Korea seizing a US Navy ship, the Pueblo, and Russian tanks rolling into Prague, crushing Czechoslovakia’s brief flirtation with democracy. It is within this historical context that we see both the rise and fall of the Nixon presidency.

On August 9th 1974, standing on his Air Force One helicopter, the 37th President gave the onlooking crowd ‘one last shot’, waving peace signs in both hands in true Nixon fashion. With that final gesture Richard Nixon waved goodbye to his staff, family, friends, and the world. That day has been etched in American history as the first and only time a US president had resigned from office, making it “a landmark event in US political history”, and a defining

\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
moment for the nation. The Watergate Affair, the political scandal which led Nixon to this end, would forever be remembered as the most devastating and widespread case of political wrongdoing the American public had endured in the 20th century. The saga began in the early morning hours of June 17 1972, when five men hired by Nixon’s Re-election Committee, equipped with electronic bugging devices, were arrested at the Democratic Party’s National Headquarters at the Watergate Complex in Washington, DC. Nixon involved himself in a conspiracy to cover-up these offences, which resulted in his abusing his presidential power and obstructing justice. Throughout the course of the next two years information would surface that would link the Watergate break-in and cover-up to a wide array of misconduct spanning the entire Nixon presidency. Facing the inevitability of impeachment by the House Judiciary Committee and subsequent trial in the Senate, Nixon chose to step down from his presidential role.

In the following discussion, I seek to contextualise this thesis by narrating a factual overview of Watergate that displays the specific ‘high crimes and misdemeanours’ in which Richard Nixon’s presidential administration was involved, as well as the legislative and cultural effects Watergate had in the United States. This portrayal will open up the analysis to be outlined in the remainder of the thesis.

**Dealing with political opponents**

Nixon’s approach to dealing with political opponents developed during the early phases of his political career. Prior to assuming the role of President of the United States, Nixon had already displayed a competitive streak whilst campaigning for political office, which led him to use unconventional methods to ensure he was elected. For example, in 1945 Nixon campaigned for Congress, contending that his opponent, Jerry Voorhis, had radical views and was ineffective as a Congressman, as a result of being endorsed by a group linked to Communists. Nixon won the election, receiving 65,586 votes to Voorhis’ 49,994. Similarly, when Nixon ran for the United States Senate in 1949 against Helen Gahagan Douglas, attention was drawn to her liberal voting record, this time by Nixon’s campaign staff. They

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distributed Douglas’ ballot slip (a ‘Pink Sheet’) contending she had a voting record similar to that of New York Congressman, Vito Marcantonio, believed to be a communist. Suggesting that Douglas and Marcantonio’s political views must be identical,\(^9\) Nixon won the election by almost 20 percentage points.\(^{10}\)

The first time that Nixon had used such tactics during a presidential election was in 1968, when his campaign staff set out to sabotage President Lyndon Johnson’s Paris peace negotiations on the Vietnam War. Anna Chennault, an Asian-American politician of the Republican Party, arranged a secret meeting in New York between South Vietnamese Ambassador, Bui Diem and Nixon, resulting in a message being passed on to Saigon that an incoming Republican administration would offer them a better deal than a Democratic one.\(^{11}\) By the time of the election in November, Johnson had evidence that Nixon sabotaged the Vietnam War peace talks. After catching wind of the Nixon campaign’s tactics, Johnson ordered the FBI to place them under surveillance and to bug the ambassador’s phone, which produced transcripts of Chennault’s calls, telling the ambassador to “just hang on through [the] election”. Johnson sent a message to Nixon through a Republican Senate leader telling him to back off, “as his subterfuge amounted to treason”; yet publicly Nixon suggested he had “no idea why the South Vietnamese withdrew from the talks” and “offered to travel to Saigon to get them back to the negotiating table”. Johnson felt it was the “ultimate expression of political hypocrisy”.\(^{12}\)

Although Johnson had evidence of Nixon’s “treason”, he did not bring this information to the public’s attention as he feared it would “require revealing the FBI was bugging the ambassador’s phone and the National Security Agency (NSA) was intercepting his communications with Saigon”.\(^{13}\) The South Vietnamese withdrew from the talks on the eve of the election, disrupting the peace initiative upon which the Democrats based their campaign. Nixon then brought his campaign home by suggesting the Democrat’s war policy was in shambles, considering they were unable to simply get the South Vietnamese to the

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\(^{10}\) Irwin Gelman, *The Contender*, 335.


\(^{13}\) Johnson expressed this fear in calls recorded with his defense secretary, Clark Clifford. In Taylor, *The Lyndon Johnson Tapes*. 

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negotiating table. Nixon won the election by less than 1% of the popular vote.\textsuperscript{14} Perhaps confirming Nixon’s culpability, it has been noted that “one of the first things he ordered upon assuming the presidency was an investigation into the Johnson administration”. In 1969 Nixon instructed his presidential aide, Tom Huston to “go through the ‘Diem cables’ to find out any information that may be damaging” to him. Huston’s work was labelled the ‘bomb study’ and looked at Johnson’s handling of negotiations with the Vietnamese throughout 1968, as Nixon was interested in what they knew about “his campaign contact with Chennault”.\textsuperscript{15}

Apart from the ambitious attitude Nixon displayed during his second campaign for president, political intelligence gathering was also a constant theme throughout the Nixon presidency. Only a few weeks after Nixon was inaugurated as President (January 20th 1969), it was decided the White House should establish an in-house investigative capability that could be used to obtain sensitive political information, stemming from “Nixon’s belief that he could no longer rely on the domestic information gathering arms of the government”.\textsuperscript{16} After Nixon consulted with his Chief of Staff, Harry Robbins (HR) Haldeman, and his Special Assistant for Domestic Affairs, John Ehrlichman, the job was given to former New York City Police Department (NYPD) officer, Jack Caulfield, who had been assigned to the security detail of candidate Nixon during the 1960 and 1968 presidential elections.\textsuperscript{17} Caulfield joined Ehrlichman’s staff as a White House employee in April 1969, and was tasked with setting up an “investigative resource” that “would be quite separate from the FBI, CIA, or Secret Service”.\textsuperscript{18}

Under direction, Caulfield hired his former NYPD colleague, Anthony Ulasewicz, as an employee to supervise solely as a private investigator. Ulasewicz was given orders directly from Nixon via Ehrlichman, communicated through Caulfield, and was put on a verbal year contract at $22,000, paid to him by Nixon’s private attorney, Herbert W. Kalmbach, out of “a

\textsuperscript{14} Taylor, The Lyndon Johnson Tapes.
\textsuperscript{16} Anthony Ulasewicz. The President’s Private Eye: The Journey of Detective Tony Ulasewicz from NYPD to the Nixon White House (Westport: MACSAM, 1990), 176.
\textsuperscript{18} Ulasewicz, The President’s Private Eye, 176.
war chest of unspent Nixon campaign funds”.

Ulasevich was ordered to keep everything from the White House, including his first assignment. This entailed posing as a reporter to investigate the Chappaquiddick incident involving Senator Edward Kennedy and the death of his date for the evening, Mary Joe Kopechne, after her car plunged off a bridge.

Investigating the Senator would prove to be routine practice for the Nixon administration. On June 23rd 1971, in a meeting with Haldeman, President Nixon ordered round-the-clock surveillance of Kennedy to “get him in a compromising situation”.

On another occasion a White House aide organised for a Secret Service official to be planted on the Kennedy campaign and report back to the White House. These efforts were also paid for out of a special campaign fund.

Thereafter Ulasevich crisscrossed the country investigating whoever the president or his subordinates thought were proper targets for information, among them Democrats George Wallace, Hubert Humphrey, Edmund Muskie, Vance Hartke, William Proxmire, Carl Albert, and Republicans John Ashbrook and Paul McCloskey, antiwar groups, entertainers, think-tanks, reporters, even members of Nixon’s own family.

The investigative zeal of Nixon in his search for political information was not habitual. From May 1969 to February 1971, the Nixon White House “initiated FBI wiretaps without a court order on three journalists and 14 individuals on the National Security Council staff, in the State Department and on the White House staff”.

Although these taps were initially executed out of growing concern for national security leaks, they morphed into the collection of information used as political leverage. The wiretap transcripts reviewed by the staff of the House Impeachment Inquiry showed an abundance of information about people’s private

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19 Mountain State University, *In Their Own Words*.

20 Ibid.


22 Alexander Butterfield, assistant to Nixon’s Chief of Staff, Haldeman, would obtain weekly reports from Senator Edward Kennedy’s chauffeur. This information was passed on to Haldeman. In Alexander Butterfield’s recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 12th, 2008.


lives and conduct. Inquiry staff member, Richard Gill, noted that the information which showed up in Haldeman’s “Political Matters Memorandum”, was essentially a collection of information, used by the Nixon administration for their own political advantage. A Senate investigation later determined that “two of the wiretapped White House staffers were domestic advisers who did not have access to classified materials, and in at least one case, the wiretaps on the NSC staff continued long after the individual had left government service”. Consequently, the listening devices administered by the Nixon White House may be considered illegal, as only wiretaps for national security purposes are permissible without a court order. It is interesting to note “it was later ruled by the Supreme Court in a separate case that ‘warrantless’ national security wiretaps, without the courts permission, violated the United States Constitution”. Yet, this legislation was relaxed under the US Patriot Act of 2001.

Caulfield was involved in at least two of these attempts to carry out illegal electronic surveillance on people Nixon considered could do him political harm. The first occasion was in June 1969, when Caulfield placed a wiretap on the telephone of newspaper writer, Joseph Kraft. Caulfield employed former FBI agent, Jack Ragan, to carry out this task. The following year he was involved in the electronic surveillance of Nixon’s nephew, F. Donald Nixon. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Nixon ordered the wiretaps, his taped conversations show that he knew they were being executed.

Arguably, the most pressing issue Nixon would have to deal with as head of state was the nation’s continued involvement in the Vietnam War. This was creating strong divisions among the population. Nixon’s ascension to power occurred within a national context of protest marches, civil disobedience, and a growing distrust of the governmental apparatus and the military, which led to the emergence of a counterculture among the nation’s youth that continued up to the early 1970s. The level and frequency of violent protest in the country,

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26 Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.
28 Ibid.
30 Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.
32 Terry H. Anderson. The Movement and the Sixties: Protest from America from Greensboro to
particularly in Washington, DC, as well as a spike in domestic bomb threats, resulted in President Nixon seeking to further increase domestic intelligence gathering via the ‘Huston Plan’, which he briefly authorised in July 1970. This operation permitted the intelligence community to conduct more domestic spying without a court order, but was cancelled after a week due to resistance from Nixon’s Attorney General, John N. Mitchell, and the Director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover. This incident effectively eroded the President’s assurance that the FBI would act to protect the nation against what was considered to be radical opposition to the war. It also gave the impression that from that day forth the Nixon administration would need to act to protect itself against dangerous opponents.

One event would prove vital in setting the Nixon security machine into full motion. On June 13th 1971, the New York Times published top secret documents, which came to be known as the Pentagon Papers. These recounted America’s involvement in the Vietnam War from 1945 through 1967. This national security leak was orchestrated by Daniel Ellsberg, who served as a Pentagon analyst in the Johnson administration and came to oppose the war. The release of these top secret documents had a dramatic effect on Nixon and the staff in the White House. “There was a mood of panic and despair”. Nixon was genuinely alarmed by the fact that “there could be a wholesale breakdown in their security system”, through the exposure of CIA assets and national security contingency plans, such as growing relationships between the United States and the Soviet Union and China.

The Nixon administration felt it was necessary to fight the issue of the Pentagon Papers leak legally, and in the court of public opinion. Although attempts were made to halt their disclosure, the Supreme Court ruled that the federal government had no legal right to prevent their publication. As a result, Nixon’s Special Assistant for Public Liaison, Charles Colson, who had been supervising ‘Black Operations’ to damage Nixon’s opponents, was tasked with the goal of finding anything “derogatory about Ellsberg”. At Nixon’s request, Colson leaked confidential FBI information and forged government documents concerning Ellsberg to Life magazine.

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33 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
34 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
Under the impression that he faced a conspiracy of former Kennedy and Johnson officials who would continue leaking classified documents to destroy his Vietnam policy, Nixon instructed his aides to form a unit, both to look for the group behind the Pentagon Papers national security leak and to discredit his political enemies. Even after Ellsberg “made a public confession on June 28th 1971, President Nixon continued to press for action against a suspected anti-Nixon conspiracy”. In response to Nixon’s demands, Ehrlichman formed the “Plumbers Unit” on July 24th, 1971, which operated within the Nixon administration, and acted outside of the FBI and CIA. Ehrlichman recruited Egil ‘Bud’ Krogh from his domestic staff and David Young, former assistant to National Security adviser, Henry Kissinger, as co-directors for the Special Investigations Unit. The Unit “operated from July to December 1971 and also investigated unauthorised leaks of classified materials on US-Soviet arms control talks and the Indo-Pakistani War”. Believing that the conspiracy extended into the Brookings Institution, a Washington “Democratic think-tank that was not exactly pro-Nixon”, the president repeatedly ordered the seizure of any classified materials held within the organisation’s walls. It has been argued that Colson, who with Ehrlichman was given responsibility over the matter, suggested that Brookings could be firebombed to distract security while the secret papers were recovered. When White House Counsel, John Dean, alerted Ehrlichman to Colson’s arson plan, it was abandoned. Yet, discussion over improving political intelligence continued.

After the plumbers reported that Daniel Ellsberg’s psychiatrist, Dr. Lewis Fielding, had refused to hand over his confidential notes to the FBI, Krogh and Young, under the approval of Ehrlichman, authorised the September 3rd 1971 burglary of Dr Fielding’s office to “examine all the medical files still held by Ellsberg’s psychoanalyst”. This operation was funded with the help of Colson and masterminded by former attorney, congressional candidate and FBI

37 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
41 There is some difference of opinion concerning whose idea it was to firebomb the Brookings Institution. Caufield claims it was Dean, Colson claims it was Caufield, and the Nixon Presidential Library argues it was Colson in their Watergate Exhibit. Yet it appears to me that there is no definitive evidence coming from either side to support their views. In The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit; Jack Caufield recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, October 28th 2008; “Watergate Exhibit Evidence”; and Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 28th 2008.
agent, G. Gordon Liddy, who had been recruited by Krogh. Colson recommended to Nixon that former CIA agent, E. Howard Hunt, also be put on the job. This led to Hunt assisting Liddy to formulate the operations plans.\(^{42}\) Hunt had been appointed to the White House Staff in 1970 by Colson and Ehrlichman, and had already been undertaking investigatory work into the Kennedys for the administration, in an effort to implicate the late John F. Kennedy in the 1963 assassination of South Vietnamese President, Ngo Dinh Diem.

The break-in was carried out by Hunt, Liddy, and CIA assets Eugenio Martinez, Felipe de Diego, and Bernard Barker. Their goal was to find any information that would discredit Ellsberg. The plumbers turned the office upside down but failed to find Ellsberg’s file, or any information relating to him. “Before leaving the crime scene, the burglars threw prescription drugs on the floor to mislead police into thinking that an addict had committed the crime”.\(^{43}\) On September 8, Ehrlichman reported to the president that the plumbers had undertaken a “little operation” in Los Angeles that had gone wrong, “which, I think, it’s better that you don’t know about”.\(^{44}\) Right after Krogh supplied Ehrlichman with the photographs of the operation, he stated that “this was beyond anything he ever authorised, shut it down”.\(^{45}\) Nixon claimed he does “not believe [he] was told about the break-in at the time, but it is clear that it was at least in part an outgrowth of [his] sense of urgency about discrediting what Ellsberg had done and finding out what he might do next”.\(^{46}\) Considering “the temper of those tense and bitter times and the peril I perceived”, Nixon stated, “I cannot say that had I been informed of it beforehand, I would have automatically considered it unprecedented, unwarranted, or unthinkable”.\(^{47}\)

There are four other ways which the Nixon administration had dealt with political enemies that deserve mentioning. First, there was the Jew Counting incident at the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS). Convinced that the BLS was producing inaccurate unemployment figures, and assuming that the BLS was staffed by many Jews, Nixon ordered Haldeman to develop a list of all of Jewish employees in the BLS, as he believed that American Jews were disloyal.\(^{48}\) Second, was the use of the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) audit

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\(^{42}\) Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 17th 2007.

\(^{43}\) The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, *Watergate Exhibit*.

\(^{44}\) Ibid.


\(^{47}\) Ibid.

\(^{48}\) The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, *Watergate Exhibit*. For a discussion of this matter and the debate about whether Nixon was an anti-Semite see: “Q&A with Timothy Naftali”. January 6, 2013.
function. While serving at the OMB, Arnold Weber was asked to audit Cabinet member Wally Hickel, as a consequence of reports that he had spent Interior Department funds improperly, but more so due to the fact that “Hickel became an outspoken opponent of the war in Vietnam, and taking public positions against it.” On another occasion, the Nixon administration also ordered the OMB to “stop federal research for universities where there were campus protests against the Vietnam War”. Third, was the use of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). “Nixon ordered Haldeman on June 23rd 1971 to have the IRS undertake audits of his political opponents and suggested Colson make a list of the people they want”. Dean was assigned to the “political enemy’s project” and after consultation with Colson, presented the list of 16 people to Haldeman’s staff on September 14th 1971. Nixon provided the list to the IRS on September 18. In 1972 Dean presented a much longer list to IRS Commissioner, Johnnie M. Walters, and his Treasury boss Secretary, George P. Schultz, who refused to launch the audits, believing they represented an improper use of the IRS. These facts were later uncovered by the House Judiciary Committee which saw them as “a violation of citizen’s constitutional rights”. “The September 1971 list included the conductor, Leonard Bernstein, computer pioneer, Thomas J. Watson Jr, former Defense Secretary, Clark M. Clifford, and journalists, Mary McGrory and Daniel Schorr”.

Fourth, was the investigation into newsman Daniel Schorr. In August 1971, the White House sought derogatory information from the FBI on CBS news correspondent Daniel Schorr, in light of his unsavoury article about Nixon. “Misunderstanding the request, the FBI


51 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit The Nixon Library’s research effort for the Watergate Exhibit was the first to find a record of Nixon ordering the enemies list. The Watergate Exhibit shows Haldeman’s notes from a meeting with the president on June 23rd 1971, ordering to audit the tax records of antwar Democrats. See “Watergate Exhibit Evidence”. Interestingly, in an interview with the libraries ex-Director and curator of the Watergate Exhibit Timothy Naftali, on C-Span discussion the exhibit and the libraries oral history program, Naftali states that “Nixon committed perjury by denying to a Grand Jury that he ordered the development of an enemies list” C-Span. “Q&A with Timothy Naftali. January 6, 2013. Accessed April 19, 2013. http://www.c-span.org/Events/QampA-with-Timothy-Naftali/10737436952/. Yet from Nixon’s perspective he outlines that “If there was any campaign advantage to incumbency, it had to be access to government information on one’s opponents. I remembered the IRS leaks of my tax returns to Drew Pearson in the 1952 campaign and the politically motivated tax audits done on me in 1963” Richard Nixon. RN: The Memoirs of Richard M. Nixon, 676.

interviewed Schorr, as if the journalist was under consideration for a federal government appointment. After Schorr complained about the FBI investigation, the White House had it stopped”. The September 18th 1971 White House tapes indicate Haldeman reported to Nixon that, although he believed he “shouldn’t get involved in this”, Schorr was on the “tax list too”, meaning he was one of the people from the enemies’ list that would be audited by the IRS. “They just want to harass them, give them a little trouble”, Haldeman stated. “Good...Exactly, pound these people”, Nixon replied. We’ll “give them something to worry about” Haldeman exclaimed. “It’s routine”, Nixon responded. In order to cover up the affair when the news came out, Nixon’s Press Secretary, Ronald Ziegler, ordered White House Personnel Manager, Frederic V. Malek, to state “he was considering Schorr for a [White House] position” if “the press started snooping around”. The House Judiciary Committee cited this misuse of the FBI in its second article of impeachment.

The 1972 presidential election and Nixon’s downfall

The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum argues that:

President Nixon set the stage for the activities that would lead to the Watergate scandal by demanding more inside information on political rivals and supporting covert activities to disrupt other campaigns. With the knowledge of the president, Haldeman initiated both political intelligence and dirty tricks operations for the 1972 election campaign. In the spring of 1971 Haldeman’s staff recruited Donald Segretti to do dirty tricks. Later that year, Haldeman worked with Mitchell to set up a political intelligence unit, led by former Plumber G. Gordon Liddy, inside the Committee for the Re-Election of the President.

Dirty tricks and campaign tactics

Nixon believed his 1960 presidential campaign had been the victim of dirty tricks by a Kennedy advance man, Dick Tuck. Considering Nixon had always felt that his campaign

53 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
54 (Tape snippet: September 18, 1971: “Going after Dan Schorr”) in Watergate Exhibit Evidence.
56 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
57 Ibid.
staffers were outclassed by the Kennedy clan, it is not surprising that Ehrlichman recalled in his memoirs that “Nixon demanded his staff conduct his [1968] campaign as if we were in an all-out war”.\textsuperscript{58} Evidence clearly shows that Nixon’s combative attitude carried on through his re-election campaign. On April 19th 1971, at a meeting with Mitchell, Nixon requested better intelligence of political rivals. In the spring of 1971, with Nixon’s knowledge, Haldeman initiated political intelligence and dirty tricks operations for the 1972 campaign. “Haldeman informed the President in May 1971 that planning for a dirty tricks campaign was underway.”\textsuperscript{59} Nixon’s Appointments Secretary, Dwight Chapin, and Haldeman’s assistant, Gordon Strachan, hired Donald Segretti, an old college friend, for the job. Segretti recruited 22 operatives and received $45,000 from Kalmbach. Segretti’s dirty tricks operation included the disruption of opposition rallies, forging letters on Democratic campaign stationary to divide the Democrats, and infiltrating spies to collect political intelligence.\textsuperscript{60}

In 2007 Chapin divulged that Nixon personally ordered the dirty tricks campaign. In a meeting which took place in Haldeman’s office, where Chapin, Haldeman, and President Nixon were present, Chapin contends that Nixon stated he wanted somebody to do “Dick Tuck type stuff”.\textsuperscript{61} Chapin refrained from making these allegations to the Senate Watergate Committee and the Watergate Grand Jury. Considering there was no White House taping system operating in Haldeman’s office, there is no evidence to support Chapin’s claims. Chapin’s disclosure caused much friction between him and his colleagues on the Nixon Foundation. This “led to a controversy”, since Nixon’s family and friends have always denied that Nixon authorised or condoned the use of dirty tricks.\textsuperscript{62} With that said, Chapin argued that the types of pranks he authorised Segretti to execute on Nixon’s behalf, including the ordering of “500 pizzas to be delivered” to “the opposition’s political rally”, were not harmful. Chapin described these antics as “inconsequential” with “zero...impact”.\textsuperscript{63} Chapin’s view was supported by Gill: “the Segretti business was a side show” that was “childish” and “annoying” but “didn’t amount to much”. The House Judiciary Committee “never found any stuff of consequence” on Segretti’s “activities”, Gill stated, “It just didn’t have the gravity and certainly not the

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Dwight L. Chapin recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave, April 2nd 2007.
\textsuperscript{62} In C-Span, Q&A with Timothy Naftali.
\textsuperscript{63} Dwight L. Chapin recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave, April 2nd 2007.
presidential involvement in it that the other things did”. The frivolous nature of Segretti’s team’s actions resulted in the charges laid against them to be “thrown overboard”.\textsuperscript{64}

Aside from these “dirty tricks”, the Nixon White House also administered illegal ‘Black Operations’. These sought to smear their campaign opponents by sending out false mailers through phony Democratic committees.\textsuperscript{65} As previously mentioned, Colson was in charge of these operations. Colson is convinced it was Nixon’s idea to get a Democratic committee together for Senator S. Muskie of Maine, to thank him for his support of busing to achieve desegregation in the South, and send it off to the parts of the country where busing was unpopular. Colson set up this campaign tactic by contacting “a public relations firm in Washington” to help him “get a hold of Democrats” that would set up a phony “straw committee” to “sign” mailers and send them out. The potential illegality of his actions, Colson claimed, never crossed his mind, particularly since he had an outside company take care of it, which allowed him to keep his fingerprints off the operation. The funds for these mailers came from special interests groups, who then hired public relations firms. Although there was a budget set up in Nixon’s Re-election Committee (CREEP), associated with the Republican National Convention, which Haldeman approved in early 1972 to set aside $90,000 for the operations, Colson maintained he never received or used these funds for the bogus committees he developed.\textsuperscript{66}

The Nixon administration was not all too worried about the prospect of Democratic candidate from South Dakota, Senator George McGovern, being elected to the presidency. But the fact that Muskie was ahead of Nixon in the polls created a real fear among Nixon White House staff about the possibility that their president would be beaten in the 1972 election. This angst caused them to believe they had to “fight every inch of the way to get Nixon re-elected”.\textsuperscript{67} For Colson, the infamous memo he sent out to his staff after the Republican National Convention, stating he would run over his own grandmother in order to win “was not an exaggeration”.\textsuperscript{68} Proving that he was not insulated from this sense of dread, Nixon too was showing signs of tension. Drawing on his experiences on Nixon’s late night call list during the 1972 presidential election, Special Counsel to the President, Leonard Garment, recalled the conversations he had with Nixon after the convention, being “filled with late night anxiety, fear, and

\textsuperscript{64} Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.
\textsuperscript{65} Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 24th 2008.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 17th 2007.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
sleeplessness…”, as a result of Nixon’s concern that he might lose the election. This apprehension led Nixon to instruct Colson to create a false ‘write-in’ campaign for Senator Kennedy in the New Hampshire primary on December 1971, to siphon votes from then frontrunner Muskie.

Interestingly, Washington Post writer Lou Cannon, who covered Nixon during his early political career in California, claimed ‘Black Operations’ were not invented by Nixon, but rather they were a dominant part of Californian electoral politics. If Nixon was involved in such harsh activities, Cannon stated, it would be justified by him wanting to be part of the crowd: “it was the culture of the times. Nixon rode the waves, he didn’t summon them up”. Ultimately for Nixon, the dirty tricks he authorised were no worse than what had been practiced by the Kennedy clan in Nixon’s ill-fated 1960 presidential election, or the long history of dirty tricks in American political campaigns.

From Operation Sandwedge to Operation Gemstone

Operation Sandwedge was a proposed clandestine intelligence gathering operation against the political enemies of the Nixon presidential administration, put together by Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Caulfield. The operation’s inception began in late 1971 when Haldeman directed Dean to assemble an intelligence plan for Nixon’s re-election campaign for the 1972 election. Dean delegated the task to Caulfield, who detailed a plan to target the Democratic Party and the anti-Vietnam War movement. Caulfield was inspired by what he believed to be the Democratic Party’s employment of a private investigation firm, Intertel, led by Department of Justice officials who had served under Robert F. Kennedy. Operation Sandwedge was Caulfield’s attempt to create a Republican counterpart to the Democrats’ professional intelligence gathering plans, by creating his own external firm. Details of Operation Sandwedge included the proposed electronic surveillance of Nixon’s political opponents to gather information on their financial statuses and sexual activities, as well as “surveillance of

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73 Mountain State University, In Their Own Words – Jack Caulfield.
74 The Telegraph. Jack Caulfield Obituary. July 11th, 2012. Available at:
Democratic primaries, conventions and meetings”, and “collecting derogatory information, [with an] investigative capability, worldwide". A meeting about the project was arranged between Mitchell (who resigned as Attorney General to become Chairman of CREEP on February 15th 1972), Deputy Chairman of CREEP, Jeb Stuart Magruder, and Haldeman’s White House liaison to CREEP, Gordon Strachan. The decision to pass control of Sandwedge to Liddy was reached in the meeting, as Mitchell wished to have a lawyer in charge of intelligence gathering.

On November 4th 1971, Haldeman and Mitchell set up a political espionage unit inside CREEP. Liddy was recruited by Dean to perform an intelligence gathering operation for this unit. Subsequently, Liddy brought in Hunt and the Cubans from the Fielding Operation, as well as ex CIA agent-cum-CREEP Security Coordinator, James W. McCord. It was hoped that these operations would supply CREEP with information that would aid them in the upcoming election. Liddy built upon the Sandwedge proposal to devise his own intelligence gathering operation. On January 27th and February 4th 1972 Liddy presented his plans to Mitchell and Dean without success. Mitchell rejected the $2 million proposals for being unrealistic. Following the second rejection, Liddy and Hunt enlisted Colson’s help in obtaining approval for their plan. Colson contacted Magruder to advise him that Mitchell needed to make up his mind. On March 30th 1971 Mitchell considered Liddy’s plan for a third time at a meeting with Magruder and his close aide, Fred LaRue. Mitchell, Magruder and LaRue all have different interpretations of what happened at that meeting. Nevertheless Magruder left the meeting believing that Mitchell had approved the plan, causing Magruder to relay to Haldeman that Liddy’s operational budget had been approved and Mitchell would receive the raw intelligence. Meanwhile Mitchell informed Maurice Stans, CREEP’s finance chair, to release the $250,000 that Magruder requested for Liddy.


75 Spartacus Educational, Jack Caulfield.
79 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
The approved operation was given the codename Gemstone by Liddy and Hunt. It involved extensive illegal activities against the Democratic Party, as well as the burglary of Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters at the Watergate Complex to install wiretaps. Unlike the Fielding break-in, Gemstone was not run out of the White House; however under the direction of Haldeman, Colson did provide $5000 to fund Hunt’s, and inadvertently the plumbers’ activities. The funds were provided by a PR firm routinely engaged by the White House to provide campaign contributions in return for the White House recommending them to potential clients.80

The first break-in attempts against a Democratic political opponent occurred on May 26th and 28th 1972 when Liddy’s intelligence operations spread to Senator McGovern’s campaign headquarters to plant illegal wiretaps. “Strachan’s April 14th 1972 notes” show that Liddy’s intelligence operation was directed to shift its focus from Muskie to McGovern, at Haldeman’s request. After McGovern won the Democratic Primary and became the likely nominee, Haldeman ordered Liddy, through Strachan, to focus intelligence efforts on McGovern. When Strachan was interrogated in 1973 by FBI investigators, he revealed he had knowledge of the break-in attempt at McGovern’s headquarters. He also explained that no evidence about the incident existed because he had shredded all of the documents in his possession in reference to covert activities after June 17.81

Late in the evening of May 27th 1972, the ‘plumbers’ broke into the DNC headquarters at the Watergate complex, and installed electronic taps on the telephone of DNC Chairman, Larry O’Brien and R. Spencer Oliver, another Democratic Party official. The Hunt-Liddy team left the complex without being detected.82 Hunt and his team were pressured by Magruder and Liddy to break into the complex for a second time because “the bug on O’Brien’s phone did not work and the one placed on Oliver’s phone was not producing any usable political intelligence”.83 Although Hunt and the Cubans were reluctant, they broke into the complex on June 17th 1972. This break-in was intercepted by a Watergate complex security guard.

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82 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
83 Ibid.
Frank Wills. He had noticed the piece of tape left by the burglars covering the lock on the stairwell door, leading to the DNC’s offices from the Watergate complex garage. Wills called the police. This culminated in the discovery and arrest of five men with electronic surveillance equipment: Martinez and Barker of the Fielding break-in, McCord, Virgilio Gonzalez and Frank Sturgis; all were charged with attempted burglary and attempted interception of telephone and other communications. Hunt and Liddy, who were at the command post in the Watergate Hotel monitoring the operation by walkie-talkies, and Alfred C. Baldwin, the man in charge of the lookout post at the Howard Johnson Motor Lodge across from the Watergate complex, all fled the scene.

Within hours of the arrests, the FBI discovered the name of Hunt and the White House telephone number in the address books of Barker and Martinez. They were also able to connect the stacks of crisp $100 bills found on the burglars to cheques from contributors to Nixon’s re-election campaign, subsequently linked to a secret slush fund used by CREEP. It is interesting to note that “Caulfield [was] not work[ing] for the White House when the Watergate break-in took place”, yet Ehrlichman immediately assumed that the operation had been part of Operation Sandwedge and that Tony Ulasewicz had also been involved.84

There is no agreement on the motive for the break-in at DNC headquarters. Magruder blamed White House pressure to get damaging information on DNC Chairman O’Brien. Liddy attributed his actions to Magruder’s demand for information on O’Brien and for any damaging information that the Democrats had on Republicans. Additionally, Liddy has outlined that “the purpose for the 2nd Watergate break-in was to find out what O’Brien had of a derogatory nature about [the Nixon administration], not to get something on him or the Democrats”.85 “Hunt [recalls] Liddy telling him that the White House wanted to know whether the North Vietnamese were funding the Democrats”, whilst the Cubans believed they were looking for evidence that their president, Fidel Castro, was financing the McGovern campaign.86 Haldeman speculated in his memoirs that President Nixon and Colson had somehow orchestrated the break-in to get information on O’Brien. Specifically, this was “any information that referred to cash that [entrepreneur] Howard Hughes had supposedly given to [Nixon’s friend] Bebe Rebozo and then possibly given to the president”.87

84 Spartacus Educational, Jack Caulfield.
87 Magruder’s comments in Watergate and Afterward: The Legacy of Richard M. Nixon. Edited by
Colson, Haldeman, and Nixon all asserted they knew nothing about the operational details of Gemstone before the Watergate arrests; neither of the later investigative efforts found any evidence to contradict their assertions. Yet, interestingly, Colson insisted Haldeman was aware of the taping system and would have been smart enough to ensure he did not discuss the Watergate break-in while being recorded.88 “Dean, who witnessed Liddy’s two presentations to Mitchell, testified he told Haldeman about the direction Liddy was taking”.89 Contrary to Haldeman’s claim, Strachan’s surviving notes indicate that Haldeman at least knew about the approval of a Liddy intelligence plan”.90

Although there is no evidence to suggest that Nixon knew about Gemstone before the Watergate arrests;91 in a 2003 PBS documentary Magruder revealed that Nixon personally approved the Watergate break-in.92 Magruder confirmed these details in his 2007 Nixon Library Oral History Project interview, explaining that whilst he and Mitchell were in Key Biscayne, Florida, they received a phone call from Haldeman and Nixon in Washington. The conversation turned to the topic of Watergate and “Nixon got on the line”. Magruder could hear Nixon’s voice on the other end, and when the call ended Mitchell turned to him and said “give Liddy the money”. Mitchell’s request solidified the belief in Magruder’s mind that Nixon authorised the break-in.93 Criticising Magruder’s allegation, Administrative Manager for CREEP, Robert Odle, stated Nixon was so puzzled to learn about the Watergate break-in that he threw an ashtray in anger when he found out—implying that Nixon had no prior knowledge of the incident.94 Odle’s logic was rejected by senior investigative staff member of the Impeachment Inquiry, Joseph Woods, who pointed out that Nixon’s actions are “of a

The assumption that Haldeman at least knew of the plan is confirmed by another briefing note produced by Strachan in preparation of a November 4th 1971 meeting, attended by John Mitchell and Jeb Magruder. The approval of the plan was discussed in this meeting. Considering Strachan’s role as CREEP liaison was to advise Haldeman of CREEP’s happenings, it’s fair to assume that this information would have been relayed back to Haldeman. In (Gordon Strachan memcon, “H, AG, JSM,” November 4, 1971) in “Watergate Exhibit Evidence” accessed April 19, 2013. http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/themuseum/exhibits/2010/watergateexhibitbackground/watergateexhibitbackground.php.
person disgusted that someone ‘blew it’, not someone that [was] shocked at what he [was] being told”. For Woods, Nixon’s reaction to the news of the break-in may be interpreted as Nixon having foreknowledge of the events.95

The cover-up

In light of Hunt and Liddy’s connection to the White House ‘Plumbers Unit’ and the Fielding break-in,96 as well as the potential for the exposure of these events to lead to evidence of unethical and illegal domestic operations in 1971, such as improper use of the IRS, unethical campaign actions, slush funds, illegal break-ins and wiretaps, the Nixon administration made efforts to cover-up the Watergate break-in. This was not the first time the administration had executed a cover-up. On December 21st 1971, at the behest of his closest political advisers, Mitchell, Ehrlichman, and Haldeman, Nixon reluctantly approved the first major cover-up of his administration.97 Nixon had concealed a “criminally insubordinate spying operation conducted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) inside the National Security Council because of the military’s strong, visceral dislike of his foreign policy”. In particular, the JCS thought Nixon had gone “soft on communism” by reaching out to the Chinese and Russians, and resented his Vietnamisation policy as a method to end the war. It has been argued that “this successful cover-up of the ‘Moorer-Radford’ affair set the stage for future cover-ups.”98

Nixon has asserted that the chief motivation behind his decision to authorise a cover-up was his administration’s need to hide their involvement in embarrassing investigations into Kennedy led conspiracies: “If the CIA could deflect the FBI from Hunt, they would thereby protect us from the only White House vulnerability involving Watergate that I was worried about exposing, not the break-in, but the political activities Hunt had undertaken for Colson”.99 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum’s former director, Dr. Timothy Naftali, who coordinated the task of updating the library’s Watergate Exhibit unveiled in 2012, raised

95 Joseph Woods interview by Timothy Naftali, October 27th 2011.
96 Magruder states that the reason for the cover-up was due to “the same burglars and their leaders, Liddy and Hunt”, being “the same people who had broken into Daniel Ellsberg’s psychiatrist’s office”. See Magruder’s comments in Watergate and Afterward: The Legacy of Richard M. Nixon. Edited by Leon Friedman and William F. Levantrosser (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), 45.
98 Ibid.
a similar point: “It does not matter that Nixon did not approve the 72’ break in, he approved the 71’ dirty tricks plan and illegal operations, and he could not deny knowing Hunt”. Considering Hunt had knowledge of the Fielding break-in and was commissioned to conduct investigations into the Kennedys, it was seen to be in the best interests of the Nixon administration to do what they could to keep Hunt quiet. It was believed that a cover-up was essential to achieve this end.

Extending the recommendations of Mitchell and Dean, Haldeman suggested to Nixon that he have the CIA block the FBI’s investigation into the source of funding for the burglary. The plan was to mislead the FBI into believing the Watergate break-in was a CIA operation. The White House learned, through the Justice Department, that the FBI had already traced the money found in the hotel rooms to cheques cashed by burglar, Bernard Barker in Miami. These cheques were the only link between CREEP and the Watergate burglars. President Nixon approved the plan to use the CIA and raised no objection to keeping Hunt away from criminal investigations by getting him out of the country. In three different conversations on June 23rd 1972, the president approved the use of the CIA to obstruct the FBI’s criminal investigations. These conversations constituted the ‘Smoking Gun’ tapes with evidence that Nixon knew of the cover-up and attempted to obstruct justice. Reflecting on the cover-up in his memoirs, Nixon wrote:

It was in these days at the end of June and the beginning of July 1972 that I took the first steps down the road that eventually led to the end of my presidency. I did nothing to discourage the various stories that were being considered to explain the break-in, and I approved efforts to encourage the CIA to intervene and limit the FBI investigations. Later my actions and inactions during this period would appear to many as part of a widespread and conscious cover-up. I did not see them as such. I was handling in a pragmatic way what I perceived as an annoying and strictly political problem. I was looking for a way to deal with Watergate that would minimise damage to me, my friends, and my campaign while giving the least advantage to my political opponents.

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100 C-Span. Q&A with Timothy Naftali.
101 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
Subsequently, Ehrlichman and Haldeman advised the Director of the CIA, Richard Helms, to instruct the FBI to “back off its investigation of the source of the burglar’s money for national security reasons”. Although the CIA had not organised the Watergate break-in, Helms initially agreed to the presidential request.\textsuperscript{103} The White House management of the Watergate issue reached a turning point when Dean, who was made the coordinator of the cover-up following the Watergate arrests,\textsuperscript{104} approached the president about his concerns. In his view the cover-up was getting out of hand due to Hunt’s lawyer approaching him to obtain additional payments for his client. During this meeting on March 21st 1973, Dean warned Nixon that the cover-up had turned into “a cancer on the presidency”. Rather than ordering an end to the cover-up the president told Dean that $1 million dollars could be found to satisfy Hunt.\textsuperscript{105}

Between June 18th and 20th 1972, Liddy, Magruder, and Strachan destroyed evidence relating to Gemstone’s planning and intelligence, whilst Hunt disappeared.\textsuperscript{106} “At Ehrlichman’s direction the contents of Hunt’s safe in the Old Executive Office Building, including evidence of his consulting work with Colson and Liddy, were sent to Dean. Liddy met with Dean and reported on the Watergate problem, whilst Mitchell, Ehrlichman, Haldeman and Dean conferred separately and together on the next steps”.\textsuperscript{107}

On June 19th 1972, Liddy advised Dean that the burglars would keep quiet, but they expected financial support. Dean, with Ehrlichman’s and Haldeman’s authorisation, arranged for payments via Kalmbach. From June 29 through September 19 the burglars’ representatives received $217,000 from CREEP and one private donation. Payments were dropped by Ulasewicz in unmarked envelopes at prearranged times and places. When Kalmbach concluded the payments were illegal, Mitchell’s close aide, LaRue, assumed responsibility for the operation. The payments made after September 19 (a sum of at least $237,000) came from the White House secret $350,000 political fund. LaRue, who received the money from Haldeman’s aide Strachan, understood the payments were hush money to keep the burglars from implicating others.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{103} The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
\textsuperscript{105} The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
\textsuperscript{107} The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
By July 6th 1972 the CIA had decided it would not comply with the White House wishes, and informed the FBI that national security was not involved in the Watergate Affair. They refused to pay the salaries and legal fees for Hunt and the Cuban Americans. Acting FBI Director, L. Patrick Gray, informed Nixon that both the FBI and the CIA were concerned that some of the White House staff were attempting to use the CIA to obstruct the Watergate investigation, to which the president replied that the FBI should press on with its investigation.\textsuperscript{109} Knowing that they could no longer manage the CIA and the FBI, Nixon and Haldeman revised the cover-up scenario, hoping to shape the investigation so that federal prosecutors would come to the conclusion that Liddy acted on his own, without the knowledge of campaign chief Mitchell, and his deputy, Magruder.\textsuperscript{110} “Sceptical that this would work, and certain that Magruder would have to be sacrificed to protect Mitchell, the president told aides on July 19 that he would pardon Magruder if he pleaded guilty”.\textsuperscript{111} The president also said he intended to pardon Hunt, Liddy and the burglars after the election. Nixon devised a plan to pair these pardons with those of jailed members of Vietnam Veterans against the War.\textsuperscript{112}

Meanwhile, Mitchell’s staff worked with Dean to give money to the burglars’ families. Kalmbach started these payments on July 7 and the president expressed his approval on August 1, commenting: “Well they took a risk and they have to be paid, that’s that”.\textsuperscript{113} On July 1st 1972, Nixon and Colson also discussed the possibility of organising a group to stage a break-in at the Republican National Headquarters. They would blame it on the Democrats and deflect attention away from Watergate, charging that the Democrats had committed their

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Tape: June 30, 1972, “President Nixon and Haldeman discuss Liddy and the Cuban cover up scenario” in “Watergate Exhibit Evidence” accessed April 19, 2013.
\textsuperscript{111} Tape: July 19, 1972, “President Nixon and Haldeman Magruder’s FBI testimony and pardoning him”, and July 19, 1972 “President Nixon and Ehrlichman discuss the Magruder problem”, Segments 1 to 5, in Watergate Exhibit Evidence. Accessed April 19, 2013.
own Watergate crime.\textsuperscript{114} Another strategy Nixon conjured was to “have a Cuban committee in Miami raise money to support the people who had been arrested”. Nixon communicated this to Mitchell in a telephone call, explaining he believed “the matter could be controlled” this way. It has been highlighted that this effort to develop a public committee to publicise and promote the plight of the detainees, for political reasons, would “have been legitimate”.\textsuperscript{115}

At a news conference on August 29th 1972, President Nixon stated that Dean had conducted a thorough investigation of Watergate, when in fact Dean had not conducted any investigation at all. Nixon also declared: “I can say categorically that…no one in the White House staff, no one in this administration, presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre incident”. On September 15, Nixon congratulated Dean: “The way you, you’ve handled it, it seems to me, has been very skilful”, Nixon stated, “because you[re]—putting your fingers in the dikes every time that leaks have sprung here and sprung there”.\textsuperscript{116}

Even if the Nixon administration’s plan to halt the investigation had worked, the FBI had already leaked the information it had on the plumbers and CREEP to the press, which instigated the journalistic investigations of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post. The Watergate story that eventually swept the American nation begins with newspaper accounts of these arrests and charges. Between June and October 1972, Woodward and Bernstein broke the news that Hunt’s name had been found in the burglars’ address books (June 20); that some of the burglars’ money had come from a $25,000 campaign contribution from Kenneth H. Dahlberg (August 1); and that the White House had funded Donald Segretti’s dirty tricks operations during the 1972 presidential campaign (October 10). These reports earned the Washington Post a Pulitzer Prize in 1973.\textsuperscript{117} Woodward and Bernstein’s reporting revealed that the break-in had been orchestrated by high-ranking officials of the Nixon administration and CREEP, and that their efforts were part of a pattern of White House misconduct. Fundamentally, the revelations presented to the

\textsuperscript{117} The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
American public by Woodward and Bernstein paved the way for the Grand Jury investigations that followed.\footnote{Yet, as has been suggested by Ruth P. Morgan in her 1996 *Presidential Studies Quarterly* article: “Nixon, Watergate, and the Study of the Presidency”, others suggest that more of the credit should be given to their editors, “Benjamin Bradlee, Howard Simons, Harry M. Rosenfeld, and Barry Sussman, as well as their publisher, Katharine Graham”, for their role in exposing the White House use of dirty tricks, in Ruth Morgan, “Nixon, Watergate, and the Study of the Presidency”. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No.1 (1996): 218.}

It must be noted that Woodward was receiving inside information from an informant in the executive, dubbed ‘Deep Throat’, concerning the Nixon Presidency’s involvement in the Watergate Affair. Deep Throat was later revealed in 2005 to be Mark W. Felt, second in charge at the FBI during the Watergate scandal. Much has been said about Felt’s motives. In particular, it has been argued that Felt may have been provoked to provide information to the press after being overlooked for the role of Director of the FBI after Hoover’s death.\footnote{Tim Weiner, *Enemies: The History of the FBI at War* (New York: Random House, 2011), 314.} Instead of abiding by the usual process of appointing an in-house successor, Nixon brought in a naval officer who was loyal to the Nixon administration, L. Patrick Gray, to head the bureau.

The Nixon White House publicly rejected *The Washington Post*’s allegations at every chance. Adding fuel to the fire, on one occasion a reporting error would haunt Woodward and Bernstein throughout the remainder of the Watergate Affair. Misinterpreting information provided to them by CREEP’s Finance Chairman, Hugh Sloan, the reporting duo alleged he had testified to the FBI that Haldeman controlled CREEP’s secret slush fund. Even though the facts surrounding Haldeman’s authoritative role over the secret fund was correct, Sloan had not yet disclosed this information.\footnote{Bob Woodward interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010, and Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, *The Secret Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 88-92.} This assertion caused an inaccuracy in Woodward and Bernstein’s story on October 25th 1972, and gave the Nixon White House leverage to criticise them on every Watergate issue they reported. Such was the case when Press Secretary, Ronald Ziegler, publicly wrote off the claim that Mitchell approved finance intelligence operations against the Democrats as the “shoddiest kind of journalism”.\footnote{The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, *Watergate Exhibit*.} Displeased with Woodward and Bernstein’s reporting, Nixon attempted to overturn *The Washington Post*’s license via the IRS.\footnote{Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 17th 2007.}
The effect of Watergate on the White House and Washington

By 1973, Watergate began to take its toll on the Nixon administration and throughout the executive branch. Notable examples include the effect on relations with the press, which became poisonous after the release of the Pentagon Papers, and more and more hostile as time went on.\textsuperscript{123} The efforts of the Domestic Council had become stunted by “the tremendous lack of civility in the discussion of public policy issues”, making it difficult for fair debate to take place.\textsuperscript{124} Nixon’s support in the Congress was “evaporating”,\textsuperscript{125} which “paralysed and slowed the government down to a stop eventually”.\textsuperscript{126} Nixon’s proposals were no longer being taken seriously by Congress, resulting in the rejection of much of the Nixon administration’s proposed legislation, including the Family Assistance Plan.\textsuperscript{127} On the foreign policy front, “for a period of several months, Watergate circumscribed the president’s freedom of action and occupied his attention”. Kissinger, for example, noted that “we were losing the ability to make credible commitments, for we could no longer guarantee Congressional approval”. The White House Congressional relations shop was having similar difficulties, and Nixon’s re-organisation of the government through the development of ‘Super-Cabinets’ also fell apart. Creativity was at an all-time low due to liaison staffers being tied up with Watergate, leaving the office “out of gas”.\textsuperscript{128} As Nixon White House Congressional Liaison Officer, Patrick O’Donnell, has noted: “Everything was all Watergate at that point. We were still doing our jobs…but the whole government was preoccupied with the Nixon matter”.\textsuperscript{129} In the end, the OMB was “virtually running the government” since the Cabinet agencies were reluctant to attend the White House due to the heightened political atmosphere, ultimately conceding to the OMB for guidance and direction.\textsuperscript{130}

The Watergate Affair was also proving to have a demoralising effect on the staff of the Nixon administration.\textsuperscript{131} “Perhaps most symbolic of the state of affairs was the fact that Kissinger

\textsuperscript{123} This point was observed by White House Deputy Press Secretary, Jerry Warren, in Jerry Warren II recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 29th 2007.
\textsuperscript{124} This point was made by a Domestic Council Staff member, Edwin L. Harper, in Edwin L. Harper recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, June 27th 2007.
\textsuperscript{125} Powell Moore recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 19th 2009.
\textsuperscript{126} John Whitaker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, Sam Rushay and Brooks Flippen, March 19th 2007.
\textsuperscript{127} Paul O’Neill interview by Timothy Naftali, September 21st 2009.
\textsuperscript{128} Dana Mead recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 8th 2009.
\textsuperscript{129} Patrick O’Donnell recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 10th 2009.
\textsuperscript{130} Frank Zarb recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, October 4th 2007.
\textsuperscript{131} Frank Carlucci recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 26th 2007.
was asked at a press conference whether the alert at the end of the war in the Middle East in October 1973 was a Watergate manoeuvre. Watergate had become the only lens”. 132 “The atmosphere in Washington had become [so] poisonous and uncomfortable”, that “everyone associated with [the Nixon] White House” was being perceived as a “little bit suspect”. 133 Inter-governmental dealings had become “too contentious” and “personally vindictive”, 134 whilst external relationships were also becoming “distorted” and “strained”. 135

The Watergate investigations

The Watergate Grand Jury

On September 15th 1972 the Watergate Grand Jury indicted Liddy, Hunt, and the five Watergate burglars with complicity in the illegal bugging operation. Mitchell and his Deputy, Magruder, however, were not implicated in the affair. On November 7th 1972, Nixon was re-elected to the presidency in a landslide, defeating Senator McGovern and Sargent Shriver, carrying 49 states with 60.7% of the vote. Although the Democratic National party filed a civil suit against CREEP, the Nixon administration was not worried, thinking they were home free after the election. 136 On January 30th 1973 the Watergate Grand Jury found McCord and Liddy guilty of their participation in the Watergate break-in, along with the other five participants who had already pleaded guilty. Convinced that the defendants had lied to cover-up for their superiors, Judge John J. Sirica gave the men long provisional sentences to encourage them to cooperate with government prosecutors and ensuing Senate investigations. Liddy received a maximum term of 20 years, the actual burglars Barker, Gonzalez, Martinez, and Sturgis received 40 years, while Hunt received 35 years. 137 Sirica’s sentencing resulted in McCord’s March 19th 1973 letter to the judge disclosing that he and the other burglars had been pressured to keep silent and had committed perjury during the trial. McCord also stated there were others not mentioned in the trial that played a role in the burglary. He revealed the Watergate break-in was not a CIA operation as several of the

Cubans had been led to believe. For those within CREEP implicated in the affair, particularly Magruder and Mitchell, McCord’s disclosure proved that “the jig was up”.\textsuperscript{138}

In terms of the trial process, Sirica was criticised for allowing the Grand Jury proceedings to be conducted in an open manner. He was denounced for being exceptionally lenient with the press, allowing them to paw through exhibits during recess.\textsuperscript{139} In addition, the Special Prosecutor was observed as being “very good at [leaking information] just before the deadlines of the press”.\textsuperscript{140} This was not only disruptive to the trial process, but went against the whole premise of a ‘closed court’, mandatory in Grand Jury procedure.

Seeking immunity from prosecution, Dean and Magruder approached federal prosecutors with information about Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Mitchell’s role in the cover-up. Magruder disclosed information about his role in setting up the Liddy intelligence operation, while Dean’s revelations related to the plumbers’ first break-in of Dr. Fielding’s office. Dean and Magruder’s requests for immunity were rejected. Following these disclosures, aiming to prevent the Watergate investigation from consuming the presidency, Nixon announced in an April 30th 1973 nationally televised address that Haldeman and Ehrlichman would resign from office. It didn’t stop there; Dean was also fired and Attorney General Kleindienst was requested to leave, and replaced by Elliot Richardson.

The Senate Watergate Committee

The Senate formed the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities (‘The Senate Watergate Committee’) on February 7th 1973, limiting its inquiry to the 1972 presidential campaign. The Committee was composed of four Democrats and three Republicans, chaired by North Carolina Democratic Senator, Sam Ervin Jr., with the assistance of Howard H. Barker Jr. of Tennessee as the ranking minority member. The committee began televising its hearings in May 1973. Dean sought, but did not receive, immunity from federal prosecution. He did, however, receive limited immunity from the Senate and was the first Nixon administration insider to disclose the president’s involvement in the cover-up.\textsuperscript{141} On April 26th

\textsuperscript{578-580.} \textsuperscript{138} Jeb Stuart Magruder recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave, March 23rd 2007. \\
\textsuperscript{139} Douglas Parker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 16th 2011. \\
\textsuperscript{140} Richard Hauser recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 21st 2009. \\
\textsuperscript{141} Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, “Dean Alleges Nixon Knew of Cover-up Plan”. The Washington
1973, it was revealed that Director of the FBI, Gray, destroyed two folders of documents that Dean and Ehrlichman had given him after the June (Fielding) break-in. One of these folders contained cables that Hunt had altered, implicating Kennedy in the assassination of Diem. The other had material Hunt collected on Edward Kennedy’s Chappaquiddick accident.

On May 22nd 1973, President Nixon made a statement concerning his involvement in the Watergate events. With senior members of the White House staff and CREEP now implicated in the scandal, Nixon issued his most sweeping denial of his involvement, stating that: he knew nothing about the cover-up before the “cancer on the presidency” meeting with Dean; he knew nothing of any ‘hush money’ payments given to the convicted burglars; he never authorised any pardons; and played no role in using the CIA to block the FBI’s investigation of the break-in. None of Nixon’s denials would prove to be true.

Harvard law professor, and former Solicitor General under President Kennedy, Archibald Cox, was appointed to be the Watergate Special Prosecutor by the Senate on May 25th 1973. Cox was the fifth person approached by Attorney General Richardson for the job. The Senate had made the appointment of an independent prosecutor a condition for confirming Richardson to replace Kleindienst. Cox’s nomination changed the way Watergate was perceived, “as is it was made even more clear how serious all this was, and how serious a threat it was to the lives and careers of these people who might be subject to criminal prosecution”.

On June 25th 1973 Dean testified that the president knew of the payments to Watergate burglars and Hunt after they were arrested. Dean also exposed the existence of the “Enemies List” and the “Huston Plan”. A month later, on July 23rd, when Deputy Assistant to the President, Alexander Butterfield, divulged that Nixon had been secretly recording his conversations to the Senate Watergate Committee, the Watergate scandal had entered a new phase. From that moment, the Senate, the Grand Jury, Special Prosecutor Cox, as well

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144 Douglas Parker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 16th 2011.
as many Americans, viewed the tapes as the key to the puzzle of Nixon’s knowledge and involvement in the Watergate Affair. That same day, Judge Sirica, on behalf of Cox, issued a subpoena for nine White House tapes and the Senate issued a separate subpoena for five tapes. Nixon fought to prevent the Congress and the Court from getting their hands on these tapes through the execution of the constitutional doctrine of executive privilege.\(^{145}\) It is interesting to note that the Nixon administration attempted to put “drastic provisions in place for preserving state secrets” well before the issue of Watergate arose; seeking to “expand and strengthen executive privilege”. By preventing these rules from taking effect, it ensured the Supreme Court would be unable to legislate about privileges through its rule making power.\(^ {146}\)

Sirica rejected the president’s argument that executive privilege allowed him to keep his tapes confidential like past presidents. Instead he ruled that the Court had to listen to the tapes to decide whether they were relevant to the Watergate criminal investigation. Despite Nixon’s appeal, the Court of Appeals upheld Sirica’s tape judgement, ruling that the president had to hand them over to Sirica, giving the White House until October 19th 1973 to decide. On October 10 Vice-President, Spiro Agnew resigned, after the disclosure of evidence, pointing to his accepting bribes whilst serving as Governor of Maryland. This plea was a blow to the Nixon administration’s image, and impacted the public’s trust in the presidency. Two days later President Nixon nominated Gerald R. Ford of Michigan to be the 40th Vice-President of the United States.

**The Saturday Night Massacre**

Instead of appealing the decision in the Supreme Court, the Nixon White House announced that the president would prepare edited summaries of the nine requested tapes for Sirica, allowing only Democrat Senator from Mississippi, John C. Stennis, to verify the transcripts. In exchange, Special Prosecutor Cox would not be allowed to ask for any other tapes. The ‘Stennis Compromise’, as it became known, was rejected by Cox on the grounds that the Court had the right to listen to the actual tapes, and by limiting any future requests, the plan also interfered with his ongoing investigation.\(^ {147}\) On the evening of October 19, Cox held a press conference to explain his decision. Former Solicitor General, Robert Bork, believes

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\(^{145}\) The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, *Watergate Exhibit*.

\(^{146}\) Elizabeth Holtzman interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007.
Cox’s remarks to the press further intensified the dispute. By criticising Nixon’s proffer in the public sphere, Cox created a “political showdown between himself and the president” over the issue of the tapes. Considering Nixon and Cox were both employed in the Executive branch of government, the confrontation exemplified “a subordinate facing down the president on national television”, “at a time when the president’s prestige was being challenged in the Middle East...and Nixon had to exert a great deal of moral and physical authority”.

The president’s response to the face-off came the next day, on October 20th 1973, when he instructed that the Justice Department fire Cox due to his rejection of the compromise.

Rather than carrying out Nixon’s request, Richardson chose to uphold the conditions he drafted in Cox’s Charter, delineating his inability to fire the Special Prosecutor, and resigned. His Deputy, William Ruckelshaus, who prior to taking on his position had served as acting FBI Director and observed evidence of the president’s role in the cover-up, refused to obstruct the Watergate investigation, and followed Richardson’s lead. Bork, who was next in line, and not feeling bound by the same restrictions as his superiors, agreed to fire Cox as he believed the president had the authority to dismiss any executive branch appointee. Bork also felt that “Cox had to be fired”, “not because he was behaving improperly, within the meaning of the Charter”, but as a result of his insubordinate behaviour in the press conference. With that said, still uncomfortable with the situation, Bork wanted to resign after firing Cox. Richardson and Ruckelshaus convinced Bork to stay on board to ensure continuity in the Justice Department. Consequently, Bork took on the role of Acting Attorney General.

That night, forever remembered as the ‘Saturday Night Massacre’, the new White House Chief of Staff, Alexander M. Haig formally dissolved the Watergate Special Prosecution Force (WSPF) working under the direction of Cox, only a few days after the incident. Nevertheless, the WSPF was quickly re-established in early November 1973. In mid-November, “ruling on

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149 Ibid.
150 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
a civil suit that challenged the dismissal of Cox, District Judge Gerhard Gesell held that Cox’s firing had been illegal”, resulting in the Congress “abandoning the idea of establishing a Special Prosecutors office by legislation”.154

Responding to the public outcry caused by the Saturday Night Massacre, the president agreed to hand over the nine requested tapes to the Court on October 23rd 1973. Included in these tapes was the president’s “cancer on the presidency” conversation with Dean, leading Sirica and newly appointed Special Prosecutor, Leon Jaworski (November 1st 1973) to conclude that Nixon had participated in the cover-up. The disclosure of this conversation also caused the Watergate Grand Jury to name President Nixon as an “unindicted co-conspirator” in the Watergate cover-up. Although the Jury’s charge was originally sealed, it was later leaked to the public. Of the more interesting finds in these tapes was the existence of an 18 and a 1/2 minute gap during a conversation between Nixon and Haldeman that took place on June 20th 1972; the first exchange they had about Watergate upon learning about the break-in, subsequent to their return to Washington from Key Biscayne. Smaller gaps also existed in Nixon’s dictabelts, which referenced Nixon’s recollections of the two conversations dealing with the 18 and a 1/2 minute gap.155 The court also subpoenaed two taped conversations, which turned out to be dictabelt recordings that the White House legal team could not find. Frustrated by the Special Prosecutor’s request, Nixon’s lawyers claimed the president offered to “forge” a dictabelt to satisfy the court.156

There are many theories about what caused the tape gap, ranging from a recording machine malfunction,157 to an accidental erasure when Nixon’s secretary, Rose Woods, was transcribing the conversations, to a purposeful effort to eradicate the conversation.158 If the erasure was deliberate, the culprit may never be known, although Naftali has pointed to Nixon’s close friend, Bebe Rebozo, being one of the only people who may have had access to the tapes while they were being transcribed in Key Biscayne.159 Interestingly, when the White House tried to reproduce the erasures, they were able to delete the conversation, but

154 Ibid.
155 Coates, The Watergate Affair, 16.
156 Douglas Parker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 16th 2011.
159 C-Span, Q&A with Timothy Naftali.
they could not replicate the buzzing noise in the background. Nevertheless, this gap and the missing tapes would raise serious questions about White House tampering.

On March 1st 1974, a grand jury in Washington, DC indicted several former aides of President Nixon, who became known as the “Watergate Seven”: Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, Colson, Strachan, Robert Mardian and Kenneth Parkinson, for conspiring to hinder the Watergate investigation. The Special Prosecutor dissuaded them from an indictment of Nixon, arguing that a president can only be indicted after he leaves office. Dean, Magruder and other figures had already pleaded guilty.

Competing views exist on the overall effect of the ‘Saturday Night Massacre’. For those in the Nixon administration, it appeared as though the hype in Washington had dissipated after five days, leaving them to get on with their work. Yet the press, members of Congress and the wider public interpreted the incident as the ‘the straw that broke the camel’s back’, and the catalyst for Nixon’s impeachment. Democratic Congressman during the Nixon Presidency, John Brademas, stated with confidence that the Massacre created “outrage” and a “great hostility” towards Nixon on “the [Capitol] Hill”. This raises many questions. Was Nixon’s staff too busy to see what was going on beyond the White House walls? Or perhaps blinded by their loyalty? Or had the issue been distorted in the media? Notwithstanding this disparity in perception, what followed was the House of Representatives passing House Resolution 80 on February 6, 1974, with only four dissenting votes. It authorised the House Committee on the Judiciary “to investigate fully and completely whether sufficient grounds existed for the [Congress] to exercise its constitutional power to impeach Richard M. Nixon, President of the United States of America”. The impeachment proceedings were to be headed by Congressman, Peter W. Rodino of New Jersey. On March 26th 1974, Sirica handed over Grand Jury materials, including the “cancer on the presidency” tape, to the House for investigation.

On April 16th 1974, Jaworski requested 64 more tapes, seven times the number that Cox had requested. In a nationally televised address on April 30th 1974, President Nixon

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160 Douglas Parker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 16th 2011.
163 Elizabeth Holtzman interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007, and Evan Davis interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.
164 John Brademas interview by Timothy Naftali, October 5th 2007.
announced the release to the House Judiciary Committee of 1308 pages of edited transcripts, which covered 46 White House meetings and telephone conversations. Since the tapes released by Nixon did not include key conversations the Special Prosecutor sought, Sirica ruled the actual tapes were required and Jaworski’s request headed to the Supreme Court. Remarkably, Bork and senior staff member of the Impeachment Inquiry, Bernard Nussbaum, both argued that the Supreme Court had no jurisdiction to hear the Nixon tapes case, because it was not possible to have “one branch” of the Executive government “suing itself”. When there is a controversy between two individuals, and one has “the ability to end the controversy by issuing an order, Bork explained, there is no case or controversy, of which the Constitution requires” to hear a case involving a branch of government.\footnote{The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.} Similarly Nussbaum stated that the Special Prosecutor did not have the power to sue Nixon for the tapes because “executive privilege is absolute except for during impeachment proceedings”. Clearly, Nussbaum believes the Supreme Court made the wrong decision.\footnote{Robert Bork recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, December 1st 2008.} For Bork, only the Congress has the jurisdiction to sue the executive branch, so the House Judiciary Committee should have issued the subpoena, and the Supreme Court should have ruled. Although the jurisdictional argument could be exercised in terms of the Special Prosecutor, it could not have protected President Nixon from impeachment.\footnote{Bernard Nussbaum interview by Timothy Naftali, October 1st 2011.} Nevertheless, on July 24, 1974, in a unanimous decision in \textit{US v. Nixon}, the United States Supreme Court upheld Judge Sirica’s order that the president hand over 64 tape recordings to Jaworski.

Nixon agreed to abide by the decision of the court, and had his legal team prepare transcripts of those conversations. Over the next fortnight, as more of the White House aides and congressional allies of Nixon learned of the contents of the tapes, the president’s last level of support began to erode. Nixon, however, decided to await the public’s response to the release of the tape transcripts before he decided on how to proceed. Almost every Watergate commentator agrees that ultimately it was the release of the White House tapes that led to Nixon’s presidential demise. There was the issue of the tape gaps, the missing tapes, and the content of the tapes—not only in respect to presidential misconduct, but also the particular language the president used behind closed doors, which was extremely different to the verbal communication style he displayed publicly. Even those who knew Nixon extremely well were shocked by the tone and profanity exhibited on the tapes.\footnote{Robert Bork recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 1st 2008.}\footnote{John Whitaker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, Sam Rushay and Brooks Flippen, March 19th 2008.}
Many Watergate observers have often wondered why Nixon did not simply burn the tapes. Nixon’s personal assistant, Stephen B. Bull, claimed that “Nixon really believed he was innocent”. After Haldeman listened to “the March 21st tape” he had faith that it “would help the president rather than hurt him in the battle with John Dean”. Similarly, Ehrlichman described Nixon as coming out of the Executive Office Building on June 4, 1973 with a smile on his face because he felt the conversations with Dean were not as bad as he had feared. Garment, Kissinger, and former Secretary of the Treasury, John Connally, like many others, suggested Nixon have a tape ‘bonfire’. Nixon rejected this advice because he and Haldeman believed the tapes would exonerate him. Garment described this assessment as “crazy” and “not to be credited as a sound judgment”. Bull concluded that “wishful thinking” and “selective memory” may have played a role in Nixon’s poor reasoning on the tapes problem, although it has been highlighted that accurately deciphering what was actually said on the tapes was an extremely difficult task.

The Impeachment Inquiry

Soon after the House gave the Judiciary Committee the responsibility for considering articles of impeachment, Chairman Rodino delegated the task of identifying someone to lead the Impeachment Inquiry team to his staff member, Francis O’Brien. After a national search, former head of the Kennedy Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, John Doar, was appointed Special Counsel to the Committee. Doar was joined by Albert E. Jenner as Special Counsel to the Republican Minority. Doar and Jenner put together a staff of relatively young lawyers and researchers, whose main assignment was “to produce a series of Statements of Information for the members of the Judicial Committee”. These Statements consisted of “chronologies of events relating to the Watergate break-in and aftermath, allegations of misconduct relating to ITT, the ‘milk fund’ controversy, White House

175 The staff member of the House Judiciary Committee tasked with developing transcripts of the White House tapes, Jeffrey Banchero, explains that listening to the tapes was very difficult. Banchero and the other two staffers tasked with the transcription job would often argue about “what they were hearing”. In Jeffrey Banchero recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
176 Francis O’Brien recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.
surveillance and campaign activities, use of the IRS to investigate opponents, the president’s tax deductions for the donation of pre-presidential papers, the bombing of Cambodia, and use of government funds for President Nixon’s private properties at San Clemente and Key Biscayne*.\(^{178}\)

Apart from some interviews of certain Watergate figures, the Inquiry staff did not conduct any new investigations. Rather, they were tasked with assembling all of the information that was currently available from the Watergate Grand Jury, Watergate Special Prosecution Force, the Senate Watergate Committee, and materials provided by the White House, namely the tapes and their transcripts.\(^{179}\) The Statements were designed to be strictly factual, lacking any emotion or emphasis, leaving the Committee to decide on the appropriate course of action in relation to Nixon’s impeachment. Some members of the staff also transcribed White House tapes; examined procedures for a possible Senate trial; researched the historical precedents for impeachment; and the question of what an impeachable offense constitutes. Focusing on the definition of ‘high crimes and misdemeanours’ in the United States Constitution, it was established that Nixon did not need to have committed a ‘crime’ in order to be impeached, for when the founding fathers built the process of impeachment into the Constitution, no criminal statutes were in existence. Furthermore, considering some crimes do not affect the functioning of government or the integrity of the presidential office, Wood’s observed that a ‘high crime and misdemeanor’ must “strike at the institutions of government”.\(^{180}\) Doar emphasised to his staff the importance of not talking about the Impeachment Inquiry with outsiders, and the importance of conducting the process in a non-partisan manner,\(^{181}\) with the utmost respect to President Nixon.\(^{182}\)

Between July 27th and 30th 1974 the bipartisan majorities in the House Judiciary Committee voted to recommend that three articles of impeachment be approved by the House of

http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/histories/hcj.php

\(^{178}\) Ibid.

\(^{179}\) Michele Conway interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2009, and Owen Fiss interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011.

\(^{180}\) Joseph Woods recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 27th 2011.

\(^{181}\) Jeffrey Banchero recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011; Fred Altshuler recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011; Michael recorded Conway interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2009; Robin Johansen recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011; Owen Fiss recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011; Dorothy Landsberg recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, November 7th 2011; Elizabeth Holtzman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007; Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011; and Evan Davis recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.

\(^{182}\) Maureen Barden recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011.
Representatives. The first covered presidential obstruction of justice; the second governmental abuse of powers; and the third, failure to comply with House subpoenas. Two other proposed articles of impeachment were rejected by the Committee, which found that Nixon had:

...prevented, obscured, and impeded the administration of justice, repeatedly engaged in conduct that violated constitutional rights of citizens, impairing the due and proper administration of justice in the conduct of lawful inquiries, or contravening the law governing agencies of the executive branch, had failed to produce tapes and documents under subpoena...thereby assuming for himself functions and judgments necessary to the exercise of the sole power of impeachment vested by the Constitution in the House of Representatives. For such offenses Rodino’s Committee stated that Nixon warrants impeachment, trial, and removal from office.183

Interestingly, Naftali highlighted that Nixon also obstructed justice in a way that was not uncovered by the Impeachment Inquiry. Expressly, Nixon had suggested to Ehrlichman on tape that Magruder should refrain from outlining his knowledge of any wiretapping operations when testifying before the Watergate Grand Jury.184 Naftali concluded that abuse of presidential power was in Nixon’s DNA and in the view of the White House which Nixon pushed forward during his presidency. For Naftali, isolated incidents of misconduct did not exist in the Nixon administration, because “if it was not one crime or misdemeanor, it would have been another”.185

The public learned for the first time that the president had ordered the CIA to obstruct the FBI’s investigation, when the White House released transcripts on August 5th 1974 of three conversations from June 23rd 1972. These ‘Smoking Gun’ transcripts contradicted the president’s public defence and undermined his remaining support on Capitol Hill. In response, every Republican member on the House Judiciary Committee, who had previously voted in favour of Nixon, announced their support of the articles of impeachment. At the same time, the president’s support in the Senate, where he would be tried if the House recommended impeachment, collapsed. On August 7th 1974, three senior Republican

184 See C-Span, Q&A with Timothy Naftali.
185 Ibid.
Congressmen, Barry Goldwater, Hugh Scott, and John Rhodes, met with Nixon in the Oval Office to advise him that not only was impeachment inevitable, but there were enough votes in the Senate to convict him if he was tried. Goldwater and Scott outlined that at most, only 15 Senators were willing to vote for an acquittal. The president’s public approval rating fell to 24%, whilst Gallop polls showed that 51% of the American public wanted Nixon to go to trial in the Senate, the final step in impeachment proceedings.

The impact of Watergate

The final episode in the Nixon presidency Watergate saga brings to the forefront the impact this emotional tragedy had on the people involved in the affair. In light of his loss of political support and the inevitability of impeachment, Nixon gathered his close colleagues, Senators James Eastland, Mike Mansfield and Hugh Scott, and Congressmen, Carl Albert and John Rhodes in the Executive Office Building at 7.30pm on August 8th 1974, to advise them of his impending action. Nixon then assembled 40 of his closest staff at 8pm in the Cabinet Room of the White House, to announce he would be resigning the next day. “Everyone was in tears”.¹⁶⁶ In a national televised address, Nixon then made his announcement to the American people:

I have made every possible effort to complete the term of office to which you elected me. I no longer have a strong enough political base in the Congress to justify continuing that effort…America needs a full time President, and a full time Congress, particularly at this time with problems that we face at home and abroad. To continue to fight in the months ahead for my personal vindication would almost totally absorb the time of both the President and the Congress in a period when our entire focus should be on the great issues of peace abroad, and prosperity without inflation at home. Therefore, I shall resign the presidency effective at noon tomorrow. Vice-President Ford will be sworn in as President at that hour, in this office…By taking this action, I hope that I will have hastened the start of the process of healing which is so desperately needed in America.¹⁶⁷

On August 9th 1974 Nixon gathered his entire staff for the last time in the East Room of the White House. In a heartfelt speech Nixon bid his friends and colleagues farewell. Amid

¹⁶⁶ Moore recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 19th 2009.
tremendous emotional strain, perhaps resulting from leaving his presidency in disgrace, Nixon gave a “kind of Shakespearean farewell”. He delivered his speech “without notes”, “cover[ing] his own personal history, his family, his acts, his regrets, [and ending with] the miraculous terminal insight, that if you hate you end up destroying yourself”. For Garment, “the last words [Nixon] spoke as president [were] the wisest words that he or any other president spoke”.188 Some observers noted how “incredibly difficult” it must have been for Nixon “to stand there and look at people in shame”, especially for “a man that proud”.189 Others however stated how saddened they were to hear about where Nixon came from, what life he created for himself out of his family’s meagre beginnings, and to see it all end the way it did.190 For those who were witnessing Nixon give his final remarks, and “had given their lives” to the Nixon administration’s cause, it would seem that “all of their hopes and aspirations” were brought to a halt by Watergate.191 The event would prove to be a very sad and “difficult circumstance for all of the staff...for the family, and for [Nixon]; a wrenching experience”,192 which left many people in the audience “sobbing”.193 Yet, after the staff had waved goodbye to Nixon standing on the Air Force One helicopter from the South Lawn Rose Garden, they were back to work shortly after.194 Just two hours later Gerald Ford was sworn in as president in a remarkably seamless fashion,195 to the surprise of many who had expected to see the Nixon administration go down in some sort of coup or tumult, with a fight, bloodshed and Army tanks rolling down the streets.196

Seeking to ease some of the troubles in the hearts and minds of his countrymen generated by Watergate, shortly after taking the oath of office Ford proclaimed: “My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over. Our Constitution works; our great Republic is a

190 Pamela Bailey recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, April 16th 2009.
194 Ibid.
government of laws and not of men". On September 8th 1974, believing that putting Nixon on trial would prolong the trauma of Watergate; President Ford granted former President Nixon a “full, free and absolute pardon”, for “all offenses against the United States”, that he “has committed or may have committed as president”. Although the pardon was not welcomed by many at the time, on reflection a multitude of observers and Watergate participants agreed that the decision to absolve Nixon and move on was in fact right for the country.

Apart from Nixon, many of the Watergate players were also personally impacted by the affair. LaRue was the first administration official to plead guilty to crimes related to his involvement in the Watergate burglary and cover-up. LaRue pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice in July 1973 and served four and a half months. Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Mitchell were convicted of conspiracy to obstruct justice, obstruction of justice, and perjury in the Watergate cover-up trial, and were sentenced to a term of between two and a half and eight years. Haldeman and Ehrlichman served 18 months in prison, whilst Mitchell served 19 months. After pleading guilty to obstruction of justice and sentenced to a term of four years, Dean served four months in a witness holding cell. Of the original White House plumbers, Krogh pleaded guilty to federal charges of conspiring to violate Fielding’s rights and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors. He was sentenced to two to six years in prison and served four and a half months. Young resigned from government service and avoided a jail sentence. The Senate Watergate Committee granted him limited immunity, which was then approved by the United States District Judge John J. Sirica on July 5 1973. Magruder pled guilty to conspiracy to unlawfully intercept wire and oral communications, to obstruct justice and to defraud the United States. He served seven months in prison. Colson pleaded guilty to intentionally leaking information to discredit Ellsberg to the Watergate Grand Jury, for which he served

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198 Nixon’s speech-writer David Gergen believed the pardon was brave and the right thing to do as Watergate was taking up too much of Ford’s time, and he was a very honest president, in David Gergen recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, August 5th 2009; Garment and Parker supported the pardon because they did not favour the idea of Nixon being prosecuted, let alone incarcerated. In Douglas Parker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 16th 2011; Becky Bovell from the Nixon White House correspondence unit outlined: “I think it was the only solution at the time. It healed the country, it helped people get past it, I saw no other way to do that, and I believe [Ford’s] decision has been vindicated. He was honoured by the Kennedy Centre”. In Becky Bovell recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 22nd 2008.
seven months in jail. In 1974 a trial jury convicted Chapin of lying about his knowledge of campaign dirty tricks, and was remanded to the California Corrections Camp at Lompoc from August 1975 to April 1976. In 1974, Segretti pleaded guilty to three misdemeanour counts of distributing illegal campaign literature and was sentenced to six months in prison, but only served four.

Of the Watergate burglars, Liddy was indicted, tried and convicted of contempt of Congress, for his refusal to testify before a House Committee. Liddy was also convicted of conspiracy, burglary and illegal wiretapping and sentenced to a 20-year prison term and ordered to pay $40,000 in fines. After beginning his sentence in January 1973, President Jimmy Carter commuted Liddy’s sentence to eight years in April 1977. He was released in September, after serving four years. Hunt eventually spent 33 months in a federal low level security prison on a conspiracy charge. McCord was convicted on multiple counts of burglary, conspiracy and wiretapping and served two months of a one to five year prison sentence. Head Watergate burglar, Bernard Barker, served 13 of an 18 months to six-year prison sentence. The three other burglars each received one to four year sentences, with Martinez serving 15 months, and Gonzalez and Sturgis each serving 13 months. Of the lucky ones, Strachan faced a maximum of 15 years in prison and $20,000 in fines, but his charges were dropped before trial; Mitchell’s aides and counsel to CREEP, Robert Mardian and Kenneth Parkinson, both faced jail time and the potential to pay thousands of dollars in fines, but Mardian’s conviction was overturned on appeal, and Parkinson was acquitted before trial.

**Watergate’s legislative legacy**

In response to the evidence of abuse of power and unethical campaign practices that emerged during the Senate Watergate Committee and House Judiciary Committee investigations, the US Congress implemented a series of legislative measures during 1974 and 1984 to address these issues. The laws Congress passed demonstrated that it was time

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199 After Judge Gerhard Gesell ruled against a defence argument that the entry into Fielding’s office had been justified by considerations of National Security, Charles Colson “pleaded guilty to obstructing justice in a federal criminal case brought against Daniel Ellsberg after his public release of the Pentagon Papers. Colson admitted that White House efforts to discredit Ellsberg by public release of derogatory information were intended to interfere with his fair trial. As a result of this plea and his agreement to disclose what he knew about matters under the Special Prosecutor’s jurisdiction, the charges against Colson in the Watergate case and the original charges against him in the Fielding break-in case were dropped. In Tom Coates, *The Watergate Affair*, 24.

for the elected officials of the nation to reassert their power by: "limiting the federal
government’s ability to collect information on private citizens";\textsuperscript{201} reforming “the campaign
finance system” to address concerns over the influence of private donors on presidential
campaigns;\textsuperscript{202} creating a framework and new standards for ethics and accountability in
government;\textsuperscript{203} increasing the power and independence of an appointed Special Prosecutor
to investigative charges brought against high administrative officials\textsuperscript{204} and “strengthen public
control of and access to presidential records”.\textsuperscript{205} During Nixon’s time in office, efforts had
also been made to curb presidential authority abroad through the implementation of the \textit{War
Powers Act} of 1973. Probably the most notorious legislation to come out of the Watergate
era was the \textit{Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act} of 1974 (PRMPA), which
acted to preserve the Nixon White House tapes by placing them into the custody of the
National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the independent agency established
to protect all government documents and administer the libraries of all modern presidents.
The enactment of the PRMPA had a dramatic effect on the history of Watergate through the
turn of the century.

By placing presidential materials in the hands of the government to ensure they would not be
destroyed, the PRMPA created a legal battle between Nixon and his loyalists, the state,
archivists, scholars and advocacy groups, which lasted decades. This tug of war concerned
Nixon’s privacy on one side, and access to one of the richest important documentary records
in United States history, on the other. Never before did government officials have to testify in
court, on multiple occasions, in defence of how they went about their jobs.\textsuperscript{206} Although the
materials deemed to be “private” and returned to Nixon during this time were finally deeded
to NARA in 2007, thus amalgamating all of the Nixon materials, the battle over Nixon’s legacy
did not end there. When NARA brought the Nixon Library into the federal presidential system

\begin{footnotes}
\item[202] \textit{1974 Amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act} (Pub.L. 93-443, 86 Stat. 1263, 2
U.S.C. § 431 et seq.).
\item[203] \textit{1974 Amendment to the Freedom of Information Act} (Pub.L. 93-579, 88 Stat. 1896); and the \textit{Ethics
\item[204] \textit{Independent Counsel Act of 1978} (Pub.L. 113-121, 28 US.C. ch. 40).
November 4, 1978, 44 U.S.C. 2201 et seq.); and the \textit{National Archives and Records Administration
\item[206] Stanley I. Kutler and Public Citizen v. John W. Carlin (Archivist of the United States), 139 F.3d 237–
v-w-carlin-e-h
\end{footnotes}
in 2006 promising more factual exhibits, this required that the Library's Watergate Exhibit be updated to provide an illustration of history that was not seen to be Nixon's version of events. The process—again adding fuel to the Watergate fire—took over three years due to numerous objections from the previous proprietors of the Library—The Nixon Foundation.

**Watergate’s aftermath**

The most well-known incident to take place in Watergate’s history since Nixon’s resignation occurred was in 1977 when the former president broke his public silence on the Watergate scandal, by participating in an internationally syndicated television interview with the British broadcaster, David Frost. For some like James Reston Jr, who was on Frost’s research preparation team, Nixon’s statement: “when the president does it; that means it’s not illegal”, provided a lens for how they would view the Watergate scandal from that day forth. But more importantly, the interviews provided a space for Watergate and the Nixon presidency to be reflected on and reviewed four years after Nixon’s resignation, ensuring the scandal had not been forgotten. Each time the international community is reminded about Watergate through the media, the scandal is further injected and cemented into the public conscience. This has contributed to the strength of Watergate’s presence in popular culture, which has continued to grow over time.

Over the last decade, various events that have played out in the media have reminded us about the Watergate Affair: Magruder disclosed in a PBS documentary in 2003 that Nixon ordered the break-in; the identity of “Deep Throat” was revealed in 2005, with reports flooding the media; the news of Nixon’s materials being deeded to the Nixon Presidential Library took place in 2006; the movie *Frost/Nixon* was released in 2007, the same year that Chapin revealed Nixon ordered the so-called “dirty tricks” operation; and the press surrounding the issue of Wiki-leaks and the release of top-secret classified information (similar to the Pentagon Papers issue) underscore the continued relevance of Watergate. Additionally, the Nixon Presidential Library unveiled its new Watergate Exhibit in 2011, and with it came a generous amount of news reporting on the backlash to this event brought about by criticisms of the exhibit by the Nixon Foundation. In 2012 the Nixon Library’s

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Director and curator of the Watergate Exhibit resigned and secret Grand Jury transcripts of Nixon’s testimony were made public. This was followed by Watergate’s 40th anniversary and Nixon’s 100th birthday in 2013. Concurrently, more and more Nixon materials were constantly being released, and with them the publicity around Nixon’s unsavoury views (for example on Jews and Blacks), and each time a key Watergate player passed away, including Nixon in 1994, their obituaries rehashed the Watergate story. Watergate continues to provide intrigue. The media reporting and editorials that surround these events prompts a new generation of readers about the affair.  

If we also add to this equation the use of the suffix ‘-gate’, it is clear that Watergate’s presence in newsprint is here to stay. Although this labelling practice began in 1987 when Safire used the suffix for the first time, it has become ubiquitous, routinely attached to the end of news headlines describing a supposed instance of corruption.  

Hardly a week goes by without Watergate being mentioned in the world’s press, rendering the affair the most referred to scandal in contemporary newsprint. Yet, every time the suffix ‘-gate’ is used the images of grave actions are projected, even though the cases to which they are attached may be trivial. Recent Australian examples, such as "Iguana-gate" and "Ute-gate", clearly demonstrates this point. Ultimately, the practice of this seemingly inconsequential characterisation method has inadvertently ingrained negative connotations via the use of journalistic shorthand, which affects the way newsreaders perceive and interpret information on current events around the world.

Few modern American presidents have commanded the attention of writers, composers, and playwrights in quite the same way as Richard Nixon. Similarly, the frequency with which Watergate has been studied far exceeds that of any other political scandal. A WorldCat database search in March 2014 of over 2 billion records, owned by over 10,000 libraries worldwide, located 3527 records on the Watergate Affair. By comparison, the Teapot Dome “which is often used as a reference point for twentieth century scandal,” returned only 631. Of the most recent scandals to occur in the United States, such as Abscam, Whitewater,

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Iran-Contra, and the Lewinsky saga, only the latter two affairs came close to the numbers yielded by Watergate, with searches returning records in the high 2000s. In regard to scandals that occurred in the era of Watergate, the J.F.K assassination returned 1961 records, whilst the Chappaquiddick incident returned only 14.\textsuperscript{212} Whilst these numbers do not represent the entire academic field, they are a useful indicator on the relative interest in the Watergate Affair. The recent release of Thomas Mallon’s 2012 novel on Watergate shows us that there is even an audience for contemporary fiction on the affair.\textsuperscript{213} Judging by the number of books, journal articles, and documentaries available on the topic of Watergate, it is clear that the affair will continue to play a role in academia and contemporary society for the foreseeable future.

The study of Nixon and Watergate has been the subject of academic discussion at high profile conferences. In 1987 the prestigious Hofstra University ran their 6th presidential series conference titled “Richard Nixon: A Retrospective on His Presidency”, which attracted scholars and past Nixon Administration officials. In 2011 the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum held a symposium titled “Understanding Richard Nixon and his Era”, attended by scholars and students of Nixon from around the United States and internationally. The most recent Watergate related conference to take place was “The Lessons of Watergate” symposium held at the National Press Club Building in Washington, DC in March 2013. This event not only gathered scholars, but assembled past US House Judiciary Committee and Impeachment Inquiry staffers, as well as Nixon Administration National Security staff, Watergate Special Prosecution Investigative staff, Watergate players, journalists, and members of democratic, government, and justice policy associations and advocacy groups.

Watergate is exceptional as an instance of political wrongdoing because its influence has stretched far beyond the players who were personally impacted by the scandal. The Watergate Affair which started off as a break-in taking place in the Washington, DC of 1972, ultimately affected the nation; with its consequences still present globally today. Watergate transcends its actors in significance and persists in reverberating in the political consciousness not merely in the United States, but internationally. Watergate offers us more than merely historical scandal or a handy suffix for news headlines. The complexities that the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{212} See the WorldCat website for more details. Available at: http://www.worldcat.org/
\item \textsuperscript{213} Thomas Mallon, Watergate: A Novel (New York: Random House, 2012).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
phenomenon has created continue to draw in new players and new angles that have yet to be considered, and will be explored in greater detail throughout the remainder of this thesis.
Chapter 1
The Research Process

This chapter outlines the research process I undertook in this study. There are four sections to this discussion. The first section frames the research context by summarising the methods and findings of the literature in a comparative field. The procedure which led to the development of the theoretical framework used in this research study is documented in the second section. The third section conducts a literature review of texts on the topics of Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate using the theoretical lens developed. In the final section I outline the research design of this project, including a description of the data set I analysed, the main research question and secondary questions, data analysis and interpretation procedures, and the limitations of the study.

Narrowing the scope of the study

This research project aims to investigate the various ways significant Watergate actors and prominent observers of the drama perceived and assigned meaning to the affair and the Nixon presidency. I began my inquiry by exploring the nature of Watergate’s impact, through the examination of a range of audio-visual productions,1 to familiarise myself with the details of the Watergate case (when the events occurred, what had happened, why it had happened, and who was involved).

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I transitioned from the examination of audio-visual material to written text by studying the work of Joseph Siracusa, in particular, in *Depression to Cold War: A History of America from Herbert Hoover to Ronald Reagan.* Siracusa’s chapter, *The White House Under Siege*, provided invaluable insight on the roots of the Watergate problem and its meaning in contemporary American society. I used the history Siracusa developed as a building block to construct a factual overview of the Watergate Affair, which I later expanded to form the introduction of this thesis. Apart from Siracusa’s work, I largely relied upon evidence put forth by the Nixon Library in their Watergate Exhibit, as well as the insight provided by the participants of the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project.

In comparison to the array of studies on Watergate, the examination of the imprint the affair has left on the American national psyche is minuscule. A review of the literature in this area of Watergate research uncovered four major texts. Michael Schudson’s *Watergate in American Memory* focused on recollections of Watergate and why they are no longer significant in the minds of Americans. His study examined the constitution of the collective memory of Watergate in the United States, to decipher the ways in which group, institutional and cultural memories of the past shape people’s actions in the present. By analysing the way the Watergate story has previously been told, Schudson asserted that we can see why it is we accept certain versions of the story as truth in the present. Schudson also argued that Watergate memory in America has been promoted by the actors involved in Watergate, as well as politicians, and has been officially sanctioned by the United States political establishment. In addition legislation and reforms enacted in response to Watergate, and the publicity generated from films, books, and novels serve as a living reminder of the events. Moreover, Americans can still count on the teaching of Watergate in primary school through children’s textbooks, guest lecturing of Watergate survivors in universities and public arenas, and Watergate anniversary newsprint to keep the memory alive.

It is through these avenues, Schudson observed, that the two main branches of the Watergate story have been disseminated, and have continued to reside in American collective memory. One branch focuses on the actual wrongdoing and cover-up the Nixon

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administration executed as the heart of the event, whilst the other branch addresses the process of revelation, and the construction of the public scandal itself. Consequently one branch may be seen as a liberal view and the other as conservative. The liberal viewpoint concentrates on the abuse of power and the justification for the implementation of processes to limit wrongdoing from taking place; whereas the conservative viewpoint sees Watergate as proof that the system works. In this sense, Watergate can either be seen as a scandal or a constitutional crisis.\textsuperscript{5} Essentially, Schudson’s work saw the meaning and memory of the Watergate Affair as socially constructed. His study confirmed that political beliefs contribute to the way one views the Watergate problem, and that competing views on the affair exist in contemporary American society: “the place of Watergate in our memory lies not with one interpretation or another exclusively but with the play of leading interpretations against one another”.\textsuperscript{6} Schudson’s investigation, therefore, can be read as an examination of the conflicting narratives of Watergate as a metaphor for the struggle to shape national identity and the country’s collective consciousness.

Schudson’s observation that opposing memories of Watergate persist has been supported by Tian-Jia Dong in \textit{Understanding Power Through Watergate}. While Dong similarly categorised these differing perceptions as stemming from a Conservative, Liberal, Radical Left or Critical Left political perspective,\textsuperscript{7} Dong also made the point that the Watergate saga was an example of powerful politicians mobilising their resources through interpersonal networks, to form the Senate and House investigation committees. These groups succeeded in framing and reframing the Watergate agenda and events to suit their needs. In Dong’s opinion, ordinary citizens and the mass media accepted the social construction of the Watergate events developed by these committees. This led to the affair being perceived, even to this day, as a unique example of political misconduct.\textsuperscript{8} Dong concluded that the Watergate case should be seen as an example of informal power relations operating outside the orthodox assumptions of United States power (i.e. checks and balances/constitutional protections) at the time.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{6} Schudson, \textit{Watergate in American Memory}, 13-14.
\textsuperscript{8} Dong, \textit{Understanding Power Through Watergate}(2001), 241-248.
\textsuperscript{9} Dong, \textit{Understanding Power Through Watergate} (2005), 24.
Rather than concentrating on the way Watergate is remembered, Daniel Frick’s *Reinventing Richard Nixon: A Cultural History of an American Obsession* attempted to gain insight into the enduring meaning of Nixon. He achieved this by examining competing images of the president as ideological symbols, deeming them as representative of national myths and cultural values that drive the United States.¹⁰ Frick explored the ways that Nixon has been represented, and represented himself, in American political life and popular culture. He conducted an exhaustive analysis of cultural artefacts—political memorabilia, campaign biographies, cinema, cartoons, drama, jokes, novels, and poems—to illuminate the ideological rifts between the cultures of contemporary America and their enduring “battle for dominance” over one another to shape the nation’s identity.¹¹ Frick portrayed Nixon as the most polarising figure in modern American political history: for some Americans he was the true personification of the American dream, epitomising the myth of the self-made man and the national mission; for others “Nixon functions as an emblem of those myths, emptiness and hypocrisy”.¹² Using a multitude of representations of Nixon in popular culture,¹³ Frick showed that no president has surpassed Nixon regarding the hold he has maintained on the public psyche. Frick observed Nixon’s persistent presence and attendant debate over his legacy, serves as a kind of metaphor for the more significant debate over “the meaning of America”.¹⁴ For Frick, “our reinventions of Nixon map out the terrain of what we have come to know as the culture wars”.¹⁵ Similar to the argument put forth by Schudson, Frick outlined that the reason why Nixon’s meaning is still passionately contested is because the “real” interpretation of the man and of post-World War II America—the Cold War, Vietnam, the antiwar movement, and Watergate—the argument over what America was and should be, is still up for grabs.¹⁶

David Greenberg’s *Nixon’s Shadow: The History of an Image* covered a similar terrain to Frick, but “devotes less attention to literary and cinematic reinventions” of Nixon, and instead examined representations of Nixon by journalists and historians.¹⁷ Like Frick, Greenberg’s study investigated Nixon’s career-long efforts to craft a marketable image, and how the 37th

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¹¹ Ibid., 13.
¹² Ibid., 6.
¹³ Ibid., 7.
¹⁴ Ibid., 17.
¹⁵ Ibid., 7.
¹⁶ Ibid., 17.
¹⁷ Ibid., 240.
President “was perceived and understood by different groups of people throughout his career and afterward.”\textsuperscript{18} Apart from commenting on Nixon’s many personae, Greenberg explored the transformation of American image politics since the birth of television, highlighting Nixon as “a man obsessed with maintaining what he perceived to be correct public image”. Greenberg’s book, therefore, can also be read as a case study in controlling political spin.\textsuperscript{19} Greenberg’s work assessed Nixon as a cultural icon, demonstrating how Nixon’s sympathisers—conservative businessman, political loyalists, foreign policy pundits and academic historians—and his detractors—Washington reporters, psycho-biographers, New Left radicals, and liberal intellectuals—responded to his political shape shifting. Lacking a unifying thesis, \textit{Nixon’s Shadow} is a series of essays examining the various images of Nixon these groups have developed and disseminated over the last half century: from the young conservative “populist everyman”, a navy veteran who loved his family and fought for the American dream; to the vice-presidential unprincipled opportunist, “Tricky Dick”; from the fascist “dark conspirator”, and the shameless “news manager” who was the enemy of the First Amendment; to the hapless “victim” of liberal enemies; from the insecure and paranoid “madman” to the “elder statesman”; and the last domestic policy “liberal”, a steward of the Great Society.\textsuperscript{20} Greenberg traced the evolution of Nixon’s images, noting that each said as much about its time and place as it did about Nixon himself. He showed that on the whole, when pieced together, the mosaic of images he created came closer to the meaning of Nixon than any in isolation. Included in Greenberg’s analysis were many anecdotes of how Nixon is portrayed in novels, films, television, popular music, poetry, and even opera. Thus, like Frick, Greenberg has provided a chronological account of the ways in which Nixon successfully lodged himself in the national consciousness, concluding that Nixon’s shifting images stemmed from the observers “own concerns and ideas”.\textsuperscript{21} For Greenberg, then, Nixon’s changing popular portrayal “provided a window into the post-war history of American culture”,\textsuperscript{22} which means that “New Nixons” will continue to be developed in the future.

Like Schudson and Frick, Greenberg argued that different perceptions of Nixon existed “simultaneously”, stemming from “the diversity of political viewpoints” in the United States. “None of these groups invented its image of Nixon out of thin air. Each detected qualities in

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., xxx.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., xxxi.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., xix.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., xix.
the man: his populist rhetoric, his conspiratorial designs, his devotion to high stakes diplomacy”, for example, “and each filtered those qualities through its own traditions, interests, ideologies, and assumptions”. Greenberg has not suggested that “every image of Nixon has an equal measure of truth…that every group’s perspective is equally valid”, or that there exists a “real” Nixon. In this sense, Greenberg has inadvertently argued that the various meanings accorded to Nixon have been socially constructed. More importantly, like Frick, Greenberg has maintained that “Nixon’s image [is] constantly changing, [and will] always [be] contested”, since “at any moment different images compete for primacy”. “Although Nixon functions as a representative symbol for certain national mythic stories”, Frick observed that “he does not do so as some singular emblem expressing the essence of a unitary culture. Rather Richard Nixon serves as a field of play upon which contradictory symbolic representations of the man and the nation he represents contend with one another”.

Interestingly, however, when it comes to Watergate, Greenberg seems to have ignored his own logic: “During Nixon’s presidency, his true nature was debated more strenuously than ever. [Yet] with Watergate the question seemed—to most, anyhow, to be settled”. If this statement was true, the conclusions that Schudson and Dong have drawn could be considered baseless. Greenberg’s comments suggest that a further examination of the perceptions of Watergate is warranted.

The Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

In October 2010, I travelled to the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda California, to perform the data collection phase of this research project. What I observed behind-the-scenes at the library significantly altered the way I looked at the legacy of the Watergate Affair and how its memory had been socially constructed.

Prior to 2006 the Nixon Library was privately run by the Nixon Foundation, an organisation made up of Nixon’s family members, friends and loyalists. As a result of the library being brought into the federal presidential library system, the National Archives and Record

23 Ibid., xxxi, xix.
24 Ibid., xxxii.
25 Ibid., xxx-xxxi.
Administration (NARA) took over the library’s management and day-to-day functioning. Dr Timothy Naftali was appointed as the library’s new Director, and it was deemed necessary to update the Museum’s Watergate exhibit to provide a narrative that did not display Nixon’s point of view on the scandal. The latter decision was not welcomed by the Foundation, leading the organisation to attempt to subvert NARA’s efforts every step of the way. The pressure being placed on the library’s NARA staff, to conform to a different view of Watergate, became apparent whilst I was visiting the library, and reinforced in my mind that Watergate’s legacy was still being strongly contested. It indicated that the history of Watergate, as with the history of Nixon and his presidency, still mattered as a current issue.

As I looked a little closer at the dispute between NARA and the Foundation, Frick’s observation that “History gets written—and rewritten—by the winners of cultural conflict” became more meaningful to me. According to Frick:

*Nixon’s diehard critics refuse to forgive, and his loyalists acknowledge very little that needs pardoning. As groups, they both remain interested in only victory...[because]...some of the combatants understand that the battle over Richard Nixon is a long-term battle for the nation’s future.*

Furthermore, for Frick:

*This matter is of great consequence because the ability to define the past comes control of the stories we use to understand the world in the present. And these narratives lead us to take certain actions that in turn, help shape the future. Imagine the measures that a nation takes if it believes that it has the most to fear from a powerful executive branch, compared to those that it takes if convinced that its enemies are the liberals and the media.*

Frick’s insights reinforced his overall argument that “the outcome of the continuing battle over Richard Nixon could not be more crucial”. Given that the meaning of Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate are fundamentally linked, I see the struggle to define the Watergate Affair as equally important.

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29 Ibid., 238.
30 Ibid., 15.
31 Ibid.
The Nixon Library Oral History Project

Inspection of the materials held within the Nixon Library’s collection, revealed the availability of a data set—the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project—previously unavailable to the public, which had not been the subject of detailed analysis. Given that the aim of my research was to examine perceptions of the Watergate Affair, I deemed the oral histories the library had recorded to be an ideal data set to analyse.

Scope and data collection process

The Nixon Library conducted a total of 145 interviews of 141 participants between 2006 and 2011, including Nixon administration officials, politicians during the Nixon era, officials from other administrations, media and entertainment figures, as well as Nixon’s family and friends. Apart from gathering evidence for the development of a Watergate narrative for the Museum’s new exhibit, the project also collated views about the Nixon presidency to preserve for the library. As a data source, the Nixon Library’s Oral History collection contained the most current and broad compilation of views about Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate open to the public at the commencement of this research. Given the Oral Histories had not previously been studied in depth, the analysis of these interviews has provided invaluable insight into the lasting legacy of the Watergate Affair, allowing me to outline a potentially fresh perspective on Watergate decades after it occurred.

Given the time constraints of a doctoral thesis, my limited finances, and lack of access to Watergate networks, it was fortuitous that the Nixon Library had interviewed a significant number of Watergate actors and prominent observers in their Oral History Project. In light of this, I deemed it unnecessary to replicate a similar method of data gathering.

Some of the notable absences from the Oral History Project included Nixon’s presidential speech-writer, Patrick Buchanan, the head of the Nixon White House ‘dirty tricks’ operation, Donald Segretti, the Committee to Re-elect the President’s Liaison to the White House, Gordon Strachan, and Nixon’s National Security Adviser and Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger.
Of these oral histories, 19 remain closed to the public as they have not yet been reviewed by the necessary agency for national security clearance. Additionally two have not yet been processed, and three are sealed due to privacy and will remain closed until they have been donated to the library as per deed or gift. Six of the Oral History Project participants (Charles Colson, Leonard Garment, Barbara Franklin, Egil Krogh, Geoffrey Shepard, and Jerry Warren) were interviewed twice as the library had follow-up questions. One of the latter three participant’s interviews remains closed, pending security clearance. Similarly the final half of Watergate burglar, Eugenio Rolando Martinez’s interview remains closed for the same reason. This left me with 117 oral history interviews to view and analyse for this research project. The interviews varied in length, with some running for as little as 50 minutes, whilst others on key Nixon administration figures stretched out to 6 hours.

The interviewers used open-ended questions and began by asking participants to give information on their life history, academic background, and how they came to meet Richard Nixon or became involved with the Nixon White House. Other questions related to their employment and role in government at the time in question, and specific tasks that were their responsibility. The interviewers would often refer to the documentary record to establish whether the participant remembered a task they may have authorised or a project they may have been working on. This method was particularly useful as the topic of investigation is over 40 years old.

Another technique the interviewers used, as a comparative tool, entailed asking many of the participants what they recalled of historical Nixon presidency moments, such as: “Where were you when you first found out about the Watergate break-in?”, “How did you feel when you heard the smoking gun tape?”, “Where were you when Nixon resigned?”, “What did you think about the pardon?”, “Have your thoughts of Nixon or Watergate changed or evolved?”. Furthermore, considering many of the participants worked in a number of different presidential administrations, the interviewees would often be asked to “compare and contrast” their recollections of each. Naftali and Musgrave did not ask leading questions in the interview process.

The oral history approach to knowledge production

Valerie Raleigh Yow noted in her guide to recording oral history that in undertaking such an exercise “it is the very interpretation of the event and the remembered feelings about it that
we seek”.32 This depiction of oral history gets at the heart of the method’s approach to knowledge production. Oral history is an “active process” where “interviewers seek out, record, and preserve memories”,33 aiming to “understand a historical time or a present era” and “individual lives in society”.34 The overarching objective of oral history to “record” memories implies that there is someone else involved in the research process that “frames the topics and inspires the narrator to begin the act of remembering, jogs memory, and records and presents the narrator’s words”.35 In this sense, oral history is not used as a method to arrive at a precise record of historical events, but instead recognises the value of recording people’s memories of an event, as a “means of describing experience and expressing meaning”.36 As Yow identified, oral history “can reveal a psychological reality that is the basis for ideals the individual holds and for the things he or she does”.37 Ultimately, the personal testimony obtained through the oral history knowledge production process “enables the researcher to understand the meaning of artefacts in the lives of people”, and thus “reveal[s] the images and the symbols people use to express feelings about their experiences and give them meaning”.38 Given this project’s aim to develop knowledge about the way Watergate actors and observers perceived and assigned meaning to the Watergate Affair, the examination of oral history is well suited to this research.

From an ontological and epistemological standpoint oral history research assumes that “meaning is generated during the research process” through the development of “an interview narrative, and the analysis and interpretation of that narrative”, thereby rejecting the view that meaning is “out there” waiting “to be discovered”. This view draws on the assumption that “social knowledge does not exist independent of the research process”. Consequently “no two interview sessions are the same”. The goals of such an inquiry include “exploration, description, explanation, theory building, or social action”.39 Given my assumption that the meaning of Watergate is not inherent in the events that took place, but rather, Watergate actors and observers have developed different ways of perceiving the affair,

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34 Ibid, 16.
36 Ibid, 15.
37 Ibid, 11.
38 Ibid, 11.
I believe the analysis of oral history interviews to philosophically be on par with the major assumptions driving this research.

Strengths and weaknesses of oral history research

One of the major advantages that oral history research has over other data collection methods, such as archival research, is its ability to capture information such as personal insights or anecdotes that are rarely found in official documents, providing the ability to tap into raw perspective. This gives researchers access to history that extends beyond official discourse, and in doing so assists in providing a fuller picture of the past by augmenting the information provided by public records, statistical data, photographs, maps, letters, diaries, and other historical materials. Those who have experienced or witnessed the event or occasion in history are able to contribute various viewpoints and perspectives that fill in gaps in the documented history, sometimes even correcting or contradicting the written record.

Considering the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project interviewed such a diverse sample of people who may not have been interviewed in the past, the possibility of new insights being unearthed significantly increase. During the interview process, Naftali and Musgrave had the opportunity to ask questions left out of the documentary record they had already examined, and to interview people whose stories have been untold or forgotten. Oral history can therefore provide a new source of information for historians who are not dependent on written documents available in the Nixon library’s document archives. Through these new sources, I had the opportunity to listen to more voices about the history of the Nixon presidency, and the Watergate Affair.

By allowing researchers to learn about the perspectives of individuals who might not otherwise appear in the historical record, oral history research may be seen as egalitarian. The Nixon Library interviewed many lower level staff employed in the Nixon administration: underlings whose perspectives may have been overlooked or left out by previous researchers, and who had fallen through the cracks of the written record. Although many of Nixon’s close aides and well-known politicians at the time may show up regularly in official documents and the media, the remainder of the staff who worked behind the scenes very seldom do. In this way, oral history research further attempts to fill gaps in the historical record that often concentrates on society’s elite.
Given the ability of oral history research to obtain information from a wider sample of research participants, it is an excellent method with which to capture the culture of an organisation, such as the inner machinations of the White House or a presidential administration at a particular time in history, providing greater insight into events. The life stories of the individuals who worked in an organisation can be used to build an organisational narrative. From such data, a picture of the values and relationships that were a part of the collective experience can be built. Oral history research has the ability to “connect biographical experience with the social/historical context in which biographies are played out”, thus “allow[ing] researchers to make links between micro-level experiences and the macro-level environments that shape and contain those experiences”.41 Such understandings can be particularly useful when researching the complex nature of a presidency which feeds off of individual personalities and relationships, and both affects and is affected by its context and place in history.

Oral history, as a research method, focuses on its participant’s perspectives during the data collection process, and “aids people as they remember, recall, restore, and retell their story”.42 Oral history participants are therefore seen as “authorities on their knowledge” and “have a significant hand in shaping the content of the interviews”, making them “privileged as knowing parties with valuable knowledge to share”.43 Oral history research taps into subjective experiences of historical events of which interviewees were a part, or to which they bore witness. “Although initially guided by a series of questions, and later prompted or questioned as needed”, participants “have a big hand in creating the direction of the narrative, the topics covered, and the language used”.44 This means that the hopes, feelings, aspirations, disappointments and personal experiences of interviewees can come to light. Oral history provides living historical actors with the opportunity to enrich our understanding of history by telling their version of events in their own words. This gives interviewees the chance to participate in the creation of the historical retelling of their lives. Since oral history is straight from a person’s mouth and often discusses or exhibits emotions, incorporating such intangible reactions into the research process becomes easier, and creates thicker descriptions of a person or a place or a time. Considering my research aims to examine the way meaning has been assigned to the Nixon presidency and the Watergate Affair, the

41 Ibid., 16.
42 Ibid., 22.
43 Ibid., 18.
44 Ibid., 19.
analysis of subjective oral histories may be deemed more appropriate than the assessment of written sources. Newspaper articles, speeches, and government documents reveal significant useful information, but these kinds of sources often neglect more personal and private experiences, and are unable to determine what a person is thinking.

One of the other strengths of oral history research is the depth of understanding of the past it provides. Oral history helps us to grasp how individuals experienced the forces of history by illuminating the ways decisions made by the movers and shakers of the day, such as Nixon, changed the lives of those on the receiving end of directives. For example, the Nixon Library oral histories go a long way in explaining the decision-making process within the White House at the time, as well as the way that undocumented orders were carried out in the Nixon administration. The analysis of White House documents more often than not makes it impossible for this information to be uncovered. Change is obvious to the naked eye, but oral history allows people to express the personal consequences of change. During interviews, narrators may reflect on ways their lives remained the same in spite of change, particularly values, traditions, and beliefs. Thus the oral histories developed by the Nixon Library captured and preserved the perspectives of the Nixon administration’s decision-making process, as well as the perspectives of those who witnessed or were affected by this practice. Furthermore, by adding depth to history by drawing on individual experience, the analysis of oral history helps researchers to avoid sweeping generalisations that stereotype people, engender prejudice, and overlook important variables in the historical context.

Ultimately the strength of oral evidence lies in its orality—its ability to analyse verbal communication. Although there may be problems when transforming the oral into the literal, with distinguishing factors such as volume and tonal range not easily being reducible to written form, one of the major assets of the Nixon Library’s oral histories is they were recorded on video. This means they have the added advantage of visually displaying each spoken word which aided my ability to accurately transcribe the sections of interview I required.

Considering many of the participants involved in the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project passed away after being interviewed, the examination of these interviews also posed an opportunity to assess the last words some Watergate actors and observers had publicly stated on the topic of the affair, and in some cases reflect on how their views of Watergate
have evolved or changed over time. This also means that the Nixon Library had the opportunity to capture and preserve information that may not otherwise have been saved. One of the other bonuses of this data set stems from the general age of the participants, ranging from 61 (David Hume Kennerley) to 98 (Earl Butz) years. It has been noted that “people tend with the passage of time to be more, rather than less, candid”. The reason for this tendency is that “when a career is in progress, there is much to lose by an untoward admission”, whereas “near the end of a life, there is a need to look at things as honestly as possible to make sense of experiences over a lifetime: this need to understand what happened strongly competes with the need to make oneself look good”.45 Most of the participants seemed very open and willing to share their experiences with the interviewers, whether that meant painting themselves and/or Nixon in a positive or negative light. Yet although many of them were retired from government and could speak freely, others were also still employed in the public service or elsewhere, and may have toned down their responses so as to not generate any criticism or bad publicity.

The candidness displayed in the Nixon Library oral histories may also be due to oral history having the potential to be a tremendously rewarding and validating encounter for research participants. The act of “sharing one’s experiences, thoughts, and feelings can be affirming”, given “they may not otherwise have the opportunity to share their knowledge”.46 Through oral history, researchers and interviewees come together in conversation about a commonly shared interest, and the interviewee is given the opportunity to discuss a time in their lives which previously they may not have had the forum to do so. This gives interviewees an opportunity to get certain things ‘off their chest’, as was the case with some oral history participants who discussed details about their Watergate experience that they had not previously shared. “In this vein, participants might find the interview process to be empowering”, giving them the “opportunity to reflect on their life experiences, which may lead to greater understanding and self-awareness”.47

Although oral history research bears much strength, the major weakness of the method arises from the very nature of the approach. Considering oral history research aims to collect

45 Yow. Recording Oral History, 22.
46 Ibid., 20.
47 Ibid.
memories, the memory of participants is a “vital concern” for historians. Ultimately “the ability to recall depends on the individuals health, on interest in the topic under consideration, on the way the question is asked, on the degree of pain (or pleasure) required to dredge the topic up, and on the willingness of the narrator to participate in the interview in a helpful way”. Although conventional wisdom would say that memories can fade and change over time, research indicates that “direct, dramatic, and emotional situations tend to produce more fixed and lasting memories”. Furthermore, studies executed on “flashbulb memories”, characterised as shocking one-time events that occur in the political and social world, have shown their consistency over the years. It is logical to assume that as a person gets older their memory may fail them, and therefore their recollections become less reliable and credible. “As time increases between an experience and its recounting, individuals tend to condense the sequence of events and omit critical actions and judgments”. Yet humans will generally recall events that are more important to them, because incidents experienced more intensely “will be more elaborately encoded in our system of memory”, and they will be repeated over the years “as they seek to reinforce meanings in their lives”. Thus, although researchers must take into account the amount of time that has elapsed since the event being researched took place, a “long duration does not automatically diminish the value of an interview” as “an individual who may not remember events that took place yesterday or last week often can recount in detail events that took place twenty or thirty years ago”.

Another potential weakness of oral history research may be seen in the opportunity for personal bias to affect the data gathered and analysed, which is of particular concern with some of the Nixon Library Oral Histories. For example, the library included Nixon’s brother

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49 Ibid, 23.
50 Ibid, 17.
51 Ibid, 48.
54 Yow. Recording Oral History, 44.
Ed and several close friends, former White House employees, and current Nixon Foundation members in the project. Although the recollections of these participants are just as important as any of the others, there exists the potential for their views to be skewed by their personal prejudices, stemming from their relationship to Nixon. In order to limit the capacity of such bias to negatively impact this study, I have noted these relationships throughout the findings chapters of this thesis.

Interviewer bias also has the potential to significantly impact the data produced in oral history research. It is extremely important for an interviewer to prevent their own influences and biases from altering or adding to the memories of the interviewees.56 “The relationship between the interviewer and interviewee has to be a trusting one, friendly, warm, and understanding. But the interviewer also has to avoid personal opinions or any other influences that could change what the interviewee is remembering”.57 Considering I did not conduct the oral history interviews, my ability to limit bias of this nature was diminished. However the partiality of the interviewers does constitute important data. This particular point is noteworthy due to the negative relationship that has developed between the former proprietors of the Library, the Nixon Foundation, and Naftali.

As will be discussed in further detail in chapter five, the Foundation have largely been opposed to Naftali’s tenure and had attempted to influence the Archivist of the United States, Steve Ferrero, to terminate his post as Library Director. The turbulent relationship developed as a result of the Foundation’s disapproval of the Library’s new Watergate exhibit that Naftali curated, which they believed painted Nixon and the affair in an inaccurate and unfair manner. Naftali was routinely being attacked in the press at the time and several objections had been made to NARA concerning the exhibit, which severely impacted the length of time it took for the renovations to be completed.58 Although the oral history interviews showed no signs of overt bias, on Naftali’s part, it must be noted that the pressure from the Foundation may have understandably affected his ability to perform his role as Library Director, his attitude at work, as well his capacity to remain completely objective during the oral history interview gathering.

57 Ibid.
and the exhibit renovation process. It is difficult to tell how many of Naftali’s views have made their way into these mediums, but it must be noted here as a possible limitation of this study.

Dishonesty is also another potential problem. Interviewees may be unwilling to honestly discuss mistakes or errors even years after the fact. The human memory is selective and susceptible to distortion, and “some people tend to recall themselves in a better light than is accurate”.\(^59\) Memory can play tricks on the truth, causing people to be subjective. However, as oral historian Alessandro Portelli observed, “untrue” statements may be psychologically “true” and errors in fact may be more revealing than factually accurate accounts. He insisted that the “importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts but rather in its divergence from them, where imagination, symbolism, and desire break in”.\(^60\) Even though “oral history interviews are generally not the best way to acquire certain kinds of factual information, such as specific dates or places, because individuals frequently fail to recall these details accurately”\(^61\), the value of oral history is less about events and more about meaning construction, which is what this research seeks to tap into. As Yow noted, “is it not the meaning attributed to the facts that makes them significant or not? After all, history—or society—does not exist outside human consciousness”. In this sense, history is what the people who lived through it “make of it”,\(^62\) and oral history provides a glimpse of the “psychological truth of the narrator”.\(^63\)

Donald A. Ritchie reminded us that “the memories of direct participants are sources far too rich for historical researchers to ignore”, and advises that “interviewers must be aware of the peculiarities of memory, adept in their methods of dealing with it, conscious of its limitations, and open to its treasures”.\(^64\) Although oral history research may be criticised for having a certain lack of historical reliability, in so far as it focuses on the peculiarities of the interviewed subject, the goal of this study was to examine contemporary perceptions and memories of Watergate, not necessarily to examine their truth. Given this project’s aim to develop knowledge about how major actors and well-known observers of the scandal perceived and

\(^{59}\) Ibid.


\(^{63}\) Ibid, 64.

\(^{64}\) Ritchie. Doing Oral History, 18-19.
assigned meaning to Watergate, the examination of oral history is appropriate for this research.

**Development of a new framework to categorise perceptions of Nixon and the Watergate Affair**

Prior to conducting the analysis of the Nixon Library’s oral histories, I spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the literature on Nixon, his presidency and Watergate. I set out to systematically collate as many views on the causes of Watergate and Nixon’s role that I could find in books and refereed journal articles, and organise them in a way that would allow me to more effectively comprehend contrasting views in Watergate’s historiography.

The area of Nixon and Watergate research proved to be prolific, with 1680 entries being found on WorldCat alone. The only review published on the topic of Watergate, which I found via a Proquest database search using “Watergate Review” as keywords, is Ruth Morgan’s 1996 *Presidential Studies Quarterly* article entitled *Nixon, Watergate, and the Study of the Presidency*. Morgan surveyed the entire field of Watergate research up till that point. Consequently I used her survey of the literature as a building block for further examination of the study area. Mainly using the Proquest and Ebsco host databases, I attempted to find as many book reviews on the studies Morgan had mentioned, organising them in the same themes she had developed to synthesise the texts she reviewed: Journalists and Freelance Writers; Participant-Observer Accounts: The Investigated; Participant Observers: The Investigators; Academicians; Watergate: Causes; and Systemic Theories. I collected multiple reviews for each text to collate their various views, in order to obtain as much information as possible. I ended up with hundreds of reviews which I organised in hard copy and a duplicate electronic folder system.

After locating the reviews I set out to examine them, taking note of the following information they outlined on the original text: the date the work had been published; information on the author including whether they participated in the Watergate events; the motivation behind the study; the study’s methodology including scope, data sources, hypothesis, research questions, and findings; the validity and reliability of the study; the author’s views on Nixon,

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whether they were positive, neutral, or negative; and how the work compared with and contrasted to other studies in the field. I recorded this information in a matrix, making it easy to locate and review.

Since the method of categorisation Morgan developed did not allow for the more recent cultural examinations noted earlier in this chapter, I attempted to classify the reviews in another way, this time organising them methodologically: psychological studies; participant-observer accounts; historical studies; and theoretical studies. I also attempted to organise the reviews chronologically, breaking the studies into seven categories: (1) the initial disclosures and investigations, (2) early story tellers, (3) the memoirs, (4) authoritative pieces, (5) conspiracy theories, (6) revisionists, and (7) cultural studies. Still, neither of these frameworks incorporated a view on Nixon’s role in the Watergate scandal. I needed to find a way to add the Nixon layer into the organisational structure I was developing to view the Watergate Affair.

On July 22, 2011, I attended a conference convened by the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, titled: Understanding Richard Nixon and His Era: A Symposium. It showcased discussions relating to the Nixon presidency, with panels organised topically on: Biography, Politics, Domestic policy, Vietnam, Foreign policy, The Nixon Archives: a progress report, Using the White House tapes, and Legacy. Importantly, it brought together the scholars who contributed to the text A Companion to Richard Nixon, edited by Professor Melvin Small; each presented a synopsis of their chapter. Of these, only Professor Keith W. Olson spoke about Watergate. This prompted me to examine his chapter on the affair, which like Morgan’s article, surveyed studies on Watergate and provided an overview of the scandal. Olson’s study proved invaluable because it offered insight into studies on Nixon and Watergate published after 1996. As I had previously done with the research Morgan had analysed, I undertook a further search for book reviews of the work Olson cited.

Olson’s chapter synthesised the literature according to the following themes: authoritative studies on Watergate, revisionist studies, and recent Watergate studies by historians. He further unpacked the Watergate revisionist study category, explaining that such texts generally have one of three characteristics: revisionists that emphasise the Watergate break in and de-emphasise the cover-up; assert that Nixon’s transgressions fell within patterns of his predecessors; and claim evaluations of Nixon lack proportion as he was more than

Watergate. Although Olson’s categorisation successfully highlighted views on the roots of Watergate and Nixon’s enduring presidential legacy, I felt it could be expanded to create a configuration that would allow for greater inclusion of the themes present in the book reviews and articles I had assessed. In doing so I sought to develop a structure that provided a glimpse into what the author believed caused Watergate, the extent of Nixon’s involvement, whether Nixon’s resignation was appropriate, and what the lessons of Watergate were. On this basis, I performed another analysis of the reviews sourced, and then conducted a further analysis of the original sources. I examined these texts in the same way I had analysed the book reviews, and noted any further insight in the matrix I developed.

This process resulted in the development of a framework which organised studies of Nixon and Watergate into four schools of thought, as a means of synthesising the various themes found within the literature. These schools of thought are distinguished by the particular element they emphasise in their Watergate storytelling. Each school can be identified via the attention they afford, or the significance they impart, to one of the following aspects: Nixon’s flawed character; abuse of power; history and the presidency; and external forces. If we place these schools of thought on a continuum, each school expands the scope of Watergate study from focusing on Nixon to addressing the wider context.

Those who emphasise President Nixon put him at the centre of Watergate and highlight his role as the primary cause of the scandal. Those who accentuate the abuse of power angle still regard Nixon’s actions as important to understanding why Watergate occurred; but argue that this insight must be coupled with the examination of the accruement of presidential power since the end of WWII, thereby emphasising the connection between power and personality. This outward looking scope has also been used by the school attempting to give a broader perspective to the image of Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate, by seeking to debunk myths via the consideration of precedents set by past presidents, and providing context for Watergate within the Nixon presidency. And lastly, those who have sought to de-emphasise the role of Nixon have taken an even wider view, by looking at the actions of actors other than Nixon and groups outside the Nixon administration who have played a role in bringing about the Watergate Affair. As a result of these contrasting views, each school perceives the Watergate story differently. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that an author may be strictly characterised as fitting into one school or another, given that neighbouring schools on

the continuum tend to overlap and lean on each other in their Watergate explanations. Even though those holding the views of each school tend to have opposing perceptions of the affair, the lines between such opposition are sometimes blurred and arbitrary.

The following table has been generated to summarise the nature of the four schools, and their emphasis on Nixon’s role in Watergate.

**Table 1.1: Summary comparison of the key dimensions of the Four Schools of Watergate Thought**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis</th>
<th>Nixon at Centre</th>
<th>Power and Personality</th>
<th>Precedent and Context</th>
<th>Nixon as Victim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>Nixon, his upbringing and personal history, and the shaping of his character.</td>
<td>Abuse of power, the Constitution, and the separation of powers.</td>
<td>Misconduct in the United States presidency, and the debunking of Watergate myths.</td>
<td>Actors other than Nixon, and Groups and Agencies outside the Nixon Administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Causes of Watergate</strong></td>
<td>The effect of Nixon’s character flaws on the way he managed his administration.</td>
<td>Presidential power aggrandisement during wartime, coupled with a lack of presidential integrity.</td>
<td>The failure of Nixon’s staff and the nation to understand the real Nixon.</td>
<td>Nixon’s enemies and rogue decision making in the Nixon White House.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nixon’s role in Watergate</strong></td>
<td>Ultimate role</td>
<td>Large role</td>
<td>Some role</td>
<td>Little to no role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did Nixon deserve his fate?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66
Review of literature using the Four Schools of Thought framework

The following discussion organises the literature on the topics of Nixon, his presidency and Watergate within the four schools framework. Although the following analysis is not exhaustive of the aforementioned subject area, it highlights the major themes that emerged during the review process and the key texts which reflect them.

Nixon at Centre

The themes of the Nixon at Centre school of Watergate thought displayed here are dominated by the views of those who have adopted a psycho-historical approach to the study of the presidency, including Nixon biographers and Nixon administration staff members. More often than not, Nixon at the centre thinkers have analysed aspects of the president’s character and personality, as a way to give colour to depictions of his presidency and the Watergate Affair. In doing so, lines have been drawn from Nixon’s negative personality traits to the downfall of the Nixon presidency. Given Nixon’s reputation for being an uncharismatic political leader, it is understandable that the analysis of his character flaws has been a popular area of study for decades. Some of the first scholars to investigate the effects of Nixon’s personality traits on the presidency published their works before information about the Watergate Affair had surfaced. For example, in 1972 three psycho-biographical studies examining Nixon had been published. Adding to this genre of study in the post-presidential era, David Abrahamsen’s 1977 psychoanalytic investigation, Nixon vs. Nixon: An Emotional Tragedy, argued that the source of Nixon’s devious behaviour as president may be traced back to his experiences as a child and adolescent. Highlighting Nixon’s secretive nature as an adult, Abrahamsen showed how an intelligent child evolved into a man alienated by others.

The effect of President Nixon’s dishonesty has also been examined by those who place him at the heart of his own downfall. David Wise's The Politics of Lying: Government Deception, Secrecy, and Power, which provided a detailed account of government, press and public


relations during the Johnson and early Nixon presidency period, argued that Nixon’s unwillingness to tell the truth was one of the major reasons for the loss of confidence he experienced from the public and the press alike.\textsuperscript{70} Fawn M. Brodie’s political psychobiography, \textit{Richard Nixon: The Shaping of his Character}, approached the examination of the forces which shaped Nixon’s personality from his early life up to his presidential election win in a way that resembled quasi-psychiatry, noting that one of the surprises of her research was “the extraordinary number of unnecessary lies Nixon told in his life”. “Their sheer quantity suggested a pathological origin”.\textsuperscript{71} Jonathan Aitken, who had privileged access to Nixon and his papers to write his revisionist biography of the President, took the insights of Wise and Brodie one step further in \textit{Nixon: A Life}. Although Aitken praised Nixon for every decision he ever made, particularly in foreign policy, he admitted that the “collapse of [Nixon’s] political support was brought about by an instant revulsion over the president’s lies, not by a measured judgment of his deeds”.\textsuperscript{72}

The emphasis on Nixon’s paranoia and lack of trust in others, and their ramifications are a common theme in Watergate literature. Those who subscribe to this view claim that Nixon’s past experiences affected the type of people he brought into and surrounded himself with in his presidency. Drawing on a dearth of biographical materials and interviews, Herbert S. Parmet’s \textit{Richard Nixon and His America} blended attention to historical forces with elements of personality in its analysis. Parmet highlighted the importance of Nixon’s loss in the 1960 presidential election to John F. Kennedy, describing this event as an instigator of Nixon’s subsequent personal staff selections as well as his behaviour in the White House.\textsuperscript{73} Likewise, Richard Reeves argued in \textit{President Nixon: Alone in the White House}, that Nixon’s suspicious nature encouraged him to surround himself with White House aides who were loyal, rather than appointing staffers purely based on their merits. Reeves’ study, which examined thousands of pages of Nixon’s handwritten presidential notes, memos and news summaries from his inauguration in 1969 until April 1973, also indicated that Nixon’s personal insecurity caused him to display a mania for secrecy and control.\textsuperscript{74} Journalist Tom Wicker’s revisionist essay, examining the secondary data on Nixon’s career, \textit{One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream}, at times an attempt to psycho-analyse his subject, found that Nixon often

\textsuperscript{73}  \textit{Herbert S. Parmet. Richard Nixon and His America}. 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), 356-8.
sought isolation, with him routinely confiding in his inner circle of personal aides on political matters, rather than his Cabinet.  

This isolation from alternative channels of communication has been described by Morgan as Nixon’s ultimate Watergate mistake: “Nixon cut out the Cabinet officers and gradually eased out old hands, such as Arthur Burns and Bryce Harlow, who might have tempered the inexperienced aides”.  

Nixon’s Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, reported in his memoir Years of Upheaval, that when he gave Harlow a brief account of what he knew about Watergate and asked what he thought had happened, he drawled, “some damn fool walked into the Oval Office and took literally what he heard in there”.  

In relation to the staffing of Nixon’s Committee for Re-election (CREEP), Senator Sam Ervin, Chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee outlined in his well-documented analysis of the fall of the Nixon presidency, The Whole Truth: The Watergate Conspiracy:

If President Nixon had entrusted his campaign for re-election to the Republican National committee, there would have been no Watergate, its members would have known that the activities of Watergate were outside the political pale. He gave control of the campaign, however, to close associates who were virtually without experience in politics or government apart from their association with him.

Those who place Nixon at the centre of the Watergate scandal, at one point or another, have drawn attention to the ‘dark side’ of his personality as a way of explaining Watergate’s causality. This was the conclusion arrived at by author of a three-part biography on Nixon, Stephen Ambrose, whose first volume Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician argued that: “Nixon exhibited an anger that knew no bounds, and it was this anger that drove his actions regarding politics in general and Watergate in particular”.  

Ambrose, whose volume is a month-by-month chronicle of a decade in the life of Nixon, based overwhelmingly on Nixon’s own words, written and spoken, public and private, and the personal accounts published by members of the Nixon administration, saw Nixon’s character flaws as the root of his desire

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for political intelligence, and the reason for the Watergate break-in. Rather than citing Nixon’s temper as the cause of many of the Nixon administration problems, long time White House reporter, Don Fulsom’s Nixon’s Darkest Secrets, which relied on a mixture of direct evidence, circumstantial evidence, rumour and gossip, argued that Nixon had a drinking problem that was the source of much havoc. That said the revelation of the White House Tapes provided clear evidence for scholars that the president not only possessed undesirable personality traits, but was largely unforgiving of those that did not agree with his views. In this vein, Small’s historical revisionist study, The Presidency of Richard Nixon—a balanced, cold, descriptive analysis which drew on original sources and secondary literature in a topical rather than chronological manner—concluded that the tapes revealed “the perpetually dark and hateful Nixon”, who “littered his conversations with religious and racial slurs”. Small claimed that those close to the president “over the eighteen months of the Watergate crisis saw a good deal of mercurial behaviour associated with manic depression”.

Subscribers to the Nixon at Centre way of thinking have argued that Nixon’s character flaws resulted in him setting the tone for his administration that rendered misconduct probable. Jeb Stuart Magruder, acting chairman for CREEP when he approved the June 17th 1972 Watergate break-in, was one of the pioneers of this view in his memoir An American Life: One Man’s Road to Watergate. Prominent historian, Stanley I. Kutler, the first author to write a detailed history of the Watergate scandal in 1990, The Wars of Watergate: The Last Crisis of Richard Nixon, based his analysis on the available Nixon presidency documentary record at the time, as well as over 60 interviews with Nixon administration figures. Adding colour to Magruder’s explanation, Kutler contended that the Watergate scandal was “rooted in the lifelong political personality of Richard Nixon”, arguing that the break-in at the Watergate Complex’s “planning, its flawed execution, and its motives must ultimately be seen as part of a behaviour pattern characterising the president and his aides that stretched back to the beginning of the Nixon administration”. The president, Kutler maintained, viewed politics as war, trusted no-one, and had his aides compile a list of enemies.

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80 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
The above view is particularly popular among those who argue that although Nixon didn’t order the break-in, he still bears some culpability for generating a particular atmosphere in the White House that promoted illegality among his staff, and allowed those in his administration to feel like they were immunised from responsibility—in regard to the abuses known as generic Watergate. This conclusion was arrived at in 2014 by White House Counsel from 1970 to 1973, John W. Dean III, in his daily chronicle of the cover-up displayed in The Nixon Defense: What he Knew and When he Knew it. Dean’s study reviewed approximately 1000 hours of Watergate related White House tapes, of which 634 had been previously un-transcribed, and brought the microscope as close to the Nixon of Watergate as anyone has. He showed that Nixon encouraged his aides to collect political intelligence by any means—fair or foul—and insisted that there had to be a cover-up immediately after the Watergate arrests. At the same time, Dean’s account concealed his own role in the affair, whilst excising some of Nixon’s exculpatory statements.

Probably the most vocal advocate for the Nixon at Centre way of thinking is journalist and historian Rick Perlstein, author of Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America. Perlstein went further than placing Nixon at the centre of the Watergate scandal, holding him accountable for the cultural divide in American life and the growth of bitter partisan divisions that still inform the country’s current political landscape. Adopting a seemingly psycho-analytical approach to his subject, Perlstein mostly relied on published accounts, some archival material, and the vast array of sources now available on the Internet, from newspapers to presidential recordings to campaign commercials, to portray Nixon as the central figure in a national agony of violence, recrimination, and division that occurred between 1964 and 1972. Unfortunately Perlstein’s approach revealed many factual inaccuracies. His work also exhibited a conspicuous disdain for his subject.

Much can be said in defence of the views of the ‘Nixon at Centre’ school of thought. We must, however, take note of the pitfalls associated with over-personalising in the president, the accumulated abuses of decades and of many individuals, and of the collapsing distinction between the president and the presidency. In summary, a personality theory of Watergate

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86 Ibid.
neglects other historical agents that may have played a role in bringing about Watergate, whether they are individuals or government agencies. Furthermore, to attribute Watergate solely to the president ignores the complexity of the presidency, the dynamic process of presidential decision making, and the impact of context.

Power and Personality

Like texts which illustrated Nixon as Watergate’s central figure, the examination of the affair using the lens of abuse of presidential power has also been a popular area of study in Watergate’s historiography. Scholars who came at the Watergate problem from this angle argued that Nixon’s personality must go hand in hand with the examination of power through history, to effectively assess the Watergate Affair and Nixon’s role within it. Such authors differed from those who have made Nixon the central agent of Watergate; they recognised the role historical context has played in explaining the cause of Watergate. Given this focus, it is not surprising that the major themes emerging from this school have been developed through historical and political scholarly studies, yet there also exists a large group of contributors whose memoirs or personal accounts of the Watergate affair portrayed their role in what they described as a constitutional battle.

The first Nixon administration insider to make the connection between power and personality themes was Dean in his 1976 memoir *Blind Ambition*. Dean described his time in the Nixon White House and illustrated what could happen when you put men of flawed character into government and turn them loose, in an in-grown, overheated, climate of power.\(^\text{89}\) Michael Genovese’s *The Watergate Crisis*, highlighted similar themes and arrived at a comparable conclusion. Via the examination of both primary and secondary sources, Genovese’s study discussed the importance of Watergate by offering a contemporary view of presidential corruption in historical perspective, whilst examining Nixon’s political personality, and addressing the question of whether any president is above the law.\(^\text{90}\)

The examination of the impact of war on the separation of powers under the Constitution, has dominated the work of those who consider power and personality as markers for examining Nixon’s presidential legacy. Although this area of study maintains a rich


historiography, the plethora of research on this topic generally stems from the well-known scholarly works of Washington Journalist and former President Lyndon Johnson Press Secretary, George Reedy, and distinguished Professor and historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. In *The Twilight of the Presidency*, Reedy explored the influence that presidential character has on White House decision-making and the problem of presidential power aggrandisement during wartime. He concluded that the presidency resembles a unique American monarchy with few checks and balances on the executive that holds office, other than their own character and internal convictions. Reedy recognised the probability that the constitutional functioning of the American presidency would diminish, if a flawed president held office during wartime.  

Schlesinger extended Reedy’s insights in *The Imperial Presidency*, a thoroughly researched, meticulous and systematic historical account. He argued that by 1973 the presidency had exceeded its constitutional limits by encroaching on the powers of Congress, and consequently had become imperial. Like Reedy, Schlesinger examined the accumulation of power in the presidency during wartime— with the increasing exclusion of the Congress, the press, and the public in foreign policy decisions—but stated that once the imperial presidency was established, it expanded into domestic areas. “Created by wars abroad”, Schlesinger argued, the imperial presidency “was making a bold bid for power at home”. Schlesinger saw the growth of presidential power accelerate during the Cold War, and carry over into non-military areas during the Nixon administration, citing Nixon’s decisions to impound federal funds, rather than veto Congressional legislation and his authorisation of the investigation of protesters. Schlesinger portrayed Nixon as an “elected king in a new revolutionary presidency”, claiming that he had deliberately and unprecedentedly set out to destroy the constitutional system by creating a plebiscitary presidency on the De Gaulle model, “with the president”, ruling largely by decree, and “accountable only once every four years”. Schlesinger perceived the Watergate Affair as both a symptom of the excessive accumulation of power, and the manifestation of Nixon’s imperial conception of the role of the executive, arising from Nixon’s view that a president was not required to obey certain laws. In this sense, Schlesinger has taken Reedy’s image of the failure of the modern

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94 Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency*, 255.
presidency and extended it, arguing that Nixon had consciously planned to alter the power of the president under the Constitution.

Through their examinations of the excesses of the executive branch of government in an era of the security state, Reedy and Schlesinger depicted the Watergate Affair as a constitutional crisis, a theme which now figures prominently among those who subscribe to the power and personality school of thought, and is arguably the most prevalent view embedded in Watergate’s legacy. An example of this perspective may be seen in the writings of Kutler, who argued that Watergate “consumed and convulsed the nation and tested the constitutional and political system as it had not been tested since the Civil War”. Small concurred with Kutler, stating that Watergate was an attempt “to subvert the American political system”. “No president”, Small argued, ever “ordered or participated in so many serious illegal and extra-legal acts that violated constitutional principles”. Highlighting the personality layer, Robert Dallek’s biographical examination, Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power, which tied together an analysis of millions of pages of national security files, 2800 hours of Nixon tapes, and 20,000 pages of Kissinger telephone transcripts, and unpublished diaries and interviews, concluded that Nixon was often erratic and unstable during his time in office and that Watergate reflected his “affinity for the secret manipulation of presidential power and small regard for legal and constitutional niceties”. Examining the way the general public viewed the Watergate scandal at the time, Olson also drew on the constitutional angle in Watergate: The Presidential Scandal that Shook America, a concise and comprehensive synthesis of the Watergate affair developed via the analysis of nationwide newspapers. Olson pointed out that the decision to remove Nixon from the presidency was a bipartisan one. This meant that the nation viewed Watergate as a concern that impacted the entire populace, rather than an example of partisan politics. Olson concluded that, Watergate had to be seen as a constitutional crisis, and a concern that required impeachment under the Constitution.

Subscribers of the power and personality mentality often highlight the roles of the media, and Senate and House Judiciary Committees in bringing down the Nixon presidency, and

95 Schudson, Watergate in American Memory.
96 Kutler, The Wars of Watergate, 616.
restoring balance to the American political system. This view has a large following among individuals who served in the press and Watergate investigative bodies. The most famous account describing Watergate from this perspective is Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein’s *All the President’s Men*. In this bestselling work, later adapted for film in 1976, Woodward and Bernstein described their time reporting at *The Washington Post*, and their role in exposing Watergate. Their journalistic investigations resulted in the conclusion that the government possessed the ability to accomplish whatever it saw fit, including the invasion of private property and the attack on personal rights of the average citizen. By illustrating the immense power and infallibility of the United States government, Woodward and Bernstein argued that the actions of the Nixon presidency threatened the ideals and standards on which the country and Constitution were founded.\(^{100}\) Although Woodward and Bernstein’s work predated Nixon’s impeachment, it is implied that they laid the groundwork for Nixon’s road to resignation.

Other notable accounts of this genre were Barry Sussman’s *The Great Cover-Up: Nixon and the Scandal of Watergate*, detailing his efforts as Woodward and Bernstein’s editor at *The Washington Post*.\(^{101}\) Focusing on his role as Watergate Special Prosecutor, Leon Jaworski wrote *The Right and the Power: The Prosecution of Watergate* in 1976.\(^{102}\) In the same year, Chief Counsel and Staff Director for the Senate Watergate Committee, Samuel Dash, provided his account of the Watergate saga in *Inside the Ervin Committee: The Untold Story of Watergate*.\(^{103}\) Both Jaworski and Dash viewed “themselves as heroes” in the Watergate Affair.\(^{104}\) In addition, Richard Ben-Veniste and George Frampton Jr, assistant special prosecutors, told their stories depicting the endeavours of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force, in their 1977 book *Stonewall: The Real Story of the Watergate Prosecution*.\(^{105}\) This was followed by Judge John J. Sirica’s *To Set the Record Straight: The Break-in, the Tapes, the Conspirator, the Pardon* in 1979,\(^{106}\) and Sam J. Ervin’s *The Whole Truth: The Watergate

\(^{100}\) Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. *All the President’s Men* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974).
Conspiracy in 1980.\textsuperscript{107} Although these accounts are meticulous, concentrating on the preparation and findings of the trials and hearings, they still succeed in emphasising the importance of their roles in the Watergate Affair. Certainly the titles of their works, which claim to provide “the real story”, “the whole truth” and “set the record straight”, are not without a sense of audacity.\textsuperscript{108}

Given that the abovementioned actors were working as part of a system to eradicate a president which they perceived to be corrupt, it is logical that they would argue that the ‘system works’. In doing so, it is maintained that the Constitution their forefathers produced succeeded in developing processes whereby the press, the Congress and the Senate had the ability to investigate executive level political misconduct, bring this information to the public’s attention, and then impeach the president. Although Nixon resigned instead, it is argued that the proper functioning of the system instigated this effect. To counteract the system works premise, Morgan argued that much of the Watergate literature has “assumed an inevitability of outcome”, highlighting the fact that “retrospectively authors tend to impose more order and continuity on history than is the case in reality, and to assume an inevitability that does not exist”.\textsuperscript{109} Knowing the ending of a story often causes the importance of individual actions and the serendipity of history to be diminished. This effect becomes more problematic in light of the Watergate example, because if it had not been for so many coincidental incidents, the scandal may not have surfaced in the way it did. As Morgan reminded us, would the Watergate story have been the same if “Frank Willys had not noticed the tape? If the plumbers had not bungled the job? If Alexander Butterfield had not been queried? Or if Martha Mitchell had not distracted John?”\textsuperscript{110}

Precedent and Context

Although the Power and Personality and Precedent and Context schools of thought similarly recognise the importance of history in their approach to the Watergate problem, seeking to incorporate a wider view in their analysis, they differ strikingly in their purpose. Whilst the former ultimately seeks to implicate Nixon in the Watergate crimes, the latter’s goal is to take some of the weight of culpability off the 37th president’s shoulders. Such a goal makes it

\textsuperscript{108} Morgan, Nixon, Watergate, and the Study of the Presidency, 223.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 234.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
easy to understand why this school of thinking is dominated by revisionists seeking to improve or modify the record of the Nixon presidency.

One of the first to attempt to put Nixon and his presidency into a broader perspective was Gore Vidal in his April 1972 play An Evening with Richard Nixon.\textsuperscript{111} Vidal’s portrait of Nixon resembled an “opportunistic, amoral, and self-aggrandizing schemer”, a political creature in a constant political campaign, and endlessly ready to sacrifice his integrity for political advantage.\textsuperscript{112} Vidal’s play may also be read as a critique of American imperialism and the presidents it attracts into office. Vidal was clear in his intention to portray Nixon as merely a more “naked” example of America’s corruption—in a sense an illustration of Nixon as a more honest expression of the nation he critiques.\textsuperscript{113} By pitting Nixon’s actions against those of past presidents including Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, Vidal argued that the depiction of Nixon as a presidential aberration is a historical creation, as ultimately every one of these men was seeking the national interest above all.

The search for past precedent was also highlighted in Victor Lasky’s It Didn’t Start with Watergate. Purposefully lacking objectivity in his approach, Lasky ultimately sought to ask “what Nixon [was] accused of doing...that his predecessors didn’t do many times over?”\textsuperscript{114} This is a view Ambrose similarly put forth, exclaiming “it [cannot] be said that Nixon was guilty of unique crimes for which he deserved singular punishment”.\textsuperscript{115} Drawing on a mass of factual evidence, in which he carefully identified, each item by its source in a lengthy appendix, Lasky argued that “dirty tricks were an accepted practice in political life,”\textsuperscript{116} a view supported by Nixon himself in his 1978 memoirs RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon.\textsuperscript{117} Lasky believed the case for Nixon’s impeachment added up to nothing, and argued that Nixon was the victim of a double standard emanating from a media that harassed him. Lasky concluded that “in the final analysis, Watergate was largely a media event” that “incessant publicity blew out of proportion”\textsuperscript{118} Yet he managed to undermine his credibility by his relentless and

\textsuperscript{112} Frick, Reinventing Richard Nixon, 146.
\textsuperscript{113} Vidal, An Evening with Richard Nixon, 115.
\textsuperscript{114} Victor Lasky. It Didn’t Start with Watergate (New York: Dial Press, 1977), 47.
\textsuperscript{116} Lasky, It Didn’t Start with Watergate, 65.
\textsuperscript{118} Lasky, It Didn’t Start with Watergate, 256, 262.
continual attempts to exonerate Nixon. Parmet agreed, stating that Nixon’s flaws were exaggerated by a hostile press.\textsuperscript{119}

The view that portrayals of Watergate and Nixon have been exaggerated is commonplace among those who have sought to accentuate precedent and context in the legacy of the Nixon presidency. It has been argued that the promotion of Watergate by the media as an exceptional case may have caused this embellishment. For example, Franklin B. Smith, editor of the \textit{Burlington Free Press} during the Watergate scandal, made a point of drawing his readers’ attention to the media’s efforts to single out Watergate and the actions of the Nixon presidency at the time. His commentaries were published in \textit{The Assassination of President Nixon}.\textsuperscript{120} The media’s willingness to highlight Nixon’s crimes whilst ignoring the transgressions of his liberal counterparts was the focus of William Rusher’s 1977 article titled \textit{Sins of the Fathers}. Rusher contended that the American presidency had become overblown over the preceding 45 years by executives who knew how to charm and seduce the press. It, therefore, came as no surprise to Rusher that the shedding of extra-constitutional power would occur in an “administration of a president at odds with both Congress and the Press”. Rusher saw it as ironic that those who brought Nixon down were the witting agents of “precisely those liberal forces that so recklessly aggrandized the presidency in the first place”.\textsuperscript{121} One of the problems identified by the voices of this school of thought is not only the existence of evidence relating to the misconduct undertaken by other administrations, but how this reality highlights the “zeal of the...press corps to expose [Watergate]”, whilst overlooking the actions of Nixon’s opponents.\textsuperscript{122} As pointed out by American journalist, Stanton M. Evans in his 1977 National Review (a conservative journal then edited by William Buckley Jr.), article \textit{Dark Horses}: “How many people are aware” that “the office of Nixon’s physician was broken into and Nixon’s medical file ransacked during the 1972 election? Or that the ‘72 campaign was rife with dirty tricks by Democratic candidates, [using] disruptive tactics, illicit funds, and the rest?”\textsuperscript{123}

Subscribers to the precedent and context mentality argue that the image of Nixon and his presidency has become distorted, to the point where Watergate has overshadowed almost everything. For example, Wicker realised that few remembered much about Nixon other than

\textsuperscript{120} Franklin B. Smith, \textit{The Assassination of President Nixon} (Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1976).
\textsuperscript{122} Rusher. \textit{Sins of the Fathers}, 893.
Watergate, and that is why he decided to write his book about Nixon in the context of “American politics, American lives, American dreams, and American reality”. Similarly Aitken, a Fleet Street journalist, concluded in his biography of Nixon that Watergate was a “political overreaction, a human injustice, and a supreme mistake”, arguing that “no foreigner has ever understood Watergate”. Aitken noted, for example, that the “smoking gun” conversation (i.e. the direct evidence on the tapes of criminal guilt) took less than five minutes of Nixon’s and Haldeman’s attention in a 90-minute agenda on the affairs of the presidency. Supporting Aitken’s view, Nixon’s Assistant for Domestic Affairs, John Ehrlichman, observed in his 1982 memoir Witness to Power, that perhaps “someday someone will notice that all the aspects of Watergate required only the tiniest percentage of the time and attention of the president and his staff...[and] then he may wonder what else was going on in 1972, 1973 and the years that went before”. Likewise, Genovese contended that “although Watergate shows us Nixon writ large...it does not show us all of Nixon”.

One of the most striking examples of the effort to provide context for Watergate may be seen in Joan Hoff’s revisionist account, Nixon Reconsidered. She assessed newly available archival sources at the time, including papers, tapes, and declassified documents, in an objective and unprejudiced manner to develop an original interpretation of post-World War II American politics. Hoff’s aim in writing her book was to counteract the distortion present in depictions of the Nixon presidency, arguing that the 2027 days that Nixon spent in office have been remembered most for Watergate, next for foreign policy, and least for domestic reform. Hoff sought to reverse this order, with the titles of her first and last chapters, ‘Nixon is more than Watergate’ and ‘Watergate is more than Nixon’. “Watergate”, Hoff contended, “was a disaster waiting to happen, given the decline in political ethics and practices during the Cold War”. Yet for Hoff, although “Nixon should have been impeached” for obstruction of justice, “if we make him an aberration rather than a normal product of the aprincipled American political system, we will have learned little from Watergate”.

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125 Aitken, Nixon: A Life, 525, 475.
The ultimate goal of those who subscribe to the precedent and context way of thinking is to
give a nuanced portrayal of Watergate, Nixon, and his presidency. To do so, some scholars
like Monica Crowley, have sought to illustrate a portrait of Nixon that is unlike his public
image. In *Nixon off the Record: His Candid Commentary on People and Politics*, Crowley
claimed that the Nixon she knew was not the “one dimensional...dark, brooding, [and]
mysterious character” that people painted him as. For Crowley, Nixon was “much more than
that”. He was a “brilliant man...[and] a political mastermind” who was “generous, thoughtful,
compassionate...[and] warm”. Crowley highlighted the fact that most people would not
believe how “witty” and “funny” Nixon could be, because it “never came across in his public
image”. Consequently, one of the goals of her book was to get “some of that humanity
across”.

Whilst Crowley has sought to focus on Nixon’s humanness, others have attempted to provide
balance to the depiction of Nixon by pitting his positive traits against his negative
characteristics or policies. This trend became more visible in 1987 when Chief Foreign
Correspondent of the New York Times from 1944 to 1954, C.L. Sulzberger, argued in *The
World and Richard Nixon* that he was convinced the allied Nations in the West, as well as
China and Japan, viewed Nixon as a shrewd statesman endowed with diplomatic wisdom
unusual in American presidents. Drawing on personal interviews with Nixon, Kissinger and a
variety of world statesmen, the combined opinions that Sulzberger displayed recognised that
Nixon made a grave error with his handling of the Watergate Affair, but argued that he was
not a completely terrible president. This line of thinking has carried on through to more
recent years with the release of Conrad Black’s favourable, but well researched biography,
*Richard M. Nixon: A Life in Full*. Black, who spent many hours with Nixon in his final years,
and was also an intimate friend of Kissinger, admitted that Nixon mishandled Watergate.
However, in regards to the effect the scandal had on his overall presidential legacy, Black
contended that Watergate moved him “just beneath the very greatest American leaders”
along with Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman. Of course it may be no
accident that Black, a former newspaper proprietor, would find Nixon attractive, having seen
himself as unjustly accused and convicted over the improper use of shareholder assets.

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129 Monica Crowley. *Nixon Off the Record: His Candid Commentary on People and Politics* (Random
House, 1996).
130 C-Span. Book discussion with Monica Crowley on “Nixon Off the Record”. August 7, 1996.
nixon-record.
The portrayal of Nixon as a less than devious character, and the downplaying of the effect of Watergate, may be hard for some to swallow. Those who seek to thwart this view may easily cite evidence of Nixon’s negative personality traits revealed on the White House tapes, as proof of Nixon’s abuse of power in other presidential documents or materials. Although it may be argued that Nixon was not the first to commit crimes as president, he did become the first president, as far as known evidence shows, to have been in a situation where he had to involve himself in a cover-up, to obstruct justice from within the Oval Office, and resign. Therefore, Nixon will always hold a special place in history. Despite this view, portrayals of a nuanced Nixon and a balanced Nixon presidency have become more prevalent in recent years, particularly as the animosity towards Nixon and his presidency has faded, and revisionist studies have become more popular.

Nixon as Victim

Scholars who sympathise with the Nixon as Victim line of thinking have incorporated the widest possible view in their analysis of the Watergate Affair. In doing so, Nixon is often seen as having a minimal role in bringing about Watergate, as well as being depicted as a pawn of history. By de-emphasising Nixon’s impact on the Watergate scandal, the analysis of other actors and external factors outside the Nixon administration are brought to the forefront of the Watergate story. Those who see Nixon as history’s victim generally argue that his downfall may be attributed to the efforts of his enemies who conspired to remove him from the presidency. It would appear that advocates of this school attempt to take a closer look at the adversaries Nixon made during his political career and time in presidential office. By and large, the major themes highlighted by the Nixon as Victim school of thought have surfaced through the development of conspiracy theories, although some of the work detailed in this discussion has also scrutinised the documentary record.

Nixon’s most visible and noted enemy has been described as the media. The first to caution about the practices of American journalism and its effect on the Nixon presidency was former editor of Time Magazine and head of Nixon’s presidential speech writing staff, James Keogh, in President Nixon and the Press. The issue of Nixon’s press relationships was also highlighted by Keogh’s colleague in the Nixon White House, William Safire, in his reflective

work *Before the Fall: An Inside View of the pre-Watergate White House*. Taking note of the animosity the press held for Nixon, Safire told the story of a newspaper editor that “hated Nixon with the same blind devotion that he worshipped Kennedy”, and who proclaimed to him at a garden party in the Easter of 1973 that there had to “be a bloodletting”.

These views were echoed by Kissinger in his memoir, noting that a journalist not known for his friendship toward Nixon called him to say that he was shocked by the “blood-lust” surfacing around his friends in relation to the president: “All they seemed to be able to think was get him, get him, get him.”

Malvin L. Kalb gave other reasons for the press’ disdain for Nixon in *The Nixon Memo: Political Respectability, Russia and the Press*. Kalb, who was a diplomatic correspondent for CBS and earned himself a spot on Nixon’s enemies list, managed to unravel the interdependent relationships that Nixon cultivated with news outlets such as Time, the New York Times op-ed page, and the TV networks in this account of Nixon’s twenty-year struggle for political rehabilitation after his 1974 resignation. Kalb argued that “at one level, Watergate was a battle between a president and a newspaper”, and while many reporters “never really liked Nixon”, they “knew a good story when they seen [sic] one”. For Kalb, “Nixon was always a good story”.

The existence of less visible Nixon adversaries was highlighted in the work of Noam Chomsky in his 1973 article *Watergate: A Skeptical View*. Chomsky was the first to draw attention to the Nixon administration’s enemies list, in that it was a “revealing index of the miscalculations of Nixon’s mafia, and raises obvious questions about the general response” to the Watergate Affair. “Suppose that there had been no Thomas Watson or James Reston or McGeorge Bundy on the White House hate list. Suppose that the list had been limited to political dissidents, antiwar activists, radicals”. “Then it is safe to assume”, Chomsky argued, “there would have been no front-page story in the *New York Times* and little attention on the part of responsible political commentators”. In a further analysis, Chomsky pointed to Nixon tearing up the Bretton Woods System as a possible catalyst for the downfall of his presidency in *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies*. Chomsky argued that “by 1971 the Vietnam War had badly weakened the United States economically relative to its industrial rivals”. As a result of Nixon taking the world off the gold standard, thus halting the

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135 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 122.


convertibility of the dollar, he created many powerful international enemies as “multinational corporations and international banks relied on the system” and “did not like it being broken down”. Chomsky highlighted the fact that “…look[ing] back, you’ll find that Nixon was being attacked in places like the Wall Street Journal at the time, and I suspect that from that point on there were plenty of powerful people out to get him. Watergate just offered the opportunity”.

The actions of Nixon’s detractors in the established governmental agencies and their role in the Watergate scandal have been the focus of study by many scholars. This was the topic of discussion in John Ehrlichman’s novel The Company, later adapted into the television mini-series Washington Behind Closed Doors. In his book Ehrlichman appeared to be bringing to the surface parts of his Nixon presidency story that he had to suppress from his memoirs. Ehrlichman’s story put great emphasis on Nixon’s fictional character (Richard Monkton) who attempted to take power from the established agencies. He highlighted that Nixon may have offended major political players in the governmental apparatus during his presidency, creating an atmosphere of institutional rivalry in Washington at the time. This emphasis appears to be telling its reader that Ehrlichman viewed Nixon’s actions as the catalyst for his presidential downfall. Ehrlichman was the first to highlight the alleged complicity of the CIA in the Watergate Affair. This view was later examined in Jim Hougan’s Secret Agenda: Watergate, Deep Throat, and the CIA. Building his thesis on circumstantial evidence, Hougan’s study concentrated on the break-in and raised questions about the motive behind it and the involvement of the CIA. He argued that one of the Watergate burglars, James W. McCord, secretly sabotaged the break-in to protect a telephone tap on a call-girl operation, being monitored in a nearby Columbia Plaza apartment. Hougan concluded that the break-in was “not so much a partisan political scandal as it was, secretly, a sex scandal, the unpredictable outcome of a CIA operation”. Hougan’s views on the role of the CIA in the Watergate scandal and the break-down of the Nixon presidency were

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141 Ehrlichman, Witness to Power.
143 Hougan, Secret Agenda, xvii.
supported by Russ Baker in *Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, the Powerful Forces that put it in the White House, and What Their Influence Means for America.*

A long line of authors who see Nixon as a victim of history, hypothesise that efforts were made to deliberately topple the Nixon administration from a position of power. The first to put forth this argument was Carl Oglesby in his conspiratorial study *The Yankee and the Cowboy War: Conspiracies from Dallas to Watergate and Beyond*, which raised many questions and hypotheses but did not entirely support them. Oglesby contended that the assassination of President Kennedy and Watergate were “intrinsically linked conspiracies, in a hidden drama of coup and countercoup which represents the life of an inner oligarchic power sphere, an ‘invisible government’, itself above the law and beyond the moral rule: a clandestine American state, perhaps an embryonic police state.” Next in line was Parmet, who concluded that Nixon had been the victim of a coup, claiming Watergate was a “media putsch” mounted by “New Class” liberals marinated in hatred for Nixon since 1948-49. The third edition of Deborah Davis’ *Katharine the Great: Katharine Graham and her Washington Post Empire* was published in 1991. The first two editions were taken off the shelf and shredded at the request of Graham and *The Washington Post*’s editor, Benjamin Bradlee. Davis put forth the idea that both Graham and the newspaper were tools of a CIA operation to dump Nixon, arguing that Graham engineered Nixon’s demise, after which her newspaper became an institution—a fourth branch of government.

Of the more recent conspiracy theories to imply that a coup took place was Robert Merritt’s *Watergate Exposed*, which claimed that the FBI and military intelligence knew about the Watergate break-in ahead of time, and sat by while it happened, knowing the plumbers would get caught. Providing his own personal account of the event, Merritt, a confidential FBI informant at the time, argued the intelligence agencies and Mark Felt of the FBI worked in concert to manipulate the media (Woodward and Bernstein) to take down the president. Tim Weiner supported Merritt’s views on Felt in *Enemies: The History of the FBI at War*,

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148 Robert Merritt and Douglas Caddy. *Watergate Exposed: How the President of the United States and the Watergate Burglars Were Set Up As Told to Douglas Caddy, Original Attorney for the
explaining that his motives behind feeding information to *The Washington Post* were not entirely altruistic. Weiner believed Felt was the leader of a faction in the FBI that resented Nixon’s appointment of an outsider, Justice Department official Pat Gray, to run the bureau after Hoover’s death, rather than Felt himself. For Weiner, the way a disgruntled FBI agent toppled Nixon's presidency by leaking secrets to the press illustrated again how a formal hierarchy of authority could be informally capsized.149 Of course the greatest proponent of the view that a coup brought down the Nixon presidency was Nixon himself, who suggested in his memoirs that the liberal press and liberal establishment were working to remove him as president.150

Focusing on the roles of actors other than Nixon within his administration and highlighting their personal and political agendas, Len Colodny and Robert Gettlin argued in *Silent Coup: The Removal of a President*, that John Dean orchestrated the break-in and the cover-up in order to remove information about a call-girl ring, because his future wife knew someone involved. Albeit well-documented, this revisionist account relied heavily on circumstantial evidence to argue that "Nixon’s remarks on the smoking gun tape are the products of Dean’s deceptions that tricked Haldeman and Nixon into joining a conspiracy to obstruct justice".151 This portrayal of Watergate influenced the views of Aitken who placed the primary Watergate blame on Dean, contending that he authorised the break-in and then implicated everyone else in the cover-up152 Highlighting the view that Nixon’s Chief of Staff, Alexander Haig, was the man who orchestrated the whole Saturday Night Massacre disaster, Colodny and Gettlin painted Nixon as a pawn in the hands of Haig and Dean.153

Colodny and Gettlin’s views about Dean’s role in Watergate were supported by Fox News Correspondent James Rosen in his political biography of Nixon’s Attorney General, *The Strong Man: John Mitchell and the Secrets of Watergate*,154 as well as former White House staff and current Nixon foundation member, Geoff Shepard, in *The Secret Plot to Make Ted Kennedy President: Inside the Real Watergate Conspiracy*. Both of these accounts have

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drawn on a mixture of primary and secondary evidence, and tapped into previously unpublished documents obtained through Freedom of Information to develop their theses. Yet Shepard approached the subject area with a reluctance to provide facts, letting his readers come to their own conclusions, whilst providing a generous appendix which featured many incriminating documents culled from the National Archives. Shepard perceived Watergate’s real author to be Dean, who set up the Nixon re-election campaign’s intelligence operation, hiring G. Gordon Liddy, who then broke into DNC headquarters. Shepard also highlighted how Dean orchestrated the cover-up without informing his superiors and, when threatened with exposure, switched sides, joining the “Camelot Conspiracy”, the focus of Shepard’s study. Shepard argued that Ted Kennedy used his subcommittee to begin an investigation and funnel information to the committee officially charged with looking into the Watergate scandal. For Shepard, this conspiracy consisted of a not-so-loose confederation of Kennedy family partisans scattered throughout the media, government and academia, who worked to bring down President Nixon and harm the Republican Party to such an extent, that Kennedy would be primed to win a bid for the presidency in 1976.155

What distinguishes this school of thought from the others is its deflection from Nixon, and its focus on what was going on outside the Oval Office as a way of explaining the causes of Watergate. Such emphasis has attracted criticisms from those who believe such scholars are aiming to exonerate Nixon from any wrongdoing whilst president, and thus ignore Nixon’s established role in the Watergate scandal. Negating the coup theory of Watergate, Olson argued:

*The charge that the media and/or liberal politicians drove Nixon from office is no longer sustainable. No coup existed. No evidence has emerged that documents CIA involvement or that the president had prior knowledge of the break in. The motive behind the break-in strongly suggests a desire for political intelligence.*156

This discussion makes clear that for the last 40 years each school, in assembling various viewpoints within Watergate’s historiography, has juggled for primacy to interpret Watergate’s legacy, whilst adding new perspectives and understandings to the Watergate story. There have been times when a particular moment in history has elevated one view over others, in an

156 Olson, *Watergate.*
attempt to understand specific aspects of the Watergate problem. There have also been times when this same view has been put aside, having been seen as an inappropriate lens for investigating new evidence. The presence each school maintains in Watergate’s historiography generally reflects the rise and fall of interests for which each school speaks, but is also affected by contextual factors in Watergate’s history that give weight to their line of thinking. The four schools have distinct beginnings which stem from different events in Watergate’s history, and each has developed and evolved in certain directions as a result of the actions of advocates within the schools. Through examining each school of thought in more detail, one can see the role that each has played in turning a political scandal into a world-wide phenomenon by emphasising certain issues, and how each view has helped shape Watergate’s legacy—factors which will be discussed in further detail in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

**Using the four schools framework to further examine the Watergate Affair**

Given that I had developed a framework which integrated the views of the causes of Watergate and Nixon’s role in the affair, through the synthesis and organisation of the various themes in Watergate’s historiography in a way not previously assembled, I deemed this framework could be applied to a Watergate data set as a conceptual lens to provide new insight into the meaning of Watergate. In this way, my research explores the use of the four schools framework as an analytical tool to examine perceptions of Watergate. Having found this organisational technique useful in assessing Watergate’s literary presence, I applied it in the analysis of the Nixon Library’s oral histories, to establish whether each school’s views were present in these materials, and to determine if the interviews could add to our understanding of their view of Watergate.

**Research question**

What do the oral histories of the Nixon Library tell us about Nixon and Watergate when analysed through the four schools framework?
Sub questions

- How and when did the particular school of thought emerge, how can it be characterised, and what key themes in the Watergate story does it draw on?
- How does the school explain the cause of Watergate and Nixon’s role in the affair?
- What evidence does the school rely on to support their views?
- What parts of the Watergate story does the school emphasise, and how does it narrate its own version of the affair?
- How does the school describe Watergate’s legacy?
- Have any aspects of the school’s Watergate narrative made its way to the generally accepted Watergate story?
- How has each school impacted Watergate’s historiography?

The data analysis process

This study looks at the ways the subjects of the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project perceived and assigned meaning to the Watergate Affair. After reviewing several texts, each with their own method of undertaking qualitative data analysis, it was clear that each differed slightly in their analytical processes, but their methods all maintained the same three central steps of coding the data, combining the codes into broader categories or themes, and interpreting these categories in a way that provided a means to answer research questions. I felt it was

important to retain these central steps whilst extracting the additional steps necessary to examine the oral histories, since I already had a framework to use as a lens. Once I had amalgamated these steps, I was left with an approach to qualitative data analysis that integrated both deductive and inductive methods, consisting of a simple, non-technical, straightforward set of procedures. This approach meant that I could start with an organising framework (deductive), but still “allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data” (inductive).\footnote{158 Thomas, A General Inductive Approach for Analysing Qualitative Evaluation Data, 238.}

(1) Data management

It was evident from the outset of this project that it would be necessary to develop and adhere to a strict data management system, given the amount of data I would have after transcribing, analysing, and creating a discussion about 117 oral history interviews. The program I used to assist in organising the codes and themes I had developed was the Scrivener word-processing program. This complete writing project management tool provides a system for its users to organise writing, notes, concepts, research and whole documents in the one project for easy access and reference. Scrivener has many useful features that can be used to the advantage of PhD candidates. Firstly, it gives users the ability to rearrange files (thesis chapters), which can be made up of sub-files (sections of writing, coding, memos, notes, etc.), by dragging-and-dropping index cards in its virtual binder. This was extremely helpful during the thesis development process. Snapshots of text, or entire chapters, can be taken to save drafts along the way, allowing users to revert to any earlier drafts if they wish. One of Scrivener’s most useful functions is also its most simple—a search function that can sift through an entire body of work to find one word or a phrase, and show where it is located within a chapter or section of writing. Providing assistance for the coding and category development process associated with data analysis, Scrivener has a meta-data function, allowing its users to label concepts by assigning different colours to text, with a separate search function making it easy to access these labels. Finally, Scrivener is able to export any writing to a standard word-processor, such as Microsoft Word, for more detailed formatting.

I organised my Scrivener writing project by splitting my work into two sections: a writing section consisting of thesis chapters to be developed; and a research section containing all
of my data, codes, categories, interpretations, and notes, to form my chapters. Within the research section, I used the following classifications outlined by the Nixon Library to initially arrange the data I obtained from the transcription process: The Nixon White House; The National Security Council; Agency Officials during the Nixon Administration; NASA; The Committee for the Re-election of the President/The Plumbers Unit; United States House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary Members and Impeachment Inquiry Staff; District of Columbia’s Criminal Investigation of Watergate; Watergate Special Prosecution Force; Media/Entertainment Figures; Antiwar Movement; Politicians during the Nixon Era; Officials from other Administrations; Friends and Family. I gave each of these groups a separate Scrivener file, with their names as a label, and created a sub-file within each for every oral history participant. This rendered each interview the unit of analysis for this study.

(2) Transcription

The size of the data-set meant I needed to undertake targeted sampling of the 117 video-recorded oral history interviews. To do this, I focused on sections within the interview deemed to be pertinent to my study, in relation to my research questions. Starting with the largest group of oral histories, the Nixon White House, I transcribed verbatim the sections of the interview where the participant divulged information relating to any of the following topics: their views of Nixon; information on the Watergate narrative; perceptions of Watergate; information on key figures or personalities involved in Watergate; where the participant fits within the Nixon Administration; what their role/or occupation was; and sections of text that clearly displayed an adherence to a particular school of Watergate thought. I colour coded each verbatim transcription in the following way: Yellow for discussion of Nixon, Green for discussion of Watergate, Blue for discussion on figures within the Nixon administration, and Pink for dialogue, highlighting the four schools of Watergate thought.

In her guide to transcription in qualitative studies, Julia Bailey noted that “transcribing appears to be a straightforward technical task”, yet it “involves judgements about what level of detail to choose (e.g. omitting non-verbal dimensions of interaction), data interpretation (e.g. distinguishing ‘I don’t, no’ from ‘I don’t know’) and data representation (e.g. representing the verbalisation ‘harryuuuh’ as ‘How are you?’)”\hspace{1em}^{159} Making decisions about what level of detail to

include and exclude in the interview transcript is actually an “iterative process” which requires “reduction, interpretation and representation to make the written text readable and meaningful”. It is therefore the “first step in analysing data”.\textsuperscript{160} When considering what factors drive researchers to distinguish what is considered to be relevant data and how it should be analysed, it is clear that the “aims of a project” and one’s “methodological assumptions and disciplinary background” play a major role.\textsuperscript{161}

Due to the space and time constraints of a doctoral thesis, the length of time it takes to transcribe interviews (at least 3 hours per hour of talk and up to 10 hours per hour with a fine level of detail including visual detail), the considerable size of the Nixon Library Oral History data set (117 oral history interviews at an average 2 hours each)\textsuperscript{162}, and my academic discipline, this research adopted a historical rather than a behavioural analysis approach, seeking to identify themes in the oral histories rather than focusing on the examination of the non-verbal behaviour of the interview participants. The scope of the analysis focused on the examination of the spoken word, with non-verbal dimensions of interaction such as room layout, body orientation, facial expression, gesture, and the use of equipment in consultation, excluded from the transcription. The fact that the Nixon library interviewed seasoned and experienced individuals in the political process, who have had time to consider their role in the Watergate saga, influenced my decision to focus less attention on non-verbal cues, and their supposed indication of untruthfulness. I did, however, ensure that I distinguished exactly what the oral history participant had said, and on occasion captured how things were said, noting features such as speed, tone of voice, timing and pauses in instances when these cues were important to understand the words that had been stated. To avoid “cluttering the text” I omitted false starts, interruptions, coughs, and encouraging noise (such as ‘mm’), but did include laughs and repetitions.\textsuperscript{163} I also incorporated contextual information on the oral history participant, such as their age, biographical information, recent news and a list of any publications. The above noted exclusions may be considered a limitation of this study.

The transcriptions were housed in the Scrivener sub-files corresponding to each oral history participant. Specifically, the transcript contained a chronological outline of the oral history interview. Each segment of text consisted of a statement, or series of statements that

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid, 127.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid, 127-128.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid, 129.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid, 129.
conveyed a participant’s thought on a specific topic. The segments varied in length, as brief as one or two sentences, or in other instances, as long as a paragraph or two paragraphs. When the interviewee began discussing a different topic, I broke up the segment and started transcribing another. Although I did not transcribe verbatim the sections of the interview that were not relevant to the study, I still took notes on what was said, and at what point in the video these conversations took place (i.e. what time on the tape the conversation started and finished), so I could go back and transcribe verbatim any sections of interview that perhaps became pertinent later in the study as themes developed.

(3) Memo taking

The data analysis process began with the transcription of the video-taped oral history interviews,\textsuperscript{164} and continued in an ongoing iterative manner.\textsuperscript{165} As I watched each oral history interview, I took memos of phrases, ideas, key concepts, or reflections on larger thoughts presented in the data that occurred to me.\textsuperscript{166} For example, I noted how the data related to the research questions, as well as anything noteworthy that popped into my mind relating to the Who? What? When? Where? Why? So what? These memos took the form of reflections I recorded within the transcripts of each oral history, placing them below the segment of text they corresponded to. I differentiated memos from the transcript text by bolding them.

This reflection process assisted me in coding the data and discovering and sorting comparable themes and concepts, facilitating the later groupings of categories. Whilst reflecting I watched for patterns, similar principles, and relationships in the data. I felt the reflection process was important as I noticed that categories and themes were emerging directly from my thinking while I was transcribing. Also, as Helen Marshall highlighted, this process helped me to “understand the underlying logic of each subject’s contribution”, and get to the “real analysis”, by going “beyond” the subjects narrative to obtain “the more theoretical stuff”. For Marshall, “it is those reflections [in the memos] that are the [crux of the] analysis and need to be written up”.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{165} Patton Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, 432; Bradley et al, Qualitative Data Analysis for Health Services Research, 1758-1772; Coffey and Atkinson, Making Sense of Qualitative Data. 2.
\textsuperscript{166} Creswell, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design 150-154.
Since my research seeks to examine the four schools of Watergate thought, I took extensive memos on whether the interviewees fit within the framework, and where, whilst noting the connections and patterns across oral histories, that emerged. I also made a summary of each oral history which I placed in the sub-file at the end of the transcript, making it easily accessible for the writing process. Similarly, after I worked through each group of oral histories, I went back and reviewed the memos I had written and wrote a summary encompassing the views and patterns that emerged in relation to that group, noting any comparisons and generalisations I could see. I placed these memos in a sub-file within each oral history group’s Scrivener file. As outlined by Victor Minichiello, this type of memo taking assists in developing an “underlining uniformity which allowed for concepts and themes to emerge from the data”\(^{168}\)

I transcribed and took memos of each oral history in its entirety without making any attempt to code it, in order to immerse myself in the details, and familiarise myself with the interview as a whole, before breaking it into parts\(^ {169}\). I felt this was important because when any particular section of the transcript is being analysed, it needs to be done in the context of the interview as a whole. Nigel King and Christine Horrocks made this same point: “To make sense of what [a] participant says at one point will often require you to refer back to something they said earlier or forward to something they said later (or both)\(^ {170}\). Once I had transcribed each oral history, taken memos and read them, I proceeded to the coding process.

(4) Use of preset codes

Ellen Taylor-Powell and Marcus Renner outlined two ways to code data, “using preset or emergent” coding. In this sense, preset codes are a “list of themes or categories” which a researcher has in advance: “These themes provide direction for what you look for in the data. You identify the themes before you categorise the data, and search the data for text that matches the themes”\(^ {171}\). Given I had made the decision to transcribe segments of dialogue that I believed were pertinent to this research study, I deemed the four themes of data I was initially searching for to be preset codes. This project resulted in 1692 pages of typed

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\(^{168}\) Minichiello et al, *In-depth Interviewing*, 271.

\(^{169}\) Kvale and Brinkman, *Interviews*, 207.


\(^{171}\) Taylor-Powell and Renner, *Analysing Qualitative Data*, 5-10
transcript, making the use of preset codes a simple method to manage the volume of data collected, by focusing the data and establishing what data was not needed for this study.

(5) Creation of emergent coding

After reading the entire transcript, I descriptively coded each segment of data. These codes, which are essentially labels for text, were generated either from key words (In vivo codes) or my summation of key points (researcher generated codes). To develop the codes, I asked: What is this person talking about? What is being said here? This led to the development of topic, subject, perspective, event codes, etc. These labels allowed me to make sense of the thousands of lines of words I was analysing. I differentiated descriptive codes from the transcript text and memos by bolding and italicising them, and placing them as a heading at the beginning of each transcript segment. Therefore, each transcript consisted of bolded italicised headings (codes), text underneath them (segment text), and bolded text underneath that (memos), organised chronologically with the first text segment appearing at the top, and the last at the bottom of the transcript. At the end of each transcript was a summary of the oral history, and memos describing the relationship between the interview and framework.

Once I completed descriptive coding of each oral history interview, I again reviewed the codes. I copied each code and its corresponding segment of text into another file I created in the research section of my Scrivener project. This process resulted in the development of my coding system (code structure), as it was “a means of reorganising the data according to conceptual themes”, which I then “used to further enhance analysis”. As the coding system expanded and developed, I was left with the following descriptive codes:

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172 Creswell, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, 150-154.
174 Ibid., 267.
175 King and Horrocks, Interviews in Qualitative Research, 153-154.
Figure 1.1 Descriptive Codes

- Nixon the man:
  - Family and upbringing
  - Negative / neutral / positive aspects of Nixon's character
  - Nixon's image
  - Nixon's political leanings
  - Nixon's campaigning methods
  - Nixon's presidential approach

- Nixon's involvement in the Watergate affair:
  - Ultimate role
  - Large role
  - Some role
  - No role
  - Nixon's resignation was good for the country
  - Nixon's resignation was bad for the country

- The Watergate narrative:
  - International and national context
  - The break-in
  - The cover-up
  - The investigations
  - The battle over the White House tapes
  - The impeachment
  - The outcome
  - National and international impact

- The causes of Watergate:
  - Presidential precedent
  - The national context
  - Problems in the White House
  - How Watergate could have been avoided

- Watergate's legacy:
  - Nixon the villain
  - The system works
  - Nixon the misjudged
  - Nixon the scapegoat

Overarching descriptive codes

Synthesised descriptive codes
Each overarching descriptive code ended up with its own Scrivener file, housing each of the synthesised codes and their corresponding text segments. I found this method of organising useful in making the data extremely accessible for later synthesis and analysis.

(6) Analysis of memos relating to the four schools of Watergate thought

Before I moved on to the category development phase of the data analysis process, I conducted a thorough analysis of the memos I created, discussing how each oral history interviewee fit within the four schools framework. What I found was that of the 95 oral history participants that mentioned Watergate, 83.15% (79 participants) outlined perceptions that were consistent with the framework. Given the significance of this number, I believed there was enough evidence to permit arranging the data into the four schools framework, in order to interpret the findings in a way that could tell a story for each school.

Realising that each school of thought could make up a content chapter in my overall thesis, I created a new file for each school of thought, labelled with its name, in the writing section of my Scrivener file. I then went back to each oral history transcript and copied the relevant coded segments of text into a sub-file. I kept the copied coded segments under their larger heading and noted who the interviewee was, so I could keep track of which participants belonged to what school. I labelled this sub-file (sub-file 1) Players (i.e. Nixon at Centre Players, Power and Personality Players, etc). Lastly, I went back and reviewed the synthesised codes I had already created and copied them into my research section, to determine whether any codes could be classified as belonging to one of the four schools. After spending a great deal of time reviewing the codes carefully to ensure I was not taking them out of context and biasing the data by forcing it to fit within the framework, I copied over the relevant codes.

Upon completion of this process, I went through another method of organisation that would make it easier to create categories for each of the four schools. Within each of the school files I created further sub-files. The second sub-file (2) grouped together the codes that displayed views from that school relating to Nixon, the third sub-file (3) contained views on Watergate, and to create the fourth, I again sifted through sub-files 2 and 3, and pulled out codes which outlined the way the school could be categorised (4). In total, I ended up with four loose content chapter outlines, each corresponding to a school of thought, with four sub-files of memos and synthesised descriptive codes.
(7) Creation of categories/themes for each school

After going through the process of re-organising my coded data within the four schools framework, I undertook a further analysis to uncover overarching themes (categories) for each. Having reached this stage, I focused on each school (content chapter) separately, before moving to the next. The first step I took was to read the memos I had written, looking for any clues. I took a step back from the data and reconsidered the association between the data and the key research questions, and how the data related to the four schools framework.\textsuperscript{176} I noted down any key points in another sub-file (5) I created within each school file.

David Thomas noted that “the outcome of an inductive analysis is the development of categories into a model or framework that summarises the raw data and conveys key themes and processes”.\textsuperscript{177} To establish these categories I went beyond describing the segments (i.e. descriptive coding), by defining codes which focused more on my interpretation of their meaning. I accomplished this by grouping together descriptive codes that shared a common meaning. I then created interpretive codes to capture the essence of the grouped codes. I kept track of the provenance of the code by ensuring that their references accompanied the segment. I went through a process of adding, redefining, and reapplying interpretive codes as I proceeded from one code to the next, until I had gone through them all, and felt that I had done a thorough job of capturing the meanings offered by the text. I was left with three to eight general categories for each school of Watergate thought, consisting of: a description of that category using previously generated and newly generated memos; sub-categories of data (coded segments); and a discussion of links or relationships with other categories pertaining to the school.\textsuperscript{178} I do not note these categories here as they are clearly outlined in each school’s chapter. Before moving on to the interpretive phase of the qualitative data analysis process, I obtained feedback from my PhD supervisors about the categories I had developed, encouraging them to ask ‘Devil’s Advocate’ questions to ensure my findings were on the right track.

\textsuperscript{176} Patricia J. Rogers and Delwyn Goodrick. “Chapter 19: Qualitative Data Analysis”. In the Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation. Edited by Joseph S. Wholey, Harry and Kathryn E. Newcomer (Wiley: Hoboken, 2010), 448.
\textsuperscript{177} Thomas, A General Inductive Approach for Analysing Qualitative Evaluation Data, 240.
\textsuperscript{178} King and Horrocks, Interviews in Qualitative Research, 156-158.
(8) Interpretation of categories to develop a narrative

At this point in the analysis process, I took another step back from the categories I created to form a more comprehensive interpretation, in an attempt to "make sense of the data". As Steiner Kvale and Svend Brinkman recommend, I "tied together" all the "essential and non-redundant themes...into a descriptive statement". I accomplished this by creating a plan for each of my content chapters corresponding to each school of thought. I created a sub-file (5) for the plan which I placed within each school's overall file. The plan was essentially an outline for writing the chapter which helped me to organise the categories and their codes in a way that formed a narrative. The narrative I developed for each school consisted of: a categorisation of the school developed through synthesising the categories in sub-file (4); an outline of the major themes the school relied on in their interpretation of Watergate developed through the integration of categories from sub-files (2) and (3); and a narrative describing each school's view of the causes of Watergate (their theory) of which each previously stated category feeds into. Each chapter uses descriptive examples and evidence found in the oral history transcripts to bring the data to life. To develop the narrative I attempted to blend all three styles of writing noted by Harry Wolcott: descriptive, analytical or interpretive; however, I feel that the thesis presented here is more of a descriptive story told by the interviewees, tied together with my analysis and interpretations of the data.

(9) Addressing limitations of the study: ensuring trustworthiness and rigour

As this research project entails the analysis of secondary data developed by the Nixon Library, many measures used to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative data analysis were not applicable to this study. The following table outlines the strategies outlined by Andrew Shenton, with a discussion on which processes I employed, and which I was unable to implement:

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180 Kvale and Brinkman, *InterViews*, 207.
Table 1.2: Strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness in the data analysis process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality criterion</th>
<th>Possible provision made by researcher</th>
<th>Processes undertaken</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Credibility</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The adoption of research methods well established</td>
<td>• I had no control over the procedures employed by the Nixon Library, such as the line of questioning pursued by Dr Timothy Naftali and Mr Paul Musgrave during the data gathering sessions of the Oral History Project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The development of an early familiarity with the culture of the participating organisations</td>
<td>• I had no impact on the way the Nixon Library prepared for their oral history interview sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Random sampling to limit researcher bias and unknown influences</td>
<td>• The Nixon Library conducted purposive sampling of research participants in order to involve as many interviewees in the project that were relevant to the study of Watergate and the Nixon Presidency possible.</td>
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| Triangulation | • Since the Nixon Library used a wide range of participants, individual viewpoints and experiences could be verified against each other.
|              | • In regards to the categories/themes I developed throughout the data analysis process, I maintained validity by looking for themes emerging from a number of interviews, to avoid basing my findings on one participant’s views. This process was outlined by Martyn Denscombe who stated: “A recurrent theme in interviews indicates that the idea/issue is something which is shared among a wider group, and therefore the researcher can refer to it with rather more confidence than any idea/issue which stems from the words of one individual”. 183 |
| Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants | • I had no input over how each individual who participated in the Nixon Library Oral History Project was approached, or the type of action taken to ensure a rapport with the interviewee was built prior to the execution of the interview.
|              | • I am unsure as to whether participants were advised they could withdraw from the study at any time, and informed that they did not need to disclose any information they did not want to. |

| Iterative questioning | • I had no control over the strategies employed by the Nixon Library to ensure they could uncover deliberate lies put forth by interview participants.
• However it was clear through viewing the oral history interviews that the interviewers used probes to elicit detailed data, and executed iterative questioning whereby the interviewer returned to matters they previously raised and rephrased their question. |
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<td>Negative case analysis</td>
<td>• I conducted a type of negative case analysis outlined by Yvonna Lincon and Egon Guba\textsuperscript{184}, Matthew Miles and A.M. Huberman\textsuperscript{185}, and David Silverman\textsuperscript{186}, which involved refining the categories I developed to account for all the codes inherent in the data.</td>
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| **Frequent debriefing sessions, and peer scrutiny of the research project** | • I frequently discussed the findings of my research with my PhD supervisors, and encouraged them to unpack my results so that alternative explanations and flaws could be drawn out and discussed, in order to recognise biases and preferences.  
• Other than input from my supervisors, I received feedback from colleagues, peers and academics at the conferences where I presented, and via informal discussions about my research project. This process helped me to gain fresh perspectives on my study. |
| **The researcher’s reflective commentary** | • Through the memos process I routinely reflected on the effectiveness of the techniques that I employed to analyse the Nixon Library oral histories.  
• I also commented on my initial impressions of the data set, as I was reviewing it, as well as patterns that were emerging. This process monitored my own developing constructions in order to facilitate the credibility of the study. |
| **Background, qualifications and experience of the investigator** | • I have no control over the background, qualifications and experience of the interviewers appointed by the Nixon Library to execute the data collection phase of the project. |
| **Member checks** | • Since I was not involved in the data collection process of the Nixon Library Oral History Project, I was unable to ask that interview participants read and check the transcripts I developed to consider whether the words matched what they actually intended.  
• I did impose another kind of member checking on this research project which included verification of my emergent theories by my PhD supervisors. |
| **Thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny** | • I ensured the provision of a detailed description of the data segments which I included in the narrative for each school of Watergate thought, in order to include the context. |
| **Examination of previous research findings** | • I performed this process during the literature review phase of this research project to establish where my findings fit within the existing body of Watergate knowledge. |
| Transferability | • Given the theoretical framework I have developed is specifically altered to the study of Nixon and Watergate, and since I am applying this framework to a particular data set, arguably the findings of this research may not be transferable. If this framework was applied to another data set there may be inclusions and exclusions in the data by participants or different questions asked and answers given which may impact the findings of a duplicate study. Nevertheless, the issue of transferability does not subtract from the new insight this study has provided, as a result of developing a new framework and applying this lens to a data set, not previously examined in depth.

• Interestingly Miles and Huberman noted that even where there are shared theoretical backgrounds, it is often true that: “It is unlikely a researcher could write a case study from a colleague’s field notes that would be plausibly similar to the original”.  

| Dependability | • Employment of overlapping methods

| • As a result of having no control over the way data was collected by the Nixon Library, I was unable to employ the overlapping of methods, such as the use of focus groups.

| • In-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated

| • I have reported in detail the process in which this study was performed, meaning a researcher could repeat my study in the future.

| • This detailed description also allows for my research practices to be properly scrutinised for readers of this thesis to develop a thorough understanding of my research design, the methods I employed, and their effectiveness.

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167 Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 428.
**Confirmability**

- I came into this research project with an open mind, having very little prior knowledge of the Watergate Affair and its impact. Therefore, I have no prior dispositions to the study of Nixon and Watergate.

- It may be contended that one of the major limitations of this study is my predilection to force the views of oral history participants to fit into the four schools framework; this was not my goal. Throughout the early analysis stages of my research project I wrote extensive memos about whether an oral history participant may be classified as belonging to one school of thought over another. I did not undertake this process in a way that was forcing interviewees into a particular school. Rather I ensured to note when interviewees did not seem to fit at all, and I also noted instances of some hybrid participants (i.e. Jeb Stuart Magruder and Leonard Garment) who had views that belonged to more than one school, which I discuss in the content chapters of this thesis. I strived to remain flexible by reinforcing in my mind along the way the idea that the framework I developed is but one lens to view the data. Although I went through the process of organising each oral history participant into the four schools framework, I did so after the category development process had been completed, which meant the codes and themes that were developed emerged inductively from the data.
| Recognition of shortcomings in study’s methods and their potential effects, and in-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinised | • I have attempted as much as possible to note the decisions I made which resulted in the generation of findings, and the reasons why I favoured one approach over another, within the data analysis process discussion above.  
• In my analysis, I have explained the weaknesses in the techniques I have employed. |
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<tr>
<td>Use of audit trail</td>
<td>• The quotes used in the narratives developed in the content chapters of this thesis are all referenced and may be located within their corresponding transcripts. Consequently, these segments of text may be audited at a later date, if need be.</td>
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The following chapters present the findings from the analysis of the research questions using the procedures outlined in the above discussion. Chapters two to five contain the narratives which emerged for each school of Watergate thought from the data analysis process.
Chapter 2

The Nixon at Centre School of Watergate Thought

The Nixon at Centre school was the first of its counterparts to feature most dominantly within Watergate’s legacy. Although the school emerged when a few Watergate players pointed to Nixon’s involvement in the Watergate Affair, it evolved into an analysis of the political scandal which argues that the downfall of the Nixon presidency can be traced back to flaws in Nixon’s character. In order to examine this viewpoint I will be drawing on the fresh narratives presented in the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum’s oral histories.

This chapter contains six sections. I will begin with a portrayal of the Nixon at Centre school’s conception, highlighting the key players who contributed to its solidification in Watergate’s history and scholarly study, and pinpointing how the school may be characterised.

This will be followed by a discussion of the key themes the Nixon at Centre school uses to illustrate their Watergate conceptions. Namely, this school cites Nixon’s us vs. them attitude, his conception of loyalty and enemies, his affinity for control, his arrogance, and hatred, as causal factors of Watergate. To illuminate their explanations, the Nixon at Centre school highlights Nixon’s experiences as a child and young adult, as well as his pre-presidential years and presidency, ultimately arguing that the examination of Nixon’s flawed character is the key to understanding Watergate. The themes outlined in this section will be used to interpret the remainder of the chapter—a depiction of the Nixon at Centre school’s Watergate story that emerged from the oral accounts.

This story consists of three sections, each stemming from the thematic discussion presented, and shows how the Nixon at Centre school has attempted to make sense of the Watergate events. The first discusses the way decision making in the Nixon White House was structured and the problems which arose from this method of organisation. Significant to this school is the illumination of ‘Dead Mouse Theory’, how it developed, and what its effect on the Nixon presidency was, outlined in the following section. The fifth section portrays the Nixon at Centre’s perception of the reasons for the Nixon administration’s decision to get involved in intelligence gathering operations in 1972. In doing so, what will surface is a Watergate theory which emphasises Nixon’s role in the Watergate scandal and explains how his attitudes and actions led to the breakdown of his presidency.
I will conclude with a discussion of the lessons of Watergate that this cohort cites in their narratives in the final section of this chapter.

**Origins**

In the course of the Watergate Grand Jury proceedings, Judge John Sirica judicially coerced the seven Watergate burglary defendants into talking by suggesting conditional sentences of 20 to 40 years be meted out, under suspicion of a cover-up. Sirica’s action caused James W. McCord to write him a letter on March 19th 1973, outlining that he and the other burglars had been politically influenced to keep quiet. McCord’s disclosure instigated a “parade of people trying to protect themselves”,¹ including former White House Counsel, John W. Dean III, who would seek immunity from prosecution. McCord’s actions solidified Sirica’s hunch that “higher ups were involved”, and led to the unravelling of the Watergate Affair.²

On June 25th 1973, Dean began his testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee in which he implicated himself, Nixon administration officials, former Attorney General and CREEP chairman John Mitchell, and President Richard Nixon in the Watergate Affair. Dean was the first Nixon administration official to place Nixon at the centre of the Watergate scandal. He pushed the envelope past the newspaper reporting of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of *The Washington Post*, who had not yet brought Nixon into Watergate’s cast of characters. As Woodward observed:

> Remember we never had a story saying anyone said Nixon was at the centre of this, and what Dean said was that Nixon was at the centre and was involved, and he had all of the dates and the meetings and so forth. So it was an escalation of the story beyond where we had taken it.³

Considering there was no evidence to suggest that Nixon authorised the June 17th 1972 break-in, Dean’s testimony caused a shift in focus in the investigations of the Senate, the Watergate Grand Jury, the Watergate Special Prosecution Force, the press, and ultimately

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² Elizabeth Holtzman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, 5th April 2007.
³ Bob Woodward recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
the Judiciary Committee’s Impeachment proceedings, from the origins of the break-in to the authorisation of the cover-up; thereby encompassing Nixon’s role in the affair. Dean’s submission also inadvertently widened the scope of all future Watergate examinations. From that day forward the scandal would be characterised in two parts—a break-in and cover-up. Dean spawned a tradition that is present to this day; a cohort of Watergate advocates who focus on the established role of Nixon in the Watergate cover-up, rather than addressing the root of the break-in. In this sense, the tradition that Dean established—the Nixon at Centre school of Watergate thought—focuses on what is known about Watergate when allocating meaning to the scandal, rather than seeking to provide explanations to unanswered questions. Such an emphasis may be seen in the comments of Bernstein: “...It’s what we know that’s important. We had a president that used illegal, unconstitutional means as a basic matter of implementing policy. That’s what makes Watergate special”.4 It comes as no surprise therefore, that this cohort has the propensity to reject Watergate revisionism, particularly if it is seen to “merely discredit or...debunk” established Watergate truths.5

While Dean’s testimony was damaging to Nixon, Sirica’s law clerk on the Watergate Grand Jury, D. Todd Christofferson, explained it had little impact legally, as the allegations merely created “a credibility contest between [Dean] and the President of the United States”.6 Nixon vigorously denied all of the accusations made against him, claiming he had authorised a cover-up, and Dean had no proof that could further implicate Nixon, beyond various notes he had taken in his meetings with the president. It was not until the existence of the secret White House tapes were revealed that Dean’s charges could be substantiated.

The tape of Nixon’s March 21st 1973 conversation with H.R. Haldeman and Dean initially provided evidence that Nixon knew hush money was going to be paid to the Watergate burglars. Once the “smoking gun” tape was released to the Grand Jury and later provided to the Judiciary Committee, there was no room left for Nixon to deny he attempted to use the CIA to block the FBI’s investigation into the Watergate burglars’ money trail.7 It is widely accepted by Watergate players and scholars alike that Nixon may not have been forced to resign, if it were not for the existence of the tapes.8 The White House tapes corroborated

5 Ibid.
6 D. Todd Christofferson recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, July 15th 2008.
7 Lowell Weicker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 23rd 2008.
Dean’s story, resulting in the tradition he spawned continuing to use these tapes as evidence for their Watergate claims, while also pointing to the fact that Nixon had been named an un-indicted co-conspirator of the Watergate Affair by the Watergate Grand Jury.

Yet the release of the White House tapes also had a dramatic effect on Nixon’s image and the historical portrayal of the Nixon presidency. Although observers had already noted that Nixon possessed negative personality traits, the tapes succeeded in corroborating their effect on presidential decision making.9 With 4000 hours of presidential tapes that would eventually make their way into the public domain, the Nixon at Centre school would have ample evidence to support their views that Nixon was an angry, paranoid president, who was sometimes racist, and almost always secretive and paranoid. Additionally, the tapes could be used as evidence to support claims that flaws in Nixon’s character resulted in him setting an atmosphere for his administration that encouraged dirty tricks, as well as a desire for political intelligence which perpetuated the consistent pattern of malfeasance throughout his entire presidency.

It is the connection that has been made between Nixon’s character and the downfall of his presidency that is at the heart of the Nixon at Centre school. Similarly those who can be said to be followers of this school see the examination and emphasis on Nixon’s actions as the key to understanding the Watergate puzzle. For instance, by seeking to cross-examine Nixon about the Watergate Affair in his famous broadcasted 1977 interviews, British journalist, Sir David Frost, extended the notion that one could get at the heart of Watergate causality by questioning Nixon. If not, Frost may have pursued the interrogation of another Watergate player.10 Frost knew that interviewing Nixon was a great opportunity: “Because of the pardon and also because of the phlebitis...[Nixon] had never been questioned” about Watergate. “Foremost in [Frost’s] mind from the very beginning...was a [sense of] real responsibility, that it was the first, and it might be the only time, as it in fact turned out to be”, that former President Nixon was questioned about his role in the Watergate Affair.11

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Proponents of the Nixon at Centre school argue that Nixon’s misdeeds outweigh the positive policies he executed as president. This focus on Nixon’s negative traits plays a big role in the way the school evaluates the Nixon presidency as a whole. As Bernstein highlighted, “I think [Nixon] did big things, but it was under this tent of anger and resentment, and revenge, and illegality, and it defined his presidency and the way he conducted the White House”\textsuperscript{12}.

The final defining factor of the Nixon at Centre school relates to the way its subscribers view Nixon and his presidency within the workings of the American presidential system. These advocates view Nixon as an aberration, not only because Nixon seemed to jar with the moralist rhetoric of American policy and its functioning, but also because no other president had been accused of criminal wrongdoing. In this sense Nixon is seen as being “outside the mainstream of American presidents” who “are generally trying to connect to the high purpose of the presidency”.\textsuperscript{13} For example, Bernstein believed “Richard Nixon did not understand what the presidency was—there is this good will that floats to every president” which Nixon failed to use because “he was driven by getting enemies, and he never really found serenity”. What struck Bernstein while he listened to the tapes, was not “just the illegality and the abuse of power” that they displayed, but “the smallness of Richard Nixon”, given that “he didn’t realise that as president he could really do big things”.\textsuperscript{14} Those who subscribe to the views of the Nixon at Centre mentality tend to dismiss the Machiavellian view that the “ends justifies the means” in politics. Therefore, it is evident that the Nixon at Centre school of thought has an idealist conception of the role of the president, the presidency, and the American political system, as its proponents draw on the belief that Nixon had a distorted image of the presidency.

Such combined themes drawn on by the Nixon at Centre cohort get more play time in film and television than topics highlighted by any of the other schools of Watergate thought. Consequently, the Nixon at Centre school dominates popular culture, as their ideas are more commonly known to the broader population.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} Washington Post Live, \textit{Watergate 40\textsuperscript{th} Year Anniversary: Woodward and Bernstein’s discussion.}
\textsuperscript{13} Bob Woodward recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
\textsuperscript{14} Washington Post Live, \textit{Watergate 40\textsuperscript{th} Year Anniversary: Woodward and Bernstein’s discussion.}
Key themes

Us vs. them

Nixon and his four brothers grew up during the depression in Southern California. Their parents owned a store, and he and his siblings worked before and after school from an early age.\(^{16}\) Nixon only had time for two things in his early life: work and study.\(^{17}\) His inability to spend time socialising or partaking in extracurricular activities resulted in the loss of his first campaign for student body president to a popular athlete at Whittier High School. While studying at Whittier College, Nixon joined the football team, but spent all of his time on the bench. Nixon also founded the ‘Orthogonians’, a college organisation for working-class students, in response to being denied admittance into the exclusive ‘Franklins Club’. Similarly Nixon found himself having to turn down scholarships from Harvard and Yale to attend Duke Law School, prompted by his family’s financial situation.\(^{18}\) At Duke, Nixon’s determination earned him the respect of classmates and election to the presidency of the Duke Bar Association. Nevertheless, this did not earn him a place in any prestigious Eastern law firms after graduation, causing him to settle for work in a Whittier firm.

Former Nixon White House speech-writer, Lee Huebner, an avid student of the presidency who is currently a professor teaching politics and global media at Northwestern University, saw Nixon’s upbringing as the root of his ‘us vs. them’ attitude. He argued that this outlook came about from Nixon feeling like an outsider and being treated differently to more well-off people his entire life.\(^{19}\) We see this point of view played out on September 23rd 1952, when Nixon, while Senator and Republican candidate for Vice-President on the Dwight D. Eisenhower ticket, made a televised speech to the nation to outline his concerns about a fund established by his backers to reimburse him for political expenses. Nixon created history that day, reaching 60 million viewers directly to discuss a political issue, in the nation’s first televised address. During the speech Nixon defended himself by outlining in detail his family’s assets and finances, arguing that the contributions reimbursed him for his travel costs and postage for political mailings. In conclusion Nixon urged the audience to contact the

\(^{15}\) For an analysis of the presence of Nixon at Centre ideas in popular culture, see Frick, *Reinventing Richard Nixon.*  
\(^{16}\) Ed Nixon recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 9th 2007.  
\(^{17}\) Hubert Perry recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 25th 2007.  
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
Republican National Committee to instruct them as to whether they should keep Nixon on the ticket. He ended his plea by saying regardless of what ‘they’ say about it, his family intended to keep one gift—their black and white cocker spaniel his little girl Tricia named Checkers.\(^{20}\)

Huebner highlighted that the most notable part of Nixon’s ‘Checkers’ speech may be found in his use of the word ‘they’—meaning those that sought to limit Nixon’s success, and inadvertently, the progress of the nation.\(^{21}\) “Nixon was being falsely accused of things that he couldn’t even imagine being charged”, and in his defence he was alluding to a common “sense of resentment of an establishment who push the morale” of the country, Huebner stated.\(^{22}\) Arguably Nixon saw himself as the voice of the unsophisticated, the nation’s backbone, the ‘silent majority’, who needed to stand up to their elitist bullies. This ‘us vs them’ attitude, therefore, portrayed Nixon on the side of the more deserving sectors of the country, that is, on the side of improvement and what is right. For those who subscribe to the Nixon at Centre school, the peppering of this attitude was visible throughout Nixon’s political career, such as, for example, during his presidential speech following the United States incursion of Cambodia, where he outlined he would rather be a one-term president than give in to everyone that was against doing the right thing.\(^{23}\) Huebner believed Nixon displayed a defiant ‘we’ll show them’ attitude throughout his presidency, stemming from the Congress, the bureaucracy, and the press being set against him from the beginning:

Some of [this posture] was justified, [as] there were real enemies and opponents, but...they were exaggerated by this Nixon sense of self-pity, which...can be a dangerously terrible emotion, victimhood. But...a lot of it came back to childhood, circumstances, the death of his brother, and a lot of little things along the way that created a sense of distrust of the way life worked.\(^{24}\)

\(^{19}\) Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
\(^{21}\) Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
\(^{22}\) Ibid.
Nixon has been described as a “populist” who “resent[ed] the rich, the powerful, the fancy, [and] the graceful”.25 Nixon’s Special Counsel to the President for Public Liaison, Charles Colson, recalled Nixon once saying:

One of the things I hate most to see is a son bring his father in [to the White House] and be embarrassed about his father’s clothes or the fact that he has dirt under his finger nails when his father worked so hard to get him ahead.26

Colson observed that Nixon “always identified with the hard hats”, leaving him feeling “rejuvenated” when “they came into the office”.27 Nixon “never liked the sophisticated” or “elite”. He “resented the fact that he had gone to Duke, and that Kennedy had gone to Harvard”,26 Colson added. It is this attitude which subscribers to the Nixon at Centre view of Watergate maintain feeds into Nixon’s preoccupation with loyalty.

Loyalty

Upon assuming the presidency Nixon brought in his ex-law firm partner, John D. Mitchell, as Attorney General. Although Mitchell had a “strong character” and “was very good at politics”, he was also “very bad at measuring his own capabilities”.29 Nixon persuaded Mitchell to take on the Attorney General post, even though he was completely unqualified for the job. He “was also Nixon’s main political adviser”, therefore making his appointment “a conflict of interest”, and rendering it impossible for Mitchell to provide objective advice.30 Nixon’s Special Counsel and former speech-writer, Leonard Garment, argued that Mitchell “lost his capacity for independent action” because of “this mixed role of political adviser and Attorney General”. The other issue with Mitchell’s appointment was his inability to give his undivided attention to his role due to the health of his wife Martha, who had a “drinking problem” and “related mania”.31 Considering Mitchell later took on the role of Chairman for the Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP), and was indispensable to both of Nixon’s election wins,

25 Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
the problems associated with his appointment have been cited by Garment as “a major contributing cause to the collapse of the Nixon Presidency”\textsuperscript{32} particularly as on the day Mitchell approved the Gemstone Plan, he was up all night with his wife Martha as a result of her not being well.\textsuperscript{33}

Mitchell’s appointment, in essence, says more about Nixon’s character than his own. Garment claimed Nixon appreciated loyalty among his staff over any other quality, and Nixon’s decision to bring in an Attorney General who would be loyal to him rather than being able to give objective advice is a perfect example. Nixon wanted Mitchell on board no matter what it cost him professionally or personally; even though he displayed a strong reluctance to give up a half-a-million dollar law practice to come to Washington to take on a role he did not want.\textsuperscript{34} In doing so, Nixon felt that he could “never turn on Mitchell”, as he “felt a special loyalty” for the man.\textsuperscript{35} Nixon’s decision would eventually play out badly during the Watergate episode. Some observers argued the president’s involvement in the affair stemmed from him wanting to protect Mitchell, resulting in Nixon choosing to involve himself in a cover-up rather than abandon a friend he had been brought into his presidency against his will.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Enemies}

Advocates for the Nixon at Centre school view Nixon’s seeking loyalty above all as also manifesting in another problem both prior to and throughout the Nixon presidency, namely the way Nixon viewed any adversary as an enemy. A common view held by advocates within this school is that Nixon believed those around him were either with him or against him. It has been argued that this view of the world stems from Nixon being a product of a dark political period which required its participants to submit to the “law of the jungle”. This meant that those involved in politics needed to make a choice: “either eat or be eaten”.\textsuperscript{37} Nixon rejected the notion of neutrality, “people were either for you or against you”, and it is believed that this

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Dwight L. Chapin recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave, April 2nd 2007.
\textsuperscript{35} Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 17th 2007.
\textsuperscript{36} D. Todd Christofferson interview by Timothy Naftali, July 15th 2008, and Hubert Perry recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 25th 2007.
\textsuperscript{37} David Gergen recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 5th 2009.
mentality led to his “paranoia and a very dark view of human nature and how the game [of politics] is played”.

Nixon’s approach comes to light in portrayals of his relationship with the press, in particular in 1962 when he unsuccessfully challenged incumbent Pat Brown for Governor of California. Nixon’s campaign was clouded by public suspicion that he lacked interest in being California’s Governor, and viewed the office as a stepping-stone for another presidential run. In an impromptu concession speech the morning after the election, Nixon blamed the media for favouring his opponent, stating: “You won’t have Nixon to kick around anymore because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference”. This popular image of Nixon “sing[ing] out the press for unfairness” whilst “depicting himself as a victim” has been used by scholars who place Nixon at the Centre of the Watergate scandal to portray his resentment and bitterness with the press. Nixon insisted the press were reporting his political career in a manner which he deemed to be biased and unscrupulous. “Whatever the origins of this antagonistic relationship” with the press, it was clear that Nixon believed it “damaged [his] campaign”. In response, whilst president, Nixon “made a list of enemies among the press to be deprived of contact with him”. Nixon’s perception of the press as an enemy resulted in the reduction of press conferences during his presidency, which further exacerbated the poisonous relationship he had with the fourth estate. Had Nixon not identified the actions of the press to be adversarial, perhaps his relationship with the press would have been quite different.

Control

Those who support the Nixon at Centre mentality have argued that Nixon’s preoccupation with enemies resulted in him striving for control in all areas of his presidency. An example of this endeavour may be seen in the development of Nixon’s obsession with public image.

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38 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
Although Nixon learned about the power of television through widespread public response he received after delivering his ‘Checkers Speech’,\textsuperscript{45} it was not until his 1960 presidential election loss to John F. Kennedy that he learned about the importance of vanity and looking good for the camera. On September 26th 1960, in the lead-up to the election, Senator Kennedy and Vice-President Nixon partook in the first nationally televised presidential debate before an audience of 70 million Americans. In the final two weeks of Nixon’s campaign, of which he pledged to campaign in all 50 states,\textsuperscript{46} Nixon had to cease campaigning due to an infected knee, the result of an injury sustained in North Carolina a month earlier. Instead of resting after his hospital visit, Nixon refused to abandon his pledge and continued campaigning until just a few hours before the first debate. Considering Nixon had not completely recovered, he looked pale, sickly, gaunt, and tired on television, and he also displayed a sweaty upper lip.\textsuperscript{47} In addition, Nixon refused to wear make-up for the first debate, which resulted in his beard stubble being visible on black and white TV screens.\textsuperscript{48} Kennedy by contrast appeared ‘tanned, rested, and ready’. The following day Kennedy had a big increase in crowds at his political rallies, whereas the Nixon cohort had a decrease, which was the only way to tell at that time who had won the debate.\textsuperscript{49}

It has been argued that people who watched the debate on television believed Kennedy had won, whereas radio listeners believed Nixon was triumphant.\textsuperscript{50} After the remaining three debates had ended, of which 20 million fewer viewers watched, polls showed Kennedy moving from a slight deficit into a lead over Nixon. It highlighted for Nixon, at least, the tremendous impact that appearance and image had on his campaign. This led Nixon to conclude that when it comes to campaigning, “vanity would prevail”, since it was obvious that “radio [was] not the only way….to get elected anymore”.\textsuperscript{51} Nixon realised that it was crucial to “shave” and “look good in the camera” by allowing the cameraman to “dress you up” and “put you in the right colour tie”. Nixon’s brother Ed Nixon believed the 1960 debate was his brother’s “awakening”.\textsuperscript{52} This episode in Nixon’s political career signified a shift in Nixon’s relationship with the camera, fuelling his obsession with public image, and further

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Herbert G. Klein recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and David Greenberg, February 20th 2007.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Henry C. Cashen recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 10th 2009.
\textsuperscript{51} Ed Nixon recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 9th 2007.
exacerbating his perception of a press that could not be trusted. It was also an example of Nixon again losing out to the wealthier, graceful and more visually appealing sectors of the nation, thereby feeding into his ‘us vs them’ sensibility and providing further evidence that he was an ‘outsider’ trying to break-in.

Another example of Nixon’s preoccupation with control may also be seen in the way he would calculate how any move would play out in the press, before he took a particular action. Such was the case with Nixon’s reaction to the Dr Martin Luther King assassination. Considering Nixon only had a relationship with King’s father, he believed going to King’s funeral would come across as not credible and send a message that he was trying to take advantage of King’s death. To counteract this perception, Nixon determined it would be best to take his friend Bob Applenoff’s private plane to King’s and his father’s home to express his condolences privately to the King family. Nixon ordered his staff to keep the trip a secret so it would be a selfless venture. When Nixon left Atlanta and arrived at the Key Biscayne Hotel in Florida he asked his appointments Secretary, Dwight L. Chapin, how the trip was playing out in the press. Chapin reluctantly advised Nixon that “nothing has happened” because he was ordered to keep the trip “confidential”.53 Nixon became furious with Chapin’s response and exclaimed that he would now “have to go back” and attend “the funeral”.54 Once Chapin consulted with Nixon’s Special Assistant for Domestic Affairs, John Ehrlichman, who confirmed Nixon’s instruction to keep the trip under wraps, the two men realised that Nixon assumed the story was going to leak, and thus provide an opportunity for a positive public relations story.55

Some proponents of the Nixon at Centre school claim that Nixon attempted to control every facet of his presidency, down to every small detail.56 For example, Nixon made efforts to control which Congressman would have the opportunity to speak with him at state dinners, and limited those that did to only a five minute conversation before they were made to move on by one of Nixon’s staffers.57 During Cabinet meetings Nixon was aloof, impersonal, and conducted the process in a dictatorial way.58 His personal insecurity caused him to seek

52 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
58 Earl Butz recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, April 13th 2007.
isolation from his Cabinet, often only confiding in his inner circle of personal aides on political matters. Laurence Silberman, who served as Solicitor of the Labour Department and Under-Secretary of Labour, believed Nixon did not meet one-on-one with his Cabinet members because he “was aware that his personality was not all that pleasant”, and he did not “want to show [it] to too many people”—not “because he was afraid of...lobbying” efforts. In the end, Silberman noted, Nixon only met with a handful of staff, such as Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Colson, and a few others, and he was really “careful not to exhibit the same kind of behaviour or personality as he did [with these people] on the tapes”, with others in the administration. Ultimately Nixon’s increased isolation from those outside his inner circle limited his capacity to learn more about issues being tackled by his wider constituency.

Nixon’s affinity with control was also fuelled by his lack of trust in others. Nixon’s past experiences affected the type of people with whom he surrounded himself, and whom he brought into the presidency. Furthermore, Nixon’s suspicious nature encouraged him to employ White House aides who were loyal, rather than appoint staffers purely based on their merits. The point has been made by some oral history participants that Nixon’s fixation with control was exacerbated by his inability to relax and enjoy himself. Deputy Director of White House Communications, Jeb Stuart Magruder, who later went on to serve as Deputy Chairman for CREEP, argued it was difficult being around Nixon, because every single interaction they had was “business, period. And that was it”. Magruder explained that there was a saying going around during the 1972 presidential campaign that “you didn’t want to go out and have a beer with Richard Nixon”, which he believed encapsulated the view of the comfort level among staff when they found themselves in Nixon’s company. “It was...always difficult being with the president...[he was not] a warm kind of friendly, gentle, buddy kind of person that communicated well with people.” Essentially Nixon had very clear ideas about where each staff member would fit in his administration, Magruder stated, hence

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60 Laurence Silberman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, July 31st 2009.
61 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
Haldeman’s “note in his memoirs that he had never been invited” to a “state dinner…on the third floor”, and “he was Nixon’s closest aide”.66

Magruder’s view was supported by Nixon’s former Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs, William Timmons, who stated that “President Nixon was not easy to talk to, and if you wanted to see him you had better have something that was worthy of his time”.67 Similarly Colson observed that Nixon was “so driven, [and] so incredibly focused that it was difficult for him to have leisure time…[he] didn’t know how to unwind”.68 The only time Colson witnessed Nixon celebrating was in 1972 after the Teamsters Labour Union announced their endorsement of him. The following morning Colson visited Nixon at the Western White House in San Clemente and noticed that he was “exuberant”.69 Nixon invited Colson to go for a ride with him and they drove around the neighbourhood in a golf cart:

I was never more nervous in my life, because he was driving up and down the roads, [saying] ‘here’s where Kissinger’s got a house’, he’s showing me this and that, and he’s not a good driver, and he’s not paying any attention, and he’s in a golf cart, but he was celebrating, and that’s as far as I ever saw Nixon…ever genuinely taking a moment out just to celebrate something. He didn’t have the capacity to relax.70

Garment concurred, adding that Nixon “couldn’t enjoy himself”.71 Garment also wondered “why [Nixon] didn’t have a larger group [of people] to spend time with? I mean he had access to anyone in the world, but he…kept himself apart”.72

Arrogance

Another character trait which Nixon at Centre advocates draw on to illuminate explanations of Watergate was Nixon’s arrogance, which is said to have transpired from his political background. Nixon completed his political apprenticeship during a time when authority was greatly respected in the United States. Nixon was elected into the Congress in 1947, and

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66 Ibid.
67 William Timmons recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 27th 2009.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
served as a Senator and later as a Vice-President till 1960, experiencing politics from the era of Roosevelt to Eisenhower. Nixon was part of the WWII generation: people who were young when the war began; came of age during it; and shared certain values pertaining to the early 20th century. Although Nixon White House Speech-writer, David Gergen, may be characterised as a proponent of the Precedent and Context school, he offered the following insight:

They were in a triumphant war and had a very positive view of what America’s role was and could be. They were proud of the country but most importantly they had engaged in common sacrifice when they were young, and...it gave them a bond in government.73

By the 1960s, however, with the emergence of the counterculture, the attitudes of youth toward the government had changed. With the United States’ growing involvement in the Vietnam War came a lack of trust for government and a greater polarisation of those that were for and those against the war. When Nixon was elected in 1968, long gone was the time where the words of the government and the president were simply accepted. Rather the president’s actions were being scrutinised more than ever before. The world had changed around Nixon, and if he was going to survive as president he would need to adapt to that change.

Woodward pointed out that instead of moving with the times; Nixon chose to arrogantly believe he could get away with the same sorts of questionable actions his predecessor had executed. He assumed he would be treated with the exact same respect that past presidents and presidencies had been afforded. Woodward believes Nixon had a distorted view of the world that led him to assume that everyone in politics got involved in dirty tricks, so he had better get in first before they got him. But more importantly, Woodward observed that Nixon also had a “sense of arrogance” about the matter and displayed “a lack of accountability”.74 Nixon’s attitudes influenced those of his top men, resulting in his staff believing they could get away with almost anything. Yet, in order to commit such ‘crimes’ against the American public, proponents of the Nixon at Centre school argue that Nixon must have held a hatred and contempt for his people.

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73 David Gergen recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 5th 2009.
Hatred

Republican member of the Senate Watergate Committee, Lowell Weicker, argued that Nixon held a “disrespect” for the “American people” and a “dismay for the Constitution” and “so many aspects of society”, rendering it impossible for him to be an effective president and properly execute “domestic and foreign policy”.75 Similarly, House Judiciary Committee member, Bill Cohen, who served on the Impeachment Inquiry, contended that Nixon held an “anger, resentment, and hatred for others”, which “fuelled him”, and ultimately led to his presidential and self-destruction. Cohen explained that he “had occasion to meet [Nixon] following the impeachment process, and [they] got along very well”, and he “wish[ed] that [Nixon] had shown the kind of serenity and tranquility that he had shown after the experience as during his time as president”. “I think we would have had a very different result”, Cohen concluded.76 Likewise Woodward highlighted the effect of Nixon’s hatred on his presidential decision making, arguing that Nixon waged five wars on “American society”: the “antiwar movement”, the “press”, the “Democrats”, “justice”, and the “war against history which Nixon launched for the rest of his life”, resulting in a “repackaging” of his presidential legacy, rather than “facing up to what it [really] was”.77 What strikes Woodward is that Nixon “had within him the intellect to at moments [understand] what had happened”, and what he had done.78

Although Nixon’s speech-writer, William Safire, may not be considered as one who would have abided by the views of the Nixon at Centre school, he alluded to the impact of Nixon’s hatred in his oral history interview, citing Nixon’s resignation speech to his staff: “Always remember others may hate you, but those who hate you don’t win unless you hate them, and then you destroy yourself”.79 For Safire, Nixon’s remarks shared the “lesson” that he had “learned and internalised”, that “you cannot react with hatred against the people that hate you. You have to understand them and deal with it”.80 For some who promote the Nixon at Centre way of thinking, such as Woodward, Nixon’s statements were proof enough that Nixon himself knew that his hatred destroyed his presidency:

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75 Lowell Weicker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 23rd 2008.
77 Bob Woodward recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
78 Ibid.
At that moment when [Nixon was] resigning he realised that the poison was hate, that the piston driving him was hate. And that is such an intellectual self-revelation to present right at that moment, in public. You almost want to say ‘ah, you get it now’. It’s not that he could stay and not resign at that point, but it was the power of Nixon’s intellect which was apparent in so many things, in that moment getting how he had destroyed himself.\textsuperscript{81}

The effect of Nixon’s character flaws on the presidency

Fundamentally, those who assess Nixon’s legacy by placing him at the centre of Watergate, argue that Nixon’s character flaws had an effect on the way Nixon chose to manage his presidency and significantly impacted the onset of Watergate. The following discussion seeks to highlight how Nixon decided to structure his presidency and its operations, and portrays the problems which arose from this arrangement and the detrimental processes which spawned.

Decision making, control, and compartmentalisation in the Nixon White House

Every White House has a culture and a system of decision making set up by the president and his chief of staff, in this instance, Richard Nixon and H.R. Haldeman. “Since most White House staffers report to the president through the chief of staff, the chief of staff must work with the president to set up an overall reporting and decision-making system for the White House Office”.\textsuperscript{82} Although this system is special to each White House, it stems from the history of the American Presidency and its traditions. In discussing how the National Security Council (NSC) system of decision making on foreign policy has been modified by each president, former Nixon administration NSC member, Harold Saunders, argued that:

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\textsuperscript{81} Bob Woodward recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
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There is no right way or wrong way to organise presidential decision making, it’s the boss’s way. It’s the way the president chooses to use people, to learn from them, and it’s the way he, by nature, tends to make up his own mind.\(^\text{83}\)

For example, Saunders contended Nixon preferred to hear all of the options and arguments from his NSC staffers and then take time to think about the pros and cons on his own, before making a decision. President Lyndon B. Johnson, however, preferred to hear his closest aides’ opinions and make a decision there and then.\(^\text{84}\) One of the main functions of the presidential decision-making system is to shield the president from any actions that may be considered improper, so if efforts are made to trace a line of authorisation, the dots cannot be connected back to the president. In doing so, the president has the ability to be truthful when saying they are not involved in misconduct, therefore removing him or her from direct responsibility.

Decisions and actions can take place through one of three ways in a presidency: presidential orders, the White House system and culture that has been created, and through rogue decision making. Some subscribers to the Nixon at Centre school focus on the influences of the Nixon administration’s culture on decision making in their Watergate explanation, thus highlighting the unspoken rules and mores evident in the Nixon presidency, which they argue stem from flaws in Nixon’s character. As former Nixon administration advance man, Red Cavaney, explained: “…the White House is an institution” which “reflects the persona” of “the person” in the driver’s seat—the president.\(^\text{85}\) In this sense, the presidency “adjusts and figures out how to operate as efficiently as it can...or in some cases not so efficiently because of the way the principal is”.\(^\text{86}\)

Nixon maintained control of his staff by keeping his White House compartmentalised, having the added effect of leaving staff unaccountable for questionable acts. Once it was established that a specific staff member would be taking care of a certain issue in the Nixon White House, that aide would ensure that the problem or directive was taken care of until its completion. Since each staff member had a tremendous work load and there was a clear push for expediency, staff simply did not have the time to enquire into what concerns other

\(^{83}\) Harold Saunders recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 27th 2009.
\(^{84}\) Ibid.
\(^{85}\) Red Cavaney recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 26th 2009.
\(^{86}\) Ibid.
staffers were addressing. For this reason, if a dilemma did arise it was easy for staffers to write it off as someone else's problem. Chapin explained this issue quite well. Highlighting why he believes Haldeman would have tolerated such operations like the Fielding break-in, Chapin asserted that Haldeman knew the operation was "Ehrlichman's problem", and he "had enough on his plate that he wasn't going to worry about what John [was] worrying about".87

Garment outlined that the extent to which the Nixon White House was compartmentalised during the Watergate Affair would be impossible for an outsider to believe. During the summer months of Watergate, after the June 17 break-in, Garment's office was next door to Colson's, and he "didn't have the faintest notion" about what was going on. Garment "didn't even...[know] that there was an investigation" taking place, as he was so "busy with other things".88 This view was also highlighted by Nixon's Appointments Secretary, David Parker, who claimed he had no idea that the Nixon White House was involved in the Watergate Affair, and assumed until the very end that Nixon and the administration could not be involved.89

Interestingly, even Colson complained about the issue of compartmentalisation in the Nixon White House, saying the problem was a constant frustration for him too, because he could not get a sense of who was doing what when it came to Watergate. Colson claimed that he was not in attendance at any Watergate cover-up meetings, but:

...it is not surprising that you would get a guy like [Tony] Ulasewicz in the White House and I would not even know that. It was not surprising that the Huston Plan, [which permitted the intelligence community to conduct more domestic spying without a court order], I never heard about until it broke out in the Watergate hearings.80

"Nixon would deal with his own people in specific areas where he chose to put them", Colson maintained, and other concerns were not "widely talked about".91 In relation to Watergate, no-one in the White House had a comprehensive view of what was unfolding.92

89 David Parker recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 17th 2009.
91 Ibid.
92 Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
Nixon kept all of his staff separated. Such compartmentalisation ensured that questionable acts could be executed, but there was a lack of knowledge of these actions between the ranks, as there was never one person who knew exactly what was going on in all areas. An example of this may be seen in the existence of the secret White House tapes, which only Haldeman, Deputy Assistant to the President, Alexander Butterfield, and Nixon’s Personal Assistant, Steve Bull, knew about. As Gergen explained, there were “circles within circles”, “you didn’t realise what structures there were” and so much of what happened in the White House, particularly the “dirty tricks, were compartmentalised”. For Gergen, the Nixon White House was as compartmentalised as President Nixon.

Nixon’s Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, Stephen Hess, who spent a lot of time writing with Nixon prior to his presidential election win, and also served on his 1960 presidential campaign, believed the compartmentalisation in the White House says a lot about Nixon. Hess highlighted how Nixon’s speech-writing shop was set up in a way that each staff member had a specific function, rather than having each person working as a team and providing input to achieve a common goal: “They did not work on speeches together, Nixon didn’t want them to…[Raymond] Price was the ‘take them to the mountain top’ speech-writer, [Pat] Buchanan was the ‘slash and burn’ speech-writer, [and William] Safire always had a good line”. Hess argued that like the speech-writing shop, “Nixon totally compartmentalised his life”, and kept things separate that were “far more serious than that”. For Hess, the White House staff were all “in some specific box that [Nixon] had given” them. For example, “in all of the years that [Hess] knew Nixon he never cursed in [his] presence”. Nixon might have said “damn, shit and other thing[s]”, but he never “really cursed”. When the White House tapes were released Hess was shocked to hear Nixon on the tapes and the number of times that the developers of the transcripts removed the profanity and replaced it with “expletive deleted”. Although Nixon had “a group of intellectuals”, including Hess, with whom he discussed “high intellectual stuff”, it became clear to Hess after listening to the tapes that as soon as he left the room and Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Colson walked in, the

94 David Gergen recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 5th 2009.
95 Steve Hess recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 19th 2009.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
“political garbage” talk would begin. “And so it went. They didn’t talk with us, we didn’t talk with them”, Hess said, “and that was a serious fault”, for the presidency, and for Nixon.99

The issue of compartmentalisation was exacerbated by the rigidity instilled in the Nixon administration. The Nixon White House has been described as very structured and hierarchical, reflecting Nixon’s own controlling and mistrusting personal style. Domestic Council staff member, Raymond Waldmann, explained that an ordinary staff member could not just “jump into Haldeman’s or Ehrlichman’s or Kissinger’s car”, within a presidential motorcade, “or sit down at their table at lunch”. These were “things” that you could just not “do”.100 The atmosphere was very “tense”, it “was a very tightly run ship”,101 and the Nixon presidency also saw more power being concentrated in the White House rather than the departments.102

Cavaney contended that every facet of the Nixon White House decision-making process points to Nixon’s preference for maintaining control of every minute detail of his presidency. Like a corporate ladder “things went up the chain, they got an answer, and then they came back down”.103 Likewise Chapin outlined that traces of Nixon’s controlling nature could be seen in his campaign advance operation, on which Chapin and Cavaney served as advance men:

Nixon had a very sophisticated advance operation; [which] tells you the degree to which he wanted things controlled. There was a big manual that was put together over the years…[which]…define[d] exactly how things were to work…[which included]…a whole disciplinary system. For example…take a motorcade…[it would show] exactly where people were supposed to be. I was trained on how to approach Nixon and how to present information…what should be in [his] suite, what should be done in terms of timing, it was endless. And it was adhered to or else the advance man would be fired…[The advance operation] really reflected a lot about Richard Nixon, which is the controlled environment, everything worked exactly like it was supposed to work, there were no surprises, there were no off beat timings, we could inject

99 Ibid.
103 Red Cavaney recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 26th 2009.
spontaneity if he wanted to, but for the most part everything worked exactly like it was supposed to...\textsuperscript{104}

Dead Mouse Theory

Other than some of the more pronounced problems that Nixon at Centre advocates claim existed in the Nixon White House stemming from the flaws in Nixon’s character, those voices also trace the emergence of a more destructive force specific to the Nixon presidency. ‘Dead Mouse Theory’, as it has been labelled by a few Watergate observers, highlights the effect of Nixon’s negative personality traits on the way he chose to manage his presidency. This led his administration to choose expediency over process and increasingly employ loyal youth, resulting in many of the old political hands being eased out of the Nixon political family, and setting the stage for Nixon’s attentiveness to be fought over by inexperienced “bunnies”.\textsuperscript{106} This consequence paved the way for even larger problems and led to the development of a structure within the Nixon presidency that made Watergate possible, and probable.

The Nixon administration’s first year in government had a dramatic effect on the president. “Nixon came into a terrible reception in Washington”.\textsuperscript{106} Colson recalled The Washington Post article, by Sally Quinn, saying “the Nixon crowd coming from Orange County to Washington is like Hitler occupying Paris. There was some pretty mean stuff said, and there were poor relations right from day one with the Nixon administration”.\textsuperscript{107} By the time Colson had come to the White House in 1969, Nixon seemed worn down. Colson arrived a week after “a lot of the protests and demonstrations” took place that surrounded the White House with “a quarter of a million people”, and he “hadn’t seen Nixon since the campaign except at public events”, so he hadn’t had the opportunity to sit “down with him”. But when he did “over the first few months [that he] was in the White House”, it became clear that Nixon was “frustrated”, “tired” and “beleaguered”, as a result of his “first year” in office. Colson could see “the toll it had taken on him”.\textsuperscript{108} For Colson, Nixon’s weakened state stemmed from “the opposition”, “the bureaucracy that [was] intractable, the White House staff that [didn’t] do what [they were told] to do, and the press”.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{104} Dwight L. Chapin recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave, April 2nd 2007.
\textsuperscript{105} Christopher DeMuth recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 14th 2008.
\textsuperscript{106} Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 17\textsuperscript{th} 2007.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
The impact the presidency had on Nixon was exacerbated by his inability to adapt to the changing times or accept the philosophy of the counterculture, due to their lack of respect for authority. This limited Nixon’s capacity to understand why the youth in the United States at the time could not see the issue of the war the way he and his administration saw it. Butterfield believed Nixon always sided with the “soldier” and law abiding citizens, and was puzzled by the fact that people didn’t see the war his way.\textsuperscript{110} It is generally understood that Nixon’s early morning visit to the Lincoln Memorial on May 9th 1970, during protests over the Kent State University shootings, was an attempt to “reach out to the youth and communicate with them”.\textsuperscript{111} Nixon “had no talking points”, and was trying to “empathise” with the students as “best [as] he could”. Nixon discussed being a “pacifist” and explained that he wanted to “make [the United States] safer, and “wanted to end the war”, which meant that he and the youth of the nation had “shared...aims”.\textsuperscript{112} This lack of understanding and communication on both sides was exacerbated by neither the counterculture nor the Nixon administration really knowing each other’s capabilities, or just how far either side would go to fight for their own cause. This sense of unpredictability generated a greater sense of fear within the Nixon administration and led to the authorisation of the Huston plan in July of 1970. The effects of this internal and external battle over the war had a great effect on Nixon’s “popularity” and “personality”.\textsuperscript{113}

Nixon’s lack of trust, paranoia, and mania for secrecy\textsuperscript{114} resulted in him taking action within his presidency to ensure his ideas and policies were enacted. This action stemmed from Nixon’s negative view of the bureaucracy and its inability to effectively implement policy.\textsuperscript{115} Christopher DeMuth who served as staff assistant to Daniel P. Moynihan, Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, claimed Nixon had a pessimistic perception and a deep suspicion of the permanent government:

\textsuperscript{110} Alexander Butterfield recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 12th 2008.
\textsuperscript{112} Egil “Bud” Krogh recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and John Powers, September 5th 2007.
\textsuperscript{113} “The war never seemed to end, it kept going and going and going...” Jeb Stuart Magruder recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave, March 23rd 2007.
\textsuperscript{114} Richard Gill interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.
\textsuperscript{115} Dana Mead recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 8th 2009.
He thought all of the civil servants and the people that ran all the programs were a bunch of liberals who had ideas that were antithetical to his and that were in some way or another out to get him...disliked him...and...would try to undermine him.\textsuperscript{116}

Domestic Council staffer, Dana Mead, extended DeMuth’s argument, explaining that “most of the problem in the Nixon administration” was its “inability to get the next three levels” of the bureaucracy “on board and get them to support what [was] going on”.\textsuperscript{117} Mead suspected that this difficulty arose from most of the “bureaucrats” in the government at the time having been “recruited” or having “worked under [the Kennedy and Johnson administrations], where there was relatively a lot of money flowing” and “a lot of federal programmatic activity”.\textsuperscript{118} After the Nixon administration came to power there was “more emphasis on cost and cost management, which in some cases meant [they] were trying to squeeze the size of the bureaucracy down, or out”.\textsuperscript{119} Mead believed this process “contribute[d] to a lot of pressure, and a lot of resistance in the lower levels of these organisations”.\textsuperscript{120}

According to Colson, Nixon was a “small government supporter”. He argued the President’s efforts to “restructure” and “cut back” on government came out of his negative views of the bureaucracy. “Nixon hated and despised the bureaucracy…I believe many of Nixon’s detractors would agree that it was a very conservative administration in the second term”.\textsuperscript{121} DeMuth also noted that Nixon “didn’t feel particularly close to his cabinet…and did not have that much more confidence in them than in the permanent government”.\textsuperscript{122} Mead agreed, arguing that it was Nixon’s suspicions of the bureaucracy that led to the idea of four ‘Super-Cabinets’ to replace all of the departments, because “Nixon…didn’t like dealing with all of the Cabinets secretaries” and this meant there would only be four with whom he would have to interact.\textsuperscript{123} It is this negative view of the bureaucracy that is believed to have led Nixon to choose expediency over process and enlist loyal youth to carry out tasks.

In one example, DeMuth described how Moynihan had the idea that Nixon should address the terrible burned out hulks left from the Martin Luther King riots in 1968, as soon as the

\textsuperscript{116}Christopher DeMuth recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 14th 2008.
\textsuperscript{117}Dana Mead recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 8th 2009.
\textsuperscript{118}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121}Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 17th 2007.
\textsuperscript{122}Christopher DeMuth recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 14th 2008.
\textsuperscript{123}Dana Mead recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 8th 2009.
president got to Washington. Moynihan wanted to at least knock down the charred buildings in the city and pour some concrete to construct some basketball hoops until they figured out what the long-term construction strategy would be.\textsuperscript{124} DeMuth claimed the first rule of the project was to not let Secretary for Housing and Urban Development [HUD], George Romney, know about the project as it was assumed he would “goof it up some way”.\textsuperscript{125} What DeMuth’s group did was “find some contractors that could go in and bulldoze the sites with some heavy machinery” and find “some people in the city government that had the authority to hire these people”, having “some responsibility for the development” of the area they were working on.\textsuperscript{126} The group then found “some budget authority in HUD that could provide money to the people in the city who could undertake the project, and they “got the whole thing arranged”.\textsuperscript{127} “Secretary Romney was informed the night before” and “was invited to come to the ribbon cutting ceremony with the President”.\textsuperscript{128}

DeMuth believed this process was to be “the beginning of Watergate”, because he was part of “a bunch of 20 somethings in the White House” who were “not acting as staff”, but rather “as line officials”—they “were real government” who “were going right into the departments…talking to people that were running programs…[and] were telling them how to run the program”:

We would say ‘Now you need to give this person a grant in the [Washington] D.C government, and then the person in the D.C government is going to hire this contractor’. We were running this little government to run this one project…We weren’t giving advice to the president, we were the government itself.\textsuperscript{129}

DeMuth contended that Nixon’s “deep suspicions of the permanent government led him time and time again to have people on the White House staff actually managing programs” which he believed to be “a key piece of the President’s pathology”.\textsuperscript{130} DeMuth also highlighted the fact that he would often “call up the FBI and have them send files over”, yet “it never occurred to [him] that there was something wrong with it”. He claimed “I thought I was just doing my

\textsuperscript{124} Christopher DeMuth recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 14th 2008.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
job". DeMuth’s view is supported by Klein who stated: “The problem was that [Nixon] had a lot of young guys who...would tell a Cabinet officer ‘The president wants this’, [when] probably the only time they had seen the president was in the weeks he had been on television".

For DeMuth “there was something in the way that President Nixon did things that if there was something that he really cared about, the people right there were going to run it for him”. This approach characterised Nixon’s plan in his “second term to have these junior bunnies actually go out and run the department for the first time”, squeezing out the “eminent political elders” and having “all of these kids sent” out, “but actually they had been running things from the beginning”. Summing up DeMuth concluded:

All White Houses are a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the president and the way he goes about governing things...there are all kinds of people in any government, and there are all kinds of people in any White House and there is not nothing to the checks and balances that the bureaucracy builds in...There were pretty goofy schemes that were dreamed up in the White House that if they had been done through normal procedures, probably would have been caught...On the other hand, we just [cleaned up the city after the riots] in two weeks. If we had asked [The Department of Housing and Urban Development] to do it, we would still be waiting.

By employing inexperienced youth to carry out questionable tasks, their way of thinking could be moulded to suit Nixon and his desire for control. In addition, Nixon’s preoccupation with loyalty could be satisfied by having “young people that were completely loyal to him working for him and going and doing something to figure out a way to get around the permanent government and get [things] done”. In addition, hiring naive workers also had the added bonus of helping Nixon get around his inability to do his own dirty work, which Harper explained on one occasion resulted in the president spending 30 minutes talking to the Secretary for the Interior, Wally Hickel, instead of firing him, and then asking Ehrlichman to do

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131 Ibid.
133 Christopher DeMuth recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 14th 2008.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
it for him after he had left the room. Eventually, all of the experienced political hands in the Nixon administration were squeezed out of the White House, and more and more power was given to younger staffers who would promptly carry out Nixon’s wishes. Consequently, the power of a select few people within Nixon’s inner circle also grew.

This effect was discussed by Lamar Alexander, who served as an assistant to Bryce Harlow, Nixon’s senior political adviser. Alexander claimed Nixon “started out [his administration] with these extraordinary individuals who...were widely experienced people, [such as] Arthur Burns, Pat Moynihan, Henry Kissinger, [and] Bryce Harlow”. “Rarely has a president brought in such a broad-gaged group of people...they knew the world...but gradually over time...[they were] beginning to get squeezed out...”. This left “a lot of us young guys...who were smart, but the truth is, we didn’t know much”. Alexander observed that:

...over the first couple of years...the efficient people, who were smart, but didn’t know much, took control, and the wise worldly people, who knew a lot, [who took] time with people and who may not have been the most efficient, were pushed to the side.

This is “how Mr Nixon got into trouble”, Alexander explained, because he didn’t have around him, when big decisions were being made, the Bryce Harlow’s, and the Moynihan’s, and Arthur Burns’ of the world...[Instead] he had Ehrlichman and Haldeman and a bunch of young people that didn’t know better”. Alexander did not believe “Haldeman and Ehrlichman were evil men”. He argued “they were narrow-gaged men who didn’t know any better”, and “should [never] have been in those kinds of positions in the White House.

Alexander’s views have been echoed by Walter Scott, who served in the Office of Management and Budget in 1973. He maintained that it is pertinent for a president to obtain impartial advice from advisers with a tremendous intellect that have the gall to disagree:

...one thing that always struck me is the fact that when [Nixon] started out as President, his three key advisers on domestic, economic and international affairs were

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138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
Pat Moynihan, Henry Kissinger, and Arthur Burns, men of extraordinary talent, brilliance, [and] independence...[but this] evolved to the Haldeman and Ehrlichman types...And that’s to me, part of the problem because at least in my experience, you need people who have the intellectual [capacity], independence and perspective to really take you on. And my guess is that became harder to do when you lost guys like those.\textsuperscript{142}

For Watergate burglar, Eugenio Rolando Martinez, the people with whom Nixon surrounded himself, including Dean, Haldeman and Ehrlichman, were simply inexperienced and not within the calibre of staff from whom a president should have drawn advice. It is this lack of sufficient counsel that Martinez argued led to Watergate.\textsuperscript{143}

Nixon drew players into his administration that were loyal to him, and who could achieve results without getting caught up in the processes of the bureaucracy. For those on the White House staff, it may be argued that many of the younger staffers were so grateful to be employed in the presidency that they did not even question what they were asked to do, allowing questionable acts to be easily executed. For example, Becky Bovell, who was asked to work in an administrative capacity in the Executive Office Building, had no idea that she was in fact working for White House plumber, Howard Hunt. Bovell was advised that she would be working for a fellow she would not see much, but would leave her instructions and memos and would call her on the phone. Her administrative function was to do whatever that person wanted. Bovell said that although that might sound strange, she was so happy to be in the White House, had never worked there before, and “didn’t know what the protocol was...so she followed directions”.\textsuperscript{144}

In addition, because so many of the staff that Nixon employed came from California, they did not know much about the way Washington worked, causing young aides to serve Nixon with blind admiration.\textsuperscript{145} Likewise Bernstein complained that not one of Nixon’s staffers spoke up:

There was a sense that [the Nixon administration had] total power and nobody [was] going to hold [them] accountable...You know if there was one strong lawyer in the

\textsuperscript{142} Walter Scott recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, November 15th 2007.
\textsuperscript{143} Eugenio Rolando Martinez recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 25th 2008.
\textsuperscript{144} Becky Bovell recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 22th 2008.
\textsuperscript{145} Alexander Butterfield recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 12th 2008.
Nixon Presidency that may have gone up to the president and said ‘stop this, it’s against the law, you don’t need to do this’. The fact that there was no-one in the Nixon White House that had that view or had that authority tells you about how he fed and how he controlled this himself. 146

“The Nixon White House had a very intense chain of command, with a “clear…pecking order”. 147 “When [one was] at the bottom of the chain they were [at] the receiving end a lot” when it came to presidential orders. 148 This meant there was a lot of stress put on staff to produce and be efficient. As Nixon White House speech-writer Pamela Baily noted:

There would be demands…coming from Haldeman, for example, where he would ask ‘We need to know how many hands the president shook in his first term in office by 12.30’. And it was up to us to produce, and if you didn’t produce you would get a call at 12.33 [asking] ‘where is it’. So there was very much a sense of a chain of command there. 149

Nixon’s staff knew that if they did not play to his vices they would not progress professionally. Those that could prove their loyalty to Nixon were safe in the White House, but those that could not were eventually squeezed out. This process has been outlined by Hess: “As everybody will tell you, Nixon had his love affairs with some staffers and aides, and for a short period of time that was me”. 150 After Nixon lost the 1960 election Nixon offered Hess a role working as his assistant in his New York law firm Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie & Alexander. Hess declined, saying “Dick I can’t do that, I have my own life now, I am writing a book”. 151 John Whitaker, who was advancing the trip at the time, and was later appointed to the post of Deputy Assistant to President for Domestic Affairs in 1969, said “well that’s it, you’re finished with Nixon”. Hess thought Whitaker was exaggerating but he was right. “We did lots of things together after that but it was never the same”. 152

147 David Parker recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 17th 2009.
149 Ibid.
150 Steve Hess recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 19th 2009.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
Nixon’s reaction to rejection led his White House staff to believe they would never have the same role in his life or presidency if they did not give him what he wanted. For example, when Magruder was asked why the committee risked getting involved in the Watergate break-in he replied: “Because we knew the president wanted as much information as we could get, and the more information we got the happier the president was, and we wanted to make the president happy.”\textsuperscript{153} Ultimately Nixon’s staffers wanted to keep him happy, and they knew that if they brought him what he wanted, the ‘Dead Mouse’, they would obtain more power in the White House.\textsuperscript{154} Although staffers who were given direct authority to bypass normal bureaucratic channels to carry out orders in the name of the president started off with more power than others in the White House, they gained more power in the presidency via their continued direct access with the President, which increased as they carried out more and more successful tasks. This resulted in, as DeMuth described, there being younger staffers in the White House with not enough political experience and too much influence:

\textit{At the time there was a lot of young people in the White House whose judgment and discretion was extremely suspicious and they tended to be the people that later got into a lot of trouble...there were some people who I had a very low opinion of who I thought had a frightening amount of power, and that made me very uneasy.}\textsuperscript{155}

Once the more experienced hands had been eased out of power channels in the Nixon presidency, the atmosphere was set for the loyal and inexperienced operatives to vie over Nixon’s attention. Watergate Special Prosecution Force member, Richard Ben Veniste, outlined that Nixon “surrounded himself with second-raters, with characters who competed with one another, to out-do each other in dragging the mouse to the masters feet, to provide him with the kind of smarmy information that Nixon craved”. Ben Veniste felt that this problem, which ultimately stemmed from Nixon’s affinity for control, led to “the self-destruction of Richard Nixon”, “an otherwise brilliant man”.\textsuperscript{156} Some characters soon learned that the way to give Nixon more and more of what he wanted was to appeal to his darker side.\textsuperscript{157} It has been argued that the most notable of the Nixon staffers who used this method to accrue added power was Colson.

\textsuperscript{153} Jeb Stuart Magruder recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave.
\textsuperscript{154} Jill Wine-Banks recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, October 21st 2008.
\textsuperscript{155} Christopher DeMuth recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 14th 2008.
\textsuperscript{156} Richard Ben Veniste recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 20th 2008.
Colson has been described as playing to Nixon’s “worst instincts”, the part of him that nobody else would, doing “things that nobody else would say or do”, which is why Nixon tolerated him. Garment explained that Nixon used to “go over, and over and over and over the same subject” in meetings with him and it used to drive him crazy as he “was not able to get any work done”. So he ended up “relay[ing] messages to Nixon through Ehrlichman so he would not get stuck in the same situation”. Yet Colson, on the other hand, would sit there and listen to Nixon ramble, which allowed him to get more and more face time with the President. After Colson organised his first Executive Order for Nixon, when Haldeman and Ehrlichman refused to, Nixon would go to Colson whenever Haldeman and Ehrlichman couldn’t get him what he wanted. Colson confided that Nixon “looked at [him] as kind of a ‘handy man’: “I was the utility in fielder, a free atom, which was a real threat to the Haldeman and Ehrlichman system... I was the [person] that he could always go to when he couldn’t get what he wanted from them”. This process not only resulted in a toxic relationship between the three men, but caused Colson to be viewed as a loose cannon within the White House. Yet Colson argued that Nixon “wanted it that way” and claims it was a way for Nixon to control people.

Although some Nixon administration staffers like Gergen disagreed that Colson brought out Nixon’s dark side. His superior on the speech-writing staff, Price, contended that by playing to Nixon’s dark side, Colson had endless opportunity for progression, as the negativity he was feeding resulted in the growth of Nixon’s capacity to hate, and thus extended Nixon’s list of enemies. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the way Nixon structured decision making in his presidency resulted in the creation of a government within a government. If Nixon wanted an action executed, this structure ensured there would be someone willing to carry out the task, and thereby bring Nixon the ‘dead mouse’. It is this structure which subscribers of the Nixon at Centre school argue paved the way for an episode like Watergate to take place.

160 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 David Gergen recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 5th 2009.
The sum of Nixon’s flawed character: The root of malfeasance in the Nixon presidency

Nixon at Centre proponents argue that a direct line can be drawn from Nixon’s negative personality traits to the Nixon administration’s decision to get involved in intelligence gathering operations during the 1972 presidential election campaign. The narratives used in this chapter’s final analysis will demonstrate that Nixon’s arrogance led him to believe he was the saviour of the nation’s ills, which justified the use of playing dirty politics for him to continue to execute his role. Additionally it is seen that Nixon’s fixation with loyalty made the situation ripe for illegal actions to be carried out to control the political process, in order to achieve Nixon’s re-election goal. Nixon’s hatred caused him to act out irrationally against his political opponents, and ultimately, an argument will be made that a consistent pattern of malfeasance existed throughout the entire Nixon presidency, which stemmed from the atmosphere that Nixon developed for his administration.

Nixon’s arrogance led him to believe that the fate of the nation rested on his serving another term. Watergate Special Prosecution Force member, Jill Wine-Banks, demonstrated this point in the following way: Nixon “thought he could get away with it, because he was the President, because he was invulnerable”, but yet “he [also] believed [that] the ends justifies the means. I’m a great president, and I should be president, and the people below him thought, we have to win this election, and so well do whatever it takes to win, and they were wrong on every one of those premises”.

As a result, it was felt that the administration needed to employ desperate measures to achieve their re-election goal, meaning they needed to match the severity of action that was being employed by their supposed political opponents.

Nixon developed a sense of arrogance about political campaigns that came from his experiences of being an outsider and a sense he had been attacked his whole life. Nixon deeply believed the Kennedys engaged in bugging, that he was bugged, that the Kennedys got away with a lot in politics that he could not get away with, and that he had always been dismissed by the swells. This perspective resulted in Nixon constantly being on the offensive when it came to his political enemies, Gergen contended, and therefore, he felt the

\[165\] David Gergen recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 5th 2009.
need to fight back in full force. Thus, when it came to political opponents it made sense that Nixon would want to play fire with fire. This sensibility drove Nixon to encourage acts of political espionage, because he felt he had the right to do what other presidents had done before him, and perceived political campaigns to have always run this way.

Magruder contended that intelligence gathering in the Nixon administration “was more driven by the president than by the staff.” CREEP’s staff perceived the “information gathering” operation as “a side line”, but ultimately something they “could [not] have cared less about”. For Magruder, his “job...was to win the election”. Yet Nixon “devoured intelligence, he just wanted to know everything there was to know”. Although the instructions to gather political intelligence came from Haldeman; Magruder believed these orders were in fact coming from the president. He drew these conclusions from his experience working in the White House, and what he knew of the atmosphere that Nixon created for his staff—one that strived for intelligence, which Magruder believed carried over into CREEP: “…we saw enough of the president ourselves, not like Haldeman did, but that you knew what he wanted”.

To satisfy Nixon’s needs, the staff developed methods of intelligence gathering that Haldeman knew about, but were executed in a way to shield the president from wrongdoing. The staff was not told what they could and could not do, but “everything went over to Haldeman, in some kind of memo form, and he would either say ‘yes’ or ‘no’, and [they] would go from there”. Magruder’s argument has been reiterated by Butterfield who explained that White House staffers were not “loose cannons”; they would only carry out tasks they believed would make the president happy and would never act in a way they believed would reflect badly on their head of state. This was compounded by the fear instilled by Nixon among his staff: that they must obey, or risk being pushed out of the administration.

Garment did not accept that Nixon had to order the Watergate break-in, or needed to have direct knowledge of the operation for him to be responsible for it:

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167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
Because that was the climate that was created, to do everything, to get everything done, and...when you have a staff that includes Liddy and Howard Hunt, and you’ve been through and had knowledge of the fact that there was the break-in at Ellsberg’s psychiatrists office, and your witting of all kinds of felonious possibilities, by people who are in your direct line of command, ultimately it would be hard for staff who knew of the plumber’s first break-in not to believe that these were the kinds of things that Nixon wanted.¹⁷²

Garment also raised another interesting point, that if you employed questionable figures to carry out tasks, more likely than not you were going to get a questionable outcome. Similarly it has been discussed by Richard Gill, who served on the Impeachment Inquiry staff, that although Nixon didn’t order wiretaps to be placed on his staff, he talked about them on the tapes, proving that he knew about it, and displaying to those around him that he believed this sort of action to be okay.¹⁷³ In essence, it may be seen here that Nixon’s need for expediency and suspicions of the permanent government resulted in unsavoury figures being brought into the administration, which Nixon at Centre thinkers contend paved the way for Watergate.

Proponents of the Nixon at Centre view claim that Nixon encouraged his staff to gather as much political intelligence as possible, in order to “micro-manage the political process” by knocking out the other top contenders, thereby choosing who the administration would run against.¹⁷⁴ In this vein Bernstein described the Watergate break-in as “part of a vast campaign of political espionage and sabotage directed by the Nixon campaign against Nixon’s political opponents”:

> It wasn’t just a break-in, the idea was to try and actually undermine the Democratic Party and their selection of a nominee. And every [bit of] evidence [shows] that Nixon and Liddy and Hunt and Haldeman wanted George McGovern to be the nominee. They wanted to knock out Muskie, and first Kennedy which explained Hunt’s fascination with Kennedy and the research he was doing on Teddy Kennedy. So it was a fundamental perversion of the electoral process...¹⁷⁵

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¹⁷¹ Alexander Butterfield recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 12th 2008.
¹⁷³ Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.
¹⁷⁴ Lowell Weicker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 23rd 2008.
For some Nixon at Centre advocates it is easy to see how the frustration Nixon experienced throughout his life, as a result of always having to play the political game harder than his opponents, has left him with the urge to take down his enemies. “I think [Nixon] saw himself as a tough guy who was going to prevail over adversity, which he had done throughout his entire life”, Harper said. Garment agreed, explaining his belief that:

_Somewhere, someplace [Nixon must have been] injured or wounded in a way that resulted in a paradox, that he survived, and he was both strengthened and weakened by the wound. The wound was very deep, and very permanent, [and it] affected his way of visiting the world, and the people of the world. [He] couldn’t get rid of it, in a way sometimes he could get aside from it and could regret that he couldn’t get rid of it, and those were the moments where I think I had a feeling of affection for him, or a feeling of sadness about the fact that he couldn’t enjoy himself_.

Yet other Nixon at Centre proponents were less sympathetic about the origins of Nixon’s negative behaviours, like Justice Department staffer Jonathan Moore, who saw Nixon as simply “parano[i]d...cynical and [possessing] a distrust in people”. Likewise Judiciary Committee member, Charles Rangel, considered Nixon to be a “bigot”, an “anti-Semite”, and “a very common, insensitive individual”. Rangel’s view of Nixon developed once he had heard several distressing remarks made by Nixon about Blacks, Jews, and Italians in a meeting with Dean, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman. This had been recorded on one of the White House tapes that Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino had removed from the impeachment proceedings, because they did not “directly relate to the question of [Nixon’s] violation of his constitutional office”. Rangel claimed this whole conversation was executed while Nixon’s staff just sat there “tolerant” and “listening to the guy rambling”. For Rangel it was “hard to imagine that [Nixon], as President of the United States, could hold such small petty prejudices against groups of people in the United States that supported him for president”. The tape that Rangel listened to had a huge impact on him, and he noted “it was something

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175 Carl Bernstein recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 22nd 2007.
179 It may be noted that although “any member who wanted to hear the tape could go privately and hear it”, Rodino “did not believe that it should be published” or released to the public. In Charles Rangel interview by Timothy Naftali, June 28th 2007.
that would be with [him] for the rest of my life”\textsuperscript{181} Silberman supported Rangel’s claim and added that when Nixon loyalists rejected Nixon’s anti-Semitism, they were merely rationalising.\textsuperscript{182}

Ultimately Nixon at Centre advocates like Woodward, believe Nixon was the wrong man for the presidency:

\textit{If you listen to the Nixon tapes...[you will see that] it’s too much about Nixon, it’s too much about using the power of the presidency for personal revenge, lets screw so and so, get the IRS, the FBI, the CIA on so and so, and I have not listened to all of the Nixon tapes and read transcripts, but it comes across to me, and you can correct me on this. Is there ever a tape where somebody says in Nixon’s inner circle, or Nixon says ‘What would be right? What would be good for the country?’ Does that ever happen?...isn’t that what the president should be asking kind of every day in the White House?’}.\textsuperscript{183}

Klein concluded that Nixon’s support of misconduct within his administration resulted in him setting a tone for his administration that encouraged dirty tricks, going after his political enemies, and ultimately constituted a pattern of malfeasance that stretched throughout his entire presidency.\textsuperscript{184} Although Nixon didn’t order the break-in himself, he led his staff to believe they were immunised from responsibility in regards to the abuses known as generic Watergate, and also for presenting an attitude “which encouraged illegality among his staff”.\textsuperscript{185} Klein argued that Nixon’s downfall was brought about by the staff in his administration’s sense that “…they…could get away with it all”, considering “nobody else had been caught up [doing] that kind of thing” in the past.\textsuperscript{186} Likewise Gergen contended that Nixon was responsible for creating a culture among some people that led them to believe that political misconduct was encouraged.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{182} Laurence Silberman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, July 31st 2009.  
\textsuperscript{183} Bob Woodward recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.  
\textsuperscript{184} In Herbert G. Klein recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and David Greenberg, February 20th 2007.  
\textsuperscript{186} In Herbert G. Klein recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and David Greenberg, February 20th 2007.
Reflecting on the magnitude of Watergate, Judiciary Committee member who served on the Impeachment Inquiry, Congressman Elizabeth Holtzman, stated:

Everywhere you turned there was misconduct. The cover-up was just enormous and never-ending, and so broad in its scope. And that was not the only thing, and then you had the Kleindeinst matter, and then you had the enemies list, and then you had the misuse of the IRS, and then you had the wiretapping, and then you had the Ellsberg break-in, I mean, where did it end? Where did it end? 188

Similarly Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Joseph Woods, explained that for him, when it came to Watergate, “…the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts”. 189

In conclusion, those who place Nixon at the centre of the Watergate scandal highlight Nixon’s character flaws to discuss their effect on presidential decision making, and their influence on the emergence of Watergate. Nixon’s lack of trust has been magnified in order to explain why he chose to enlist loyal youth to bypass the bureaucracy and carry out questionable tasks. This process resulted in the more seasoned political hands being squeezed out of the Nixon White House, creating a space for those that remained to vie over Nixon’s attention and generate more power for themselves within the administration. In order to do so, Nixon’s dark side would be appealed to, and ultimately what transpired was a government within a government that had the ability to carry out questionable tasks at the drop of a hat. Nixon’s controlling tendencies led him wanting to manage the political game he was playing, and to create an atmosphere in his White House that encouraged misconduct. Nixon’s arrogance caused him to routinely assume that he was on the side of what was ‘right’. At the same time Nixon’s feelings of being an outsider prompted him to fight hard against the elite he hated, 190 and the rich and graceful he resented. 191 Nixon at Centre advocates place Nixon at the heart of their Watergate theory and at every corner show how the president’s actions influenced Watergate events and caused a chain reaction that led to his resignation.

188 Elizabert Holtzman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007.
189 Joseph Woods recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 27th 2011.
The Nixon at Centre view of the administration’s presidential legacy

Those who see Nixon as central to Watergate contend that Nixon’s role in the affair should not be overlooked. To exemplify this point Nixon at Centre promoters point to the investigation and impeachment process being a bipartisan venture. Bernstein claimed that the mere fact that “Democrats, Republicans and independents voted 70 to nothing to create the Watergate committee”, and that “Nixon’s appointees in the Supreme Court, three of them, including the chief Justice of the Supreme Court said ‘you’ve got to turn over these tapes Mr Nixon because you’re not above the law’”, is proof that the forced resignation of Nixon “was not an ideological” or “partisan exercise”. Likewise senior member of the Impeachment Inquiry staff, Bernard Nussbaum, believed there would be a historical backlash to the inquiry and Nixon’s resignation, yet “that backlash never came”:

[I] thought in 20 years from now people were going to start writing that [Watergate was] a moment of hysteria, using the tapes, we forced a president out of office and we shouldn’t have done. Nobody ever said that. The position has been accepted by history that it was the correct judgment under those circumstances, in those times…Nobody looks back in the 1974 impeachment and the resignation as a joke.

Nixon at Centre proponents highlight Nixon’s controlling nature as evidence that it is likely he was involved in every minute detail of his presidency, and thus had intimate knowledge of the Watergate operation. Similarly, Chief Counsel to the House Judiciary Committee, John Doar, went so far as to argue that Nixon’s involvement in the Watergate Affair began in June 1972, not at the time of the ‘Smoking Gun’ tape, which was the first evidence that could be used to link Nixon to the cover-up. Also in agreement, Ben Veniste argued that if Magruder’s testimony was accurate, it was likely that Nixon saw the Gemstone documents, considering Magruder said that he gave the take of Gemstone to Strachan: “If Gordon Strachan gave the material to Haldeman, the likelihood, considering how the Nixon White House operated, was

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191 Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
192 Fred Altshuler recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
194 Bernard Nussbaum recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 1st 2011.
195 Robert Sack recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 27th 2011.
that Haldeman would have shared the material with his boss, Richard Nixon".\footnote{Richard Ben Veniste recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 20th 2008.} Ben Veniste claimed that Watergate Special Prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, was convinced Nixon was culpable prior to the release of the ‘Smoking Gun’ tape, otherwise the process of naming Nixon an un-indicted co-conspirator would not have taken place.\footnote{Ibid.}

Impeachment Inquiry staff member, William Weld, highlighted the fact that Nixon did not act surprised on the White House tapes whenever he was advised of misconduct, as evidence that he was culpable:

\begin{quote}
I didn’t listen to all of the tapes but I listened to a lot of them, and Haldeman, Ehrlichman and the president all seemed to be on the same page. I would say that the president was not going ‘oh really? That’s an interesting idea’. He was right there with them, there is no question of parasite and host here.\footnote{William Weld recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011.}
\end{quote}

Colson believed it was likely that Nixon knew about the Watergate break-in beforehand, as he was the one encouraging his staff to bring people in to carry out such tasks:

\begin{quote}
Well he wanted Hunt...No...no no. Go back to the ill-fated conversation about Brookings. [Nixon] turns to Haldeman and he says ‘But I’m telling ya, I want someone in here who can do these black bag jobs, I want somebody in here who can do what the FBI used to do. We need to do that, we need to protect National Security. I have now thought about that later and thought, geez Mr President, you can’t do that, not in the White House. And I regret I didn’t, but I didn’t. But I always thought he knew what was going on, because, and the Ellsberg thing, I was sure that he had approved it, because of that conversation I had sat in the Oval Office, so I mean I always thought that Ehrlichman must have got his OK. It turns out he didn’t but I always thought he would have.\footnote{Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 17th 2007.}
\end{quote}
...60 percent of what that man did was great, was really good. 30 percent may not have been good, but he did not realise that. Well, mathematicians watching this now, this moment in history, will realise that he left 10 percent, which were not good and he must have realised they were not good or were wrong, or whatever. And that was an early and amazing sort of seismic thought...And then he said ‘If you don’t do justice to the 60 percent, then I will never forgive you, I will pursue you to ruin’, and so on. And I said, ‘if you screw us on the 10 percent, I will do the same to you’. That was a tense situation between the two of us.\textsuperscript{200}

Former Senator George McGovern is one of many subscribers of the Nixon at Centre way of thinking who claimed Nixon had the opportunity to tell the truth from the start. McGovern, who ran against Nixon in the 1972 presidential election highlighted that the legacy of Watergate showed:

\begin{quote}
that even a very powerful figure can break the law, can violate the Constitution, and it showed also that sometimes you get caught when you engage in behaviour of that kind, and that you may pay a very heavy price for wrongdoing. I can’t imagine anything worse that can happen to a president, than to be thrown out of office in disgrace. And I am sure that President Nixon came to feel that way about it. So the lesson of Watergate is to tell the truth, to obey the law. The only oath a president takes is to uphold the Constitution. Don’t ignore that oath, take it seriously.\textsuperscript{201}
\end{quote}

Ben Veniste claimed that Nixon showed no remorse for his actions, pointing to the fact that he may not have known the difference between right and wrong:

\begin{quote}
[Nixon] squandered the opportunity to save himself, had he immediately after the break-in taken responsibility...and acted as an individual who knew the difference between right and wrong, who cared about the immorality of the situation and cared about the damage that had been done to the Constitution, and done his mea culpa, I think there was a chance that he may have survived and his presidency would have continued, although he would have been gravely wounded as President. It was not until the fact that his lies were irrefutably demonstrated out of his own mouth on tape, that he then lost any option of continuing as president.\textsuperscript{202}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{200} Sir David Frost recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 30th 2007.  
\textsuperscript{201} George McGovern recorded interview by Kent Germany, August 26th 2009.  
\textsuperscript{202} Richard Ben Veniste recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 20th 2008.
The Washington Post writer, Lou Cannon, had the same idea:

...[Nixon] could [have] avert[ed resignation] if he had made a clean breast to the American people...[and] apologised...I felt that then and I feel that now...and it was never quite clear to me...why Nixon, who saw so many things, didn’t see that. He sort of chose death by water torture, it seems to me.203

Wine-Banks contended that Nixon covered-up the affair because it was impossible for him to admit fully what he had done to the American people:

I think, obviously no-one wants to admit that they have engaged in criminal activity, and of course, this is very different. It’s one thing to apologise to your wife for fooling around, and to the American people, but a very different thing to say that I know about discussions about covering this up, about using the FBI and the CIA, and paying hush money, that’s a little trickier to admit, so you are almost forced into a cover-up.204

For Nixon at Centre thinkers, ultimately Nixon admitting that he let the country down in his interview with Sir David Frost is proof enough that he did wrong.205 Furthermore, the fact that he was pardoned, is evidence that Nixon got away with ‘murder’. Ben Veniste was saddened by the timing of the pardon as it “left open the question of whether Richard Nixon accepted responsibility for his criminal activity...”.206 Holtzman also saw the pardon as a sad event as Nixon “did not acknowledge...what he had done to the country and what he had done that was wrong”.207 Angelo Lano, lead investigator for the FBI on the Watergate matter, argued that if Nixon was pardoned “then the rest of [the offenders] should have been pardoned [too], but not until they were tried or at least came forward and admitted to what they had done to the country”.208

In closing, it has been said that Nixon left behind a legacy of distrust, which Woodward highlighted Nixon’s successors did not comprehend: “They didn’t get that the press is more aggressive...That the Congress is more aggressive, [and] that the public is more sceptical”.

205 Sir David Frost recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 30th 2007.
206 Richard Ben Veniste recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 20th 2008.
207 Elizabetth Holtzman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007.
208 Angelo Lano recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 28th 2009.
Thus for Woodward, as with other Nixon at Centre proponents, the lesson of Watergate which has not effectively been learned is: "just get it out, take your medicine, and don’t get involved in a war with Congress, and the Supreme Court or with the press".  

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209 Bob Woodward recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
Chapter 3
The Power and Personality School of Watergate Thought

The Power and Personality school emerged as evidence of Nixon’s abuse of presidential power surfaced, causing observers to question the causes of the affair, and its greater meaning in history, politics, and government. Those who subscribe to the views of this school argue that Watergate must be seen as a constitutional crisis, claiming that context and presidential character go hand in hand when explaining the evolution of the affair. In order to illustrate these arguments I will again be drawing on the narratives presented in the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum’s oral histories.

This chapter contains six sections. I will begin with a portrayal of the Power and Personality school’s conception, highlighting key events and groups that have contributed to its solidification in Watergate’s history and scholarly study, and identifying the way the school may be characterised.

This will be followed by a discussion of the key themes associated with the school’s understanding of the Watergate scandal: right and wrong, abuse of power and Nixon the elected king. Proponents of the Power and Personality line of thinking draw their explanations from the notion that Nixon had a distorted view of the presidency and the power he could execute. They discuss the context which bred the Watergate scandal, and use this dialogue to illuminate Nixon’s decision to abuse his presidential power. They recognise that ultimately the Republican system created by the framers of the Constitution works. The themes highlighted in this section will be used to interpret the remainder of the chapter: a depiction of a Watergate story that emerged from the oral accounts which coincides with the Power and Personality mentality.

This story consists of three sections, each stemming from the thematic discussion presented, and showing how Power and Personality advocates have attempted to make sense of the Watergate events. The first depicts the context of the presidency during wartime, exemplifying the issue of power aggrandisement, and the importance of the integrity of the commander-in-chief. Within this backdrop, in the fourth and fifth sections, Watergate is portrayed as an inescapable event within the American constitutional system, emerging from the turbulence of its era, as a result of an all-encompassing national security mentality that
transpired within the Nixon administration. It will be argued that Power and Personality sympathisers perceive this mindset to be the source of the Watergate Affair.

Significant to this school of thinking is the belief in some idea of ‘System Work’s Theory’, outlined in the final section of this chapter. Watergate’s true legacy, they argue, can be best characterised as a separation of branches battle, thereby emphasising the triumph of the American system of government as the cornerstone of their Watergate theory.

**Origins**

On July 16th 1973, Deputy Assistant to the President serving under H.R. Haldeman, Alexander Butterfield, revealed to the Senate Watergate Committee that Nixon had been secretly recording his conversations.\(^1\) Nixon fought to prevent the release of the tapes to the Congress and the Courts through the execution of the constitutional doctrine of executive privilege, protesting that a president would be unable to properly execute their duties if they could not obtain proper and confidential advice. In doing so, Nixon claimed he had the right to protect these communications between high government officials and their advisers.\(^2\)

Nixon’s views did not change the fact that District Court Judge, John Sirica, viewed the tapes as key to understanding his involvement in the Watergate Affair. Sirica rejected Nixon’s claim, arguing the court had to review the tapes to determine whether they were relevant to the Watergate criminal investigation. Although Nixon appealed the determination, the Court of Appeals upheld Sirica’s decision, ruling that Nixon had to hand over the tapes. Instead of lodging an appeal by October 19, the White House announced it would prepare edited summaries of the nine requested tapes for Sirica, allowing only the Democrat Senator from Mississippi, John C. Stennis, to verify them in exchange for Special Prosecutor Cox not pursuing any other tapes.

The ‘Stennis Compromise’ was rejected by Cox on the grounds that the Court had the right to listen to the actual tapes, and by limiting any future requests, the plan also interfered with his ongoing investigation. On October 20th 1973 the president instructed the Justice Department to fire Cox in light of his rejection of the compromise. Attorney General, Elliot Richardson, and his Deputy, William Ruckelshaus, chose to resign rather than uphold the

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2. Ibid.
president’s order, yet Solicitor General, Robert H. Bork, who was next in line, agreed to fire Cox. The ‘Saturday Night Massacre’, dubbed by political commentators at the time, resulted in the formal dissolution of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force, working under the direction of Cox.

The public reacted to the Saturday Night Massacre by flooding Capitol Hill with thousands of telegrams calling for Nixon’s impeachment. Ten days later, impeachment proceedings in Congress began as the House Judiciary Committee, chaired by Republican, Peter Rodino, started its preliminary investigation. Nixon responded to the public outcry by turning over some of the tapes; however, it was announced by the White House that two of the requested tapes did not exist and one contained an 18 and a 1/2 minute gap during a crucial conversation between Nixon and Haldeman, three days after the Watergate break-in took place. To avoid handing over the 42 subpoenaed tapes to the House Judiciary Committee, the White House instead released 1254 pages of edited transcripts of 20 tapes in the spring of 1974, which were published nationally in book form. Apart from confirming that Nixon had discussed the raising of hush money to the Watergate burglars, the transcripts revealed that behind closed doors Nixon behaved quite differently from his carefully tailored public image, causing a national sensation. Yet, by the time the White House released their transcripts the Impeachment Inquiry staff had already made their own, highlighting the fact that a large number of discrepancies existed between the transcripts that both the White House and Congress had produced. Judiciary Committee member, Elizabeth Holtzman, and Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Dorothy Landsberg, argued that the White House “doctored” transcripts were signs of a continuing cover-up.

On July 27th 1974 the House Judiciary Committee approved its first article of impeachment, charging President Nixon with obstruction of justice. On July 29 the Committee approved its

3 Ibid.
5 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
6 Judiciary Committee staff member, Jeffrey Banchero, was tasked with preparing transcripts of the White House tapes for the Committee. Banchero was “stunned” at the difference between the transcripts that he and his colleagues made in comparison to the version the White House provided to the Committee in 1974. The Judiciary Committee ended up publishing a comparison of the two transcripts which showed “hundreds of differences”. In Jeffrey Banchero recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
7 Elizabeth Holtzman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007, and Dorothy Landsberg recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, November 7th 2011.
second article, charging Nixon with abuse of power, and the next day, the third and final article, contempt of Congress, was approved. Newly appointed Special Prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, pursued the remainder of the White House tapes in the Supreme Court, which ruled unanimously on July 24th 1974 that President Nixon must surrender the tapes. On August 5th 1974 the ‘Smoking Gun’ transcripts were released, providing evidence that Nixon was involved in the Watergate cover-up by ordering Haldeman to halt the FBI’s investigation. This chain of events culminated in the collapse of support for Nixon in Congress, leading to Nixon’s resignation from presidential office on August 9, amidst the likelihood of impeachment.

The battle over the White House tapes—resulting in the Saturday Night Massacre and the Impeachment Inquiry—exemplified a time when Nixon attempted to exercise the power that had amassed to the American presidency since World War II, to prevail over the other branches of government. It is those that viewed Nixon as an imperial president during the Watergate scandal, such as Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr had highlighted in The Imperial Presidency, who inadvertently founded the Power and Personality school. Like Schlesinger, Presidential Counsel during the Watergate trial, Richard Hauser, saw Watergate as a constitutional crisis—a “Titanic clash of the branches” which sought to determine “what...the powers of the presidency” would be, “versus the power of the legislature, versus the power of the courts”. It is the description of Watergate as a constitutional crisis that is at the heart of the Power and Personality school. The image presented by such advocates is one of President Nixon in a battle with the other branches of government, a crusade whereby the press, the Senate, the Congress, and the Courts fought back, and thus restored balance to the American system of government. It is these investigative groups and their players who initially promoted the view that the understanding of the interplay between presidential Power and Personality were fundamental to the comprehension of the Watergate crisis. Their published accounts which began to emerge in the mid-1970s reiterated this theme.

Those who subscribe to this interpretation of Watergate and Nixon’s role differ from those who have made Nixon the central agent of the Watergate Affair, in that they do not believe Nixon’s flawed character to be the fundamental feature dominating Watergate’s causality. Advocates of the Power and Personality thesis contend that Watergate must be understood

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8 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
within its historical context, thereby allowing us to examine how and where Nixon obtained his presidential power, rather than focusing on why he may have chosen to misuse it. Stanley I. Kutler summed this premise up well in The Wars of Watergate: "In 1968, the times and the man came together—and Watergate was the result".\(^1\)

Similar to the argument that Nixon was the indispensable central facet of Watergate, Power and Personality commentators use the White House tapes as evidence for their claims; but they cite the tapes as confirmation of Nixon’s abuse of power and his attempts to subvert the Constitution, rather than using them as evidence of Nixon’s flawed character and its impact on his presidency. For example, D. Todd Christofferson, who served in the Watergate Grand Jury as a clerk for Sirica, explained that when he and Sirica heard the “cancer on the presidency” tape, they knew “it was only a matter of time before [Nixon] would either be impeached or resign”.\(^2\) Similarly, senior staff member of the Impeachment Inquiry, Bernard Nussbaum, claimed the tapes “confirmed that there really was a misuse [of governmental power], and that it was wrong to break into the headquarters of your political opponents to wiretap”, and “the headquarters of a psychiatrist”, and “misuse…the FBI” and “the CIA”.\(^3\) For Senate Watergate Committee member, Lowell Weicker, the Smoking Gun tape showed that there was “evidence” of abuse of power, rather than just “hearsay”, which District Attorney Earl Silbert argued was proof that Nixon obstructed justice.\(^4\)

Despite the accounts of these investigative groups dominating this school during its conception, the arena which bears the strongest presence of Power and Personality thinking today is academia, with many focusing on Power and Personality themes in their scholarly work on Watergate. As the school moved further in a scholarly direction, the belief that the source of Watergate may be explained through the interpretation and examination of political and historical theory had become more commonplace. An examination of power and governance, including the separation of powers, was also beginning to be seen as important. An example of the domination of the school among scholars may be seen in the topics of papers presented at the prestigious 1987 four-day Hofstra University Symposium titled Richard Nixon: A Retrospective on his Presidency. The academics who attended the


\(^{2}\) D. Todd Christofferson recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, July 15th 2008.

\(^{3}\) Bernard Nussbaum recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 1st 2011.

\(^{4}\) Lowell Weicker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 23rd 2008, and Earl Silbert recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 17th 2008.
conference largely focused on Power and Personality themes, essentially overshadowing all of the other topics presented.

Examples of this way of thinking may also be seen in the revamped Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum Watergate exhibit, unveiled in 2011. The Museum’s display argues that the origins of Watergate may be attributed to a mixture of the following causes: Watergate’s tumultuous backdrop; the tradition of dirty tricks in American campaign politics; Nixon’s personality and deep suspicions of conspiracies out to get him; Nixon’s desire for political intelligence; and the way the Nixon White House was structured which favoured secrecy and sought to shield the president from culpability. Thus the Nixon Museum’s version of the Watergate story sits well with those who use themes of Power and Personality as markers for evaluating Nixon’s presidential legacy, for its amalgamation of Nixon’s characteristics, and historical context. Likewise the Power and Personality school also has a strong presence in popular debate on the topic of Watergate, as was seen on June 17th 2012 during the Washington Post Live Watergate 40th Year Anniversary program titled Conversations with Watergate players.¹⁵

Important to the followers of the Power and Personality rationale is the way they see Watergate as a significant event which outweighs all other instances of presidential wrongdoing.¹⁶ To evidence this claim, commentators point to Nixon being the only United States President to resign from office. In this vein, an argument can also be made about the aforementioned suffix ‘-gate’. This has been used to describe any instance of governmental wrongdoing since 1974, indicating that Watergate should be seen as exceptional event, one grave enough to constitute “the most serious constitutional crisis of the post-war period”.¹⁷

Power and Personality sympathisers extend these arguments when outlining that Nixon should be seen as an aberration of the presidential system. Yet, rather than focusing strictly on Nixon’s negative personality traits, proponents of the Power and Personality viewpoint claim that Nixon’s character may be seen as the vehicle which carried the power that had accrued to the American presidency, in directions that Nixon’s predecessor’s had not dared


go before him. Although those who endorse the Power and Personality view focus on Nixon’s misdeeds, in some instances their analysis is used to show how the presidency had travelled on a path that was not meant for it. Accordingly, the Power and Personality school may also be seen to have an idealist conception of the role of the president, the presidency, and the American political system, since they use Watergate as a moral case study or lesson for the American people, exemplifying what can occur if the American nation travels along the ‘wrong’ path.

Key themes

Right and Wrong

By the time the House Judiciary Committee was given the task of considering articles of impeachment, a plethora of information relating to the governmental misconduct of the Nixon administration had already made its way into the public arena via newsprint, the televised Senate Watergate hearings, and the outcomes of court proceedings. As the momentum of these inquiries brought Nixon closer to the prospect of impeachment, with more and more details relating to presidential wrongdoing being detailed publicly, the image of a supposed battle between good and evil had become more discernible to the American people. What transpired was a sense that the people involved in the battle against the undeserving president and his shoddy men had to execute righteousness, in order to prevail and eradicate society’s ills.

An example of this attitude may be seen in the views of Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post. During his oral history interview Bernstein argued that misconduct was a strong part of “the mentality of the Nixon White House”, exemplified through its “willingness to participate in not just the cover-up to pay burglars, but real unconstitutional concepts of wire-tapping, [and] burglary”.\textsuperscript{18} Giving colour to his view, Bernstein noted how important the roles of people fighting within the Watergate investigative groups were in their battle against Nixon. They explained if it were not for their willingness to “believe in the Constitution”, stand up for how they believed the United States Republic should function, and “do their job”, the effect of the

\textsuperscript{17} Paolino, Politics, Public Opinion, and Popular Culture, 26.
\textsuperscript{18} Carl Bernstein recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, October 22nd 2007.
Nixon administration’s collapse would not have been achieved.Bernstein commends the efforts of the Press, Judge Sirica, Senator Ervin, and the members of the Senate and House Committees. More importantly, Bernstein sighted the determination of the Republicans and Nixon appointees who “put aside their reluctance” and did what they needed to do for the good of the country.

For example, Bernstein contended that Senators Howard Baker and Fred Thompson were initially “really determined to play the role of Nixon defenders, to the point of collaborating with the White House in a way that was secretive and not quite above board”. But when “Baker asked [Dean the] question ‘what did the president know, and when did he know it?’ the Republican attitude started to change, including his own”. Instead of settling for the status quo when “information started going in a certain direction”, the Senate Committee, which had subpoena powers, compelled Mitchell and Dean to testify, and as a result of their willingness to stand up and persevere, “the whole White House horrors, as Mitchell would call them”, were exposed.

This action was then followed by that of Chief Justice Warren Burger, who, although Nixon appointed, “urged the other justices” to “decide unanimously” on the issue of the Nixon tapes. The aim here was to “establish the principle that the president was not above the law, and the Supreme Court”, Bernstein argued. The Congress then followed suit when “the House voted to create an impeachment investigation”, and “articles of impeachment were voted” upon in the affirmative by “key Republicans”. Similarly, when Nixon refused to resign after the articles were passed, “Barry Goldwater and the Republican leadership in Congress marched down to the White House and said ‘Mr Nixon, if you don’t resign, we’re going to make sure that you’re convicted in the Senate’”. Nixon had “no choice but to be convicted or leave”. For Bernstein then, the counter attack against Nixon was not simply a bipartisan venture—it was a separation of powers concern that required a combined effort from all people within each entity of the government. This meant that Americans needed to put their allegiances aside in order to be virtuous.

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19 Ibid.  
20 Ibid.  
21 Ibid.  
22 Ibid.  
23 Ibid.  
24 Ibid.
Bernstein’s views have been echoed by House Judiciary Committee member Congressman Charles Rangel, who believed the lesson of Watergate to be that citizens, through their elected Congress, have a responsibility to stand up for what is right and take steps to “investigate [the] behaviours” of a “president” that has “disappointed the American people”, and carry out the necessary punitive action, if it is found they have “disgraced the office” of the presidency.\textsuperscript{25} Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Dorothy Landsberg, supported Rangel’s argument, stating “that institutions can be effective, and the rule of law can prevail, and a group of people who can take their responsibilities seriously, who have the good fortune of being in the right place at the right time, can make a difference.”\textsuperscript{26} Landsberg’s colleague, Richard Gill, had faith throughout the impeachment process that everything would “turn out” in the end, because although there was “political and partisan fighting” at the time, he knew that “there [were] some good people there” who in essence want[ed] to do the right thing.\textsuperscript{27}

Discussing the benevolent efforts of lawyers in this struggle against right and wrong, Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Robin Johansen, claimed Watergate “taught [her] what really good lawyers can do. This gave her “the sense of the profession as a really fine thing to be part of”.\textsuperscript{28} Likewise, Christofferson asserted he “became really proud of the legal profession and what honest, good lawyers can do to advance the public interest”.\textsuperscript{29} Christofferson maintained that “a lot of people...were in government with altruistic motives”. It was evident that they “were public servants” that “were honest”, “were there to serve”, and “didn’t have ulterior motives”.\textsuperscript{30} This left Christofferson “feeling much better...about [the American system of] government...the Constitution, and people in general” when the Watergate episode came to a close.\textsuperscript{31} For Christofferson, the country “came through a crisis” because of the high-principled efforts of the people”.\textsuperscript{32}

Inadvertently shining a light on possible motives behind framing the Watergate Affair as a fight between good and evil, editor of The Washington Post during the Watergate period, Benjamin Bradlee, acknowledged that Watergate put him, Woodward and Bernstein on the

\textsuperscript{25} Charles Rangel recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 28th 2007.
\textsuperscript{26} Dorothy Landsberg recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, November 7th 2011.
\textsuperscript{27} Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.
\textsuperscript{28} Robin Johansen recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
\textsuperscript{29} D. Todd Christofferson recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, July 15th 2008.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
cusp of history, “and [they] were not ashamed of it”. With the case of the news media, as with other investigative bodies, it may be argued that a strong incentive exists for the portrayal of a Watergate story which displays their efforts in a righteous manner, or gives extra weight to their role over other groups to oust the Nixon administration. For example, even though it has been highlighted that the Senate Watergate Committee were the ones who broke the Watergate story, the collapse of the Nixon presidency has been framed in a way which displays The Washington Post as having played the most significant role in uncovering the affair. The Watergate scandal thus created a situation where journalists, and, in particular, Woodward and Bernstein were elevated to a heroic status within certain circles, with the fourth estate becoming accepted as the ultimate source of non-governmental power. As Bradlee explained: Watergate “put us on the map...We became a news story ourselves...Nobody had ever heard of Post reporters before”, but after Watergate, “Woodward and Bernstein became household words”.

The media establishment has a vested interest in keeping their Watergate legacy strong, perhaps enticing them to promote their role in Watergate’s chain of events. For instance, in the past Woodward has claimed that Watergate did not have the lasting effect that he had hoped, and he had not seen any breakthroughs in journalism since Watergate. This may be seen as an attempt to reinforce his and Bernstein’s role, and by doing so, creating an effect where the power of the press is constantly being restated as a balancing mechanism in the government system: a form of guardianship of bad governance. In contrast, the British regard the press as an entity that does not deserve a constitutional presence at all.

Abuse of power

The notion that Nixon had abused his power as president is central to the thesis of the Power and Personality school. It was the House Judiciary Committee which determined Nixon’s abuses to be a matter of fact. They found that Nixon used “the power of the office of the

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33 Benjamin Bradlee recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
34 Weicker maintains that although Woodward and Bernstein reported on the Watergate break-in, “everything else was the [Senate Watergate] Committee”. “…all of the business of what the White House was doing, that was revealed through the good work and the shoe leather of people on the Committee and the staff on the Committee”. In Lowell Weicker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 23rd 2008.
35 Benjamin Bradlee recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
president for political purposes”. Consequently Congressional members on the Committee concluded that Nixon had committed “impeachable offences”.

On the question of what should constitute an impeachable offence, Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Evan Davis, outlined that the “functions, roles, duties and powers of the president” needed to be taken into account, since the president has a significant duty under the Constitution, only he or she has the ability to commit constitutional crimes. Davis concluded that it was necessary for the standard of proof to be set “high” because the “President needed substantial room for independence of action”. Thus, an impeachable offence needed to be of the same “seriousness” as a “statutory crime”; needed to be “persistent”; “not of the public purpose”; and constitute “the subversion of the Constitution for a private purpose”. Holtzman claimed “Nixon...took the position” that a president could only be impeached “for violation of the federal criminal code”, which “narrow[ed]...the scope of...impeachment”. Although the Republicans on the Committee supported Nixon’s view, ultimately they found that “an impeachment did not need to be limited to the commission of a crime, but could detail a great abuse of power such as giving a list of people to the IRS to be audited because they disagreed with the president’s policies on Vietnam”.

It was determined by Chief Counsel to the House Judiciary Committee, John Doar, that a clear pattern of malfeasance needed to exist in order for the articles of impeachment to stick. This was very different from what Special Prosecutors Cox and Jaworski were attempting to uncover for the Watergate Grand Jury. Davis explained that Hank Ruth, who was on the Watergate Special Prosecution Force staff, advised Doar that in criminal proceedings the prosecution only needs to demonstrate “one incident” of “clear” and airtight “obstruction of justice” to prosecute an individual. The Force believed they had achieved this with regard to Nixon who had outlined that he knew where Dean could get a million dollars to pay to the Watergate burglars. As Davis reported, in view of the weight of the evidence the Force had built against President Nixon, they were able to refer to him as an “un-indicted co-conspirator”.

Yet Davis highlighted that Doar did not agree with Ruth’s logic on “two counts”: Doar did not see criminal conspiracy legislation as relevant to the Watergate case, because he believed

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37 Fred Altshuler recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
38 Evan Davis recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.
39 Ibid.
40 Elizabeh Holtzman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007.
41 Ibid.
42 Evan Davis recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.
Nixon was in charge and saw his staff as agents. Thus a conspiracy defined by a “person who agrees with another to do a wrongful act” and takes action, did not apply.\footnote{Ibid.} Secondly, since an impeachment is essentially the trial of a constitutional crime, Doar felt it “had to have the seriousness and persistence of...something more than just one event.”\footnote{Ibid.} Given the seriousness of removing a president from office and the effect this event would have on the nation, Doar and his staff on the Impeachment Inquiry believed they needed to show that the abuses of power being cited were not “errors” that were “transitory”, but events that were consistent.\footnote{Ibid.} So Doar concluded that a “pattern” or “persistence” of malfeasance needed to exist.\footnote{Ibid.} Impeachment Inquiry staff member, William Weld, concurred with Doar and Davis, explaining that even though Nixon’s obstruction of justice may have been enough to instigate his impeachment, this was only true because his actions “part[ook] of the colour of the underlying offenses”.\footnote{William Weld recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011.} Weld argued that if there were no underlying offences, perhaps Nixon’s actions may have been seen as “artificial”, and thus, not worthy of impeachment.\footnote{Ibid.}

According to senior Impeachment Inquiry member, Joseph Woods, who supervised the group tasked with establishing how an impeachable offence may be defined, his staff “came out with the understanding that not all crimes were high crimes and misdemeanours, and conduct that was not criminal could be grounds for impeachment.”\footnote{Joseph Woods recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 27th 2011.} For example, Woods highlighted his belief that Nixon was guilty of perjury “in connection with his income tax returns”, since he had “filed false income tax returns”, but this had nothing “to do with the functioning of the government” or “his presidential office”.\footnote{Ibid.} Rather “this was just a cheating tax payer”, an example of a matter between Nixon “and the IRS”. This provided weight to the argument that “not all crimes were high”.\footnote{Ibid.} In relation to the conception of ‘misdemeanours’, Woods explained these actions could not relate to “something that wasn’t nice to do”, it had to strike “at the institutions of government...actual abuses of their offices” that “would undermine their whole system of government”.\footnote{Ibid.} In addition, serving as a senior member of the staff advising the Committee, Bernard Nussbaum, added that the purpose of the inquiry was “not [to] investigate whether the president committed a crime, but whether there was an

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
47 William Weld recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
abuse of power by the executive branch and by the president with respect to the Watergate matter”.53 “That’s all we really needed to show, ultimately”.54

In terms of what members of Impeachment Inquiry staff felt was the most pressing abuses of power, senior adviser for the Committee, Robert Sack, believed the existence of the enemies list to be “an abuse of power of significance”. “The very fact that they were called enemies”, Sack claimed “is beyond the pale”, as this label resulted in their lack of “protection from the law”, particularly from the IRS.55 Likewise, Woodward saw the political espionage and illegal activities in which the Nixon administration was involved as “an assault on Democracy”.56 Watergate Special Prosecution Force staff member, Stephen Breyer, argued that the break-in to Ellsberg’s psychiatrist office and reports that the plumbers were going to physically attack people, were to him the most serious allegations.57 For others, examples such as illegal campaign contributions, vote siphoning, and the misuse of the conception of executive privilege were unjustifiable.

Davis was unable to find any evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the Nixon administration without presidential involvement, during the course of his inquiries. For this reason, Davis rejected the prevalent argument put forth by Nixon loyalists who claim Nixon’s advice to Director of the FBI, Patrick Gray, on July 8th 1972 is proof that the president wanted the FBI to press forward with their investigation into the burglar’s money trail.58 Nixon’s advice came two weeks after the CIA was advised to halt their investigation, Davis explained. Nixon had a lot of information he knew would help Gray press forward with all vigour, but he did not convey that information.59 Thus, if Nixon “really wanted the investigation to move forward, he would have provided the information that was helpful”.60 In relation to the tape transcripts that were provided by the White House, the Impeachment Inquiry staff came to the conclusion that Nixon was involved in the process of omission. The transcripts had elements which were deleted, and phraseology changes that were important to the substance of the information in the transcript, which was incorrectly altered.61 The staff concluded “that it was not just

53 Bernard Nussbaum recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 1st 2011.
54 Ibid.
55 Robert Sack recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 27th 2011.
56 Bob Woodward recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
58 Evan Davis recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
Nixon’s lawyers that were doing this, but that Nixon had been actively involved in reviewing and revising the transcripts, and deciding what would be presented”.  

The committee staff had evidence that Nixon supported a plan of containment, and they knew that Nixon’s chief of staff, Haldeman, would not be asking the CIA to halt the FBI’s investigation without Nixon’s approval. Individuals such as senior member of the Impeachment Inquiry staff, Owen Fiss, who was tasked with drafting the articles of impeachment, argued that without the tapes, the articles may have collapsed due to their reliance on “circumstantial evidence”, and since they were “dealing” with “the President of the United States”. Fiss explained that without the tapes the dots could not be connected in the “mind of an impartial, neutral, arbiter”. “You could make charges…but [they] wouldn’t be convincing”, because the argument could be made that Watergate was caused by zealous lieutenants doing things that Nixon didn’t know about. Ruth also highlighted the importance of the tapes for the Watergate Grand Jury, stating “there is no way not to believe a tape when you hear a person saying it”.  

The Judiciary Committee ultimately found that Nixon was “involved [in] the misuse of presidential power” and subsequently approved three articles of impeachment against him. This decision was based on the implementation of the cover-up, which the committee saw as the subversion of the Constitution by Nixon, who orchestrated, approved and condoned the plan of containment for his personal benefit. Impeachment Inquiry staffers, Fred Altshuler and Nussbaum, argued that the Nixon impeachment was extremely different to the 1868 impeachment of President Andrew Johnson and the 1998 impeachment of President Bill Clinton. The Johnson impeachment entailed an attempt to remove him as “a political opponent” after he had “fire[d] the Secretary of War”, whereas the Clinton impeachment related to “a personal affair”. Nussbaum explained:

It's true that Congress can impeach a president for anything it wants to, but the proper way of looking at it is to see whether there was a fundamental abuse of power by the

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Owen Fiss recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011.
65 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Fred Altshuler recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
executive branch contrary to our structure of government, contrary to our constitutional principles, and that’s what we concluded.69

Director of the Legal Services Program, working under Rumsfeld, later to serve in the Senate Watergate Committee as an investigator and cross-examiner, Terry F. Lenzner, agreed with Altshuler and Nussbaum, highlighting the difference between the two impeachments in terms of their “purpose” and “pursuit”, and how “they were administered and run”.70 For Lenzner, the “subject matter” of the two impeachments was “dramatically different”, since the Nixon impeachment dealt with “unbelievable issues involving the future of the country and the Constitution, and how it is interpreted”.71 The abuses being examined related to “people’s privacy, the misuse of government agencies for political purposes, revenge, [and] vindictiveness... generated by the President of the United States...[who tried] to cover it up...”.72 A “responsible investigation” took place in “the Senate” and moved “to the Impeachment Inquiry”.73 Lenzner concluded there was no similarity between the Nixon and Clinton impeachments: “They were like ‘night and day’”.74

Woods explained that “by the time Nixon resigned” the American “people” understood that impeachment was inevitable, and that the Judiciary Committee had approached the matter in a “reasonable” way. This meant that if there was a trial in the Senate, there would be a “fair judgment”. “Whatever that judgment was”, Woods believed the “people” would have been “prepared to accept” it, which was “certainly not true...with [the] Clinton” impeachment.75 Altshuler concluded that the Nixon impeachment was “a valid exercise of the impeachment power”.76

Nixon as elected king

Some of the oral histories suggested that Nixon had a distorted view of the presidency, claiming that his comments during his interviews with Sir David Frost in 1977 corroborate this perspective. During the televised interviews Nixon shocked the world by proclaiming ‘When

69 Bernard Nussbaum recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 1st 2011.
70 Terry Lenzner recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, December 4th 2008.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Joseph Woods recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 27th 2011.
76 Fred Altshuler recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
the president does it, that means it’s not illegal’. This statement has provided ample evidence for advocates of the Power and Personality viewpoint to argue that President Nixon thought of himself as the elected king.\textsuperscript{77} This view also provided justification for the behaviour of some of Nixon’s staffers, who appeared only to serve his personal interests, believing that Nixon’s interests were inadvertently those of the national interest, which meant that his wishes should be put above that of the country, with disregard to Democratic ideals and principles.\textsuperscript{78}

An example of this mentality may be seen in Magruder’s delay to implicate Nixon in the authorisation of the Watergate break-in. Magruder stated in a 2003 PBS documentary that Nixon was the one who ordered the burglary, yet he did not disclose this information until Nixon had passed away. When Magruder was asked why he did not furnish this information during his testimony before the Watergate Grand Jury, he stated:

\begin{quote}
Ah, [for] one the president had indicated to us that somehow or another we would get a pardon, and [secondly]...I guess I had this kind of feeling of loyalty to the president, and I did not want to get him in trouble directly. It was one thing [to implicate] Haldeman or myself, even Mitchell, but the president was the president, and I think those were the two most cogent reasons why. And of course at that time I didn’t know that the president would end up having to resign.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

Some Nixon White House staffers noted their belief that the future of the country rested on Nixon’s re-election, which has been described by Watergate plumber, Egil ‘Bud’ Krogh, as the catalyst for the Fielding break-in.\textsuperscript{80} This problem has also been cited in the Senate’s Watergate report on Presidential Campaign Activities:

\begin{quote}
Nixon’s White House staff did not appreciate the responsibilities of governing and the restraints that must be exercised in a democracy, and they did not have a proper respect for the institutions of government...Very few of the top witnesses indicated any sense of understanding for the appreciation of democratic ideals and principles. Almost
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{78} Malcolm Roberts recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, April 25th 2008.
\textsuperscript{80} Egil “Bud” Krogh recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and John Powers, September 5th 2007.
no one mentioned any special considerations of public service for the public interest apart from the president’s interest.\textsuperscript{81}

Many Power and Personality advocates note they had an exaggerated view of how far Nixon would go to protect himself, and just how much of his presidential power he would wield and abuse to ensure he stayed on his presidential throne. For example, Johansen explained there were times before the tapes case was resolved “where people were really wondering whether there would be a constitutional crisis and whether the presidency was out of control to the point where the Executive Branch might not listen to the courts”.\textsuperscript{82} Similarly, Johansen’s colleague, Francis O’Brien, assistant to Chairman Rodino, was very fearful at that time. He felt he could not trust the government, believing the Committee staff was bugged, and that he might go to jail as some sort of political prisoner.\textsuperscript{83} Lenzner too claimed that at, one point, he got so paranoid he believed Rumsfeld was also taping himself, because when he was fired from the role of Director of Legal Services, Rumsfeld leaned over and talked into his desk. Lenzner’s suspicions stemmed from his carrying out investigations for the Senate Watergate Committee, when Dean revealed his belief that Nixon was taping himself by “whispering into the [Oval Office’s] curtains”.\textsuperscript{84}

Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Michael Conway, thought it was strange that Nixon was ousted from the presidency, and that the atmosphere around the White House was not in tumult, but rather, it was quiet and serene. Like O’Brien, Conway had expected to see tanks rolling down the streets.\textsuperscript{85} The Washington Post reporter, Lou Cannon, who covered the Nixon presidency during the Watergate scandal, claimed there were rumurs at the time that “there might be some coup or that Nixon might do something extraordinary”.\textsuperscript{86} Yet Cannon admitted that he did not believe anyone actually “knew…what [Nixon would do] to stay in power”.\textsuperscript{87} On this point, Cannon recalled a conversation with Haldeman’s successor to the post of Chief of Staff, Alexander Haig, in the last days of the Nixon presidency. Knowing that


\textsuperscript{82} Robin Johansen recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.

\textsuperscript{83} Francis O’Brien interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.

\textsuperscript{84} Terry Lenzner recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, December 4th 2008.

\textsuperscript{85} Michael Conway recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2009.


\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
Cannon was going to tell his editors everything that was said, Haig explained “there was not going to be any coup d’états”, and the Nixon presidency was going to “have an orderly secession”.88 Clearly the Nixon administration was aware of the heightened state of hysteria in the nation’s capital surrounding the perception of the Nixon administration. On the foreign policy front, National Security Council member, Harold Saunders, explained that foreign leaders were surprised how the Watergate scandal could take place and the United States government could still conduct foreign policy.89 Even Woodward stated that he may have overreacted to some of Deep Throat’s advice, believing his life was in danger, when all Mark Felt meant was for Woodward to watch his back and not let his guard down, because the stakes were high.90

Watergate: A constitutional balancing act

Those who subscribe to the Power and Personality view argue the political atmosphere in the United States in the 1970s was ripe for a tragedy such as Watergate to occur. The following discussion seeks to highlight the Watergate acts as a reflection of the heightened state of fear present in the nation at the time, and outline the justification put forth by a number of the staff involved in the affair: that the Watergate operations seemed innocuous in comparison to the seriousness of the combined wars of Vietnam and the civil war taking place on the streets.

Power, personality, and Watergate as an inevitable test of constitutional power

Scholars such as Fred Warner Neal, John Shattuck, and Tom Wicker, view Nixon’s Watergate policies as an extension of the Cold War environment in an overstretched national security state. In 1973 Neal argued there was a direct line from the Truman doctrine to Watergate, concluding that “the American system has been bent out of shape by the corruptive influence of executive power set up to direct our Cold War foreign policy…which required secrecy, a vast security apparatus, and greatly expanded executive power”.91 This view was extended by Shattuck, who was Vice-President of Government, Community and

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88 Ibid.
Public Affairs at Harvard University, when he addressed the 1987 Hofstra University Symposium. Shattuck made the case that the underlying crisis in the Nixon presidency was a crisis of national security that began when the security policies and intelligence community that grew out of WWII became a permanent feature of the American post-war era.92 Wicker concurred, stating that “Watergate was a live possibility in any post-war administration...By the time Richard Nixon reached the White House, Watergate or something equally as disreputable was a disaster waiting to happen”.93 Like George Reedy and Arthur Schlesinger, these Power and Personality advocates seek to underscore the effect of context on the executive branch of government, highlighting the amount of power that floods to the presidency during wartime.94

Reedy claimed that the office of the presidency magnifies the office holder’s weaknesses of character, because there are few checks and balances on the executive other than their own internal convictions.95 Yet although it has been highlighted that context plays a significant role in our understanding of how the American presidency obtained the power Nixon misused, it has been stated that Nixon should have had the disposition to steer the country in the right direction, rather than drive the presidency and the nation along a path that none of his predecessors had dared go. In this sense, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and later Secretary of the Treasury during the Nixon administration, George Shultz, rejected the notion that precedent may be seen as a justification of presidential abuse of power.

Although Shultz recognised that Nixon had been using powers laid before him by his predecessors when he allowed the IRS to investigate his enemies, Shultz claimed he had the opportunity to do what was right, and refused to use the IRS in an improper manner. Schultz was asked to investigate Larry O’Brien’s tax returns (the Democratic National Committee’s strategist whose office was bugged at Watergate), even though “there was no evidence of any problem”.96 In addition, the Commissioner of the IRS, Johnny Walters, was requested by Nixon’s presidential counsel, John Dean, to do a “full field investigation” of a “list of 50 names

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95 Reedy. The Twilight of the Presidency.
of people” he had provided, but Schultz once again declined.97 “It was an improper use of the IRS, and I wouldn’t do it”, Schultz said, as he was a firm believer in “using the power of government…properly”.98 Although “things like that had been done before” perhaps causing “the president” to believe he “was just doing what…others had done”, Schultz was not going to allow it on his watch: “Not with me”.99 Shultz’s views have been echoed by Altshuler who saw Nixon as a “tragic character” with “a mean streak” who displayed “a lack of a sense of responsibility for the limits of presidential power”.100 Ultimately Altshuler viewed Watergate as a “sad” event since Nixon “had a lot of intelligence and certainly was a careful, thoughtful, planning person”.101 The president “had a lack of character in the sense that he was willing to use the presidency against his political opponents”, Altshuler said.102

Similarly Weicker was disturbed by the government’s ability to “turn any of their [Executive] agencies…loose on” a private a citizen “who opposes the White House”.103 For Weicker, the key segment of the Senate Watergate hearings took place when Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs, John Ehrlichman, stated “well everybody does it”, suggesting that the Nixon administration’s actions were not exceptional in their gravity.104 Even though Weicker was “sure” this sort of action had gone on in the past, and conceded that his view of the government may have been a little too “idealistic”, he believed politics would have been brought down to “an all-time low” if “the American public” accepted Ehrlichman’s justification.105 “It would have put any subsequent administration above the law”, Weicker argued, allowing them to use “the power of the United States an [they y way] wanted to”.106 In this sense, Weicker outlined the problems the American system of government could face if its commander-in-chief were at ease with the power of the presidency being misused, due to a belief in his actions being justified by the context in which they are being executed. Thus, for the Power and Personality school, the issue of presidential integrity is of utmost importance.

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97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Fred Altshuler recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Lowell Weicker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 23rd 2008.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
Vice-President to George W. Bush, Richard Cheney, previously staff assistant to the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity during the Nixon administration, Donald Rumsfeld, contended that context and character must go hand in hand when attempting to understand the American presidency. Cheney unpacked this argument whilst highlighting his view that the institution of the presidency he observed had not changed over the last 30 years.\textsuperscript{107} Cheney claimed that, in an institutional sense, the office of the presidency is the same, but each presidency is different as a result of “the times in which [a president] governs, the kind of problems [they] have to deal with, and...the nature and...characteristics of the man in the Oval Office”.\textsuperscript{108} To exemplify his point, Cheney argued there was no way for him or President Bush to envisage the September 11th 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York City prior to their 2000 election win. Yet this event ended up dominating their administration.\textsuperscript{109} Similarly, “Jerry Ford” could not have predicted that he would go from being the “Republican leader of the House, to the Vice-President, to the President of the United States” in a matter of “eight months”.\textsuperscript{110} Both of these contexts and challenges have had an effect on the nature of a presidency; however, Cheney was “struck more than anything else by how much the character and qualities of the man, the individual president, affects and shapes things in the way the [presidency] works”.\textsuperscript{111}

Although subscribers of the Power and Personality mentality see Watergate—and actions like Nixon’s failure to submit the tapes or provide accurate transcripts—as an attempt by Nixon to subvert the Constitution and the American system of government\textsuperscript{112}, they also see Watergate as an inevitable and necessary test of power. For instance, it has been argued by Weicker that an executive cannot behave any way they wish, because in doing so, they may “violate specific provisions of the Constitution of the United States”.\textsuperscript{113} Thus, for Weicker, Watergate was essentially an exercise in establishing what the “American people” would tolerate, by “testing the power of the executive”.\textsuperscript{114} Like Weicker, Kutler contended that Watergate was a test of the constitutional and political system to establish what the role of the presidency should be in relation to other branches of government.\textsuperscript{115} The Saturday Night

\textsuperscript{107} Vice-President Richard B. Cheney recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, December 19th 2007.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} John Brademas recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 5th 2007.
\textsuperscript{113} Lowell Weicker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 23rd 2008.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} Stanley I. Kutler. The Wars of Watergate: The Last Crisis of Richard Nixon. 1st ed. (New York:
Massacre may be seen as an example of this constitutional balancing act. As Solicitor General Robert Bork explained, Nixon had the authority to fire Cox, since the president has the power to relieve anyone in the executive branch of their duties. Yet, the American public saw this act as Nixon overstepping his boundaries, leading to calls for impeachment.  

Similarly the tapes battle may also be seen as an example of this exercise, for Nixon’s conception of executive privilege was being tested for the first time in United States history since the Civil War. As Ruth observed, this resulted in the Supreme Court ruling that executive privilege did not apply to evidence relating to a crime:

*The Supreme Court [held] that if a president is being investigated for committing a crime, that executive privilege does not include the conversations pursuant to that crime...[the] Supreme Court decision I hope established limits on the use of executive privilege, although subsequent presidents never paid attention to that I think.*

Watergate can be seen in this view as a necessary and inevitable symptom of the clash of branches that has been occurring since the birth of the country. As Hauser outlined:

*[Watergate was] nothing new in the sense of the tensions between the branches, which has been part of the great design of our Constitution, but it was certainly magnified and exaggerated, you know, almost to the, testing the tinsel strength of that point.*

**Watergate as a reflection of the times**

Watergate did not occur in a political vacuum, leading some scholars to contend that its occurrence was symptomatic of the times. Internationally Watergate took place during a period of reorientation of relations with the Soviet Union and China, and during continued troubles in the Middle East. Internally, the United States was still battling race issues because of the existence of segregated communities, a legacy from the 1950s of civil unrest on college campuses. The tumult that existed in the United States since the beginning of the civil

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Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1990), 616.


rights movement has been cited by Alexander Bickel and Michael Genovese as a casual factor for Watergate. In *Watergate, Politics, and the Legal Process*, Bickel wrote that in some measure Watergate may be seen as a replica of the transgressions and testing of limits present during the time of civil disobedience and conscientious objection of White Southerners in the mid-50s, as well as the civil rights movement and the white middle class antiwar movement. Therefore an understanding of the era is crucial in that much of what happened to the legal and social order in the 15 or so years before Watergate was prologue.119

In *The Nixon Presidency: Power and Politics in Turbulent Times*, Genovese reminded readers of the emotion, fear, and alienation in the country in the late 1960s and of the fears occasioned by demonstrations against the war that were growing increasingly menacing when Nixon became president:

> In [Nixon’s] determination to not let demonstrations drag him down as had happened to his predecessor, [he] committed acts that were to plant seeds of illegal and immoral activities that would eventually lead to the president’s downfall.120

Furthermore, the Vietnam War was creating strong divisions within the nation. Genovese suggested that rather than viewing the Nixon presidency through the prism of Watergate, “one must always see Nixon through the prism of Vietnam”.121

With no victory in sight, the ‘60s ushered in protest marches, civil disobedience, and a growing distrust of the governmental apparatus and the military, which led to the emergence of a counterculture among the nation’s youth that continued up to the early ‘70s. Unlike previous wars, the conflict in Vietnam was the first to be televised. White House Press Secretary, Jerry Warren, claimed this ability to view the effects of war up close had a dramatic effect on the public’s perception of the United States role in Vietnam and the world, and succeeded in the “sympathy for the soldier” diminishing, and a strong “opposition to the military” intensifying.122 In his oral history interview Magruder supported Naftali’s concerns about the difficulties of capturing a certain period of time. Ultimately Magruder argued that what people needed to consider when judging that era and the actions of the Nixon

administration was “the negative feelings that fell onto Nixon primarily because of the war on one hand and his personality on the other”:

[Everything] would have been different...if the Vietnam War was over...but the war kept going and it was a very negative event in our history, and negative against us because we continued it after Johnson left, instead of getting out.\textsuperscript{123}

The context within which the Nixon administration was operating was causing it to take on a “bunker” mentality.\textsuperscript{124} The end of August 1968 was marked by violent protests erupting at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, which saw 10,000 demonstrators confronting 23,000 police and National Guardsmen.\textsuperscript{125} A total of 159 race riots took place in the United States in 1967. These continued through 1968, with the riots triggered by Dr Martin Luther King’s murder in Washington, DC.\textsuperscript{126} Powell Moore, who served in the Justice Department before being transferred to the Committee to Re-elect the President, noted that “smoke was building across the Capitol”.\textsuperscript{127} On January 20th 1969, the day Nixon was inaugurated, “there [were] water fuelled machine guns on the steps of the Capitol" building,\textsuperscript{128} with bystanders “throwing rocks and bricks at the inaugural parade” on its “way down to the White House”.\textsuperscript{129} The turmoil of civil unrest did not dissipate during Nixon’s first year in office. Antiwar forces organised a moratorium of 500,000 protesters which took place in Washington on October 15 and November 15. These enormous demonstrations, which included “mass violence”, gave the impression that “the nation was at war with itself”.\textsuperscript{130}

Actual bombings, attempted bombings and bomb threats (40,000 in all) were recorded in the United States during the Nixon administration’s first 16 months in office, from January ‘69 to April ’70,\textsuperscript{131} and staff had “National Guard troops sleeping outside” their offices “on weekends in the hallways”.\textsuperscript{132} As Dana Mead who served on the Domestic Council staff noted: “The

\textsuperscript{122} Jerry Warren II recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 29th 2007.
\textsuperscript{125} Powell Moore recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 19th 2009.
\textsuperscript{126} Paul Gilje. Rioting in America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
\textsuperscript{127} Powell Moore recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, 19 May 2009.
\textsuperscript{128} John Price recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 21st 2007.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Herbert G. Klein recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and David Greenberg, February 20th 2007.
town [was being] burned down”, and it was impossible to “walk out of the White House on any given day and not smell tear gas”.\textsuperscript{133}

For those working in the Nixon White House there was no shortage of examples to draw on to convince those on the inside looking out that the country was in a state of national security. As has been described by Edwin L. Harper, who had a policy analysis and development role on the Domestic Council staff (which evolved from the Urban Council):

\begin{quote}
I think it is very hard for people to imagine today...that people would be bombing the United States Capitol. The level of hostility and violence vis-a-vis the government, had reached levels that people couldn’t imagine. And this was certainly not the 1950s, where there was still a recollection of a united front against the Nazis and against the empire of Japan, and we were in the afterglow of that when Korea came up and we were united with the United Nations, and we were seen as one nation fighting a common enemy. It was the situation in the 1960s, where there was such tremendous domestic hostility and giant displays of civil disorder that you really wondered about what the future of the country is and who is on which side in these issues.\textsuperscript{134}
\end{quote}

Nixon’s presidential speech-writer, Raymond Price, added:

\begin{quote}
This was in effect a civil war that had begun in the mid-1960s when rioting became the fashion. People forget [that] part of the culture was burning down cities; whole sections of cities were set a flame every summer, mobs rioted in the streets, and the counter culture was riding high and was setting the cultural tone for the country...And these were huge demonstrations, and demonstrations is a mild word, but the demonstrations in those years included mass violence, murderous violence, rock-throwing violence. And I think it was May Day ’69 when...the radical left organised a march on Washington and they were determined to shut the city down, which they damn near did. Mobs were rushing through the streets, smashing windows, dragging cars into the streets, blocking traffic, even throwing bed springs off of the overpasses into the way of traffic, all to try to shut the city down. That’s the kind of climate we inherited and had to deal with. I think it’s hard for people these days to understand and to appreciate that,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{133} Dana Mead recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 8th 2009.

but the nation was at war with itself and a lot of the popular mass media were cheering the violent folks on.  

Lenzner described the situation in Washington during the May Day protests in 1971 as “chaos”. Lenzner was asked to leave the White House that day and go out with his young colleagues in the administration to talk to the youth protesting the war. Lenzner claimed the “streets were filled with [mobs of] kids running around with helmets on with tear gas”, giving Lenzner the sense that “the country” was “in turmoil” and “falling apart”. Chapin’s successor to the post of Nixon White House Appointments Secretary, Stephen Bull, explained he was sliced open with a razor blade when the president was addressing a senior citizens committee. Bull believed these demonstrators were actually going after the president, explaining the American nation was “close to civil war”. Bull asked students of Watergate to take this “violent...atmosphere” into account when examining the affair, stating “demonstrators back then were pretty mean”. He described a time when he went to Billy Graham day in North Carolina” and “the Weathermen” were “throwing rocks” and “barbed [wire] fish hooks” into the crowd to “tear people apart”. “These were nasty times”, Bull said, which called for nasty reactions from the government.

The fear of violence resulted in the Nixon administration undertaking extreme precautionary actions to protect the White House. Egil ‘Bud’ Krogh, a member of the Domestic Council staff and Justice Department crisis group, assisted in the development of a strategy to prevent violent demonstrators in 1969 from sweeping the Capitol and entering the White House gates. Reminiscent of a John Wayne western, where wagons circled the camp to protect pioneers from an Indian attack, bumper-to-bumper-commercial buses were brought in to surround the 16-acre White House complex. Krogh explained that protesters “could puncture the tires...punch holes in the windows...write graffiti on the buses, but they [would] not [be able] to get to the fence”. He added that they also “had guys from the military district inside the old Executive Office Building” protecting the White House staff, and he did a

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137 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
daily tour around the building “to ensure that they were in the proper position at the start of the day”.142

In 1969, despite Nixon’s election promise to end the Vietnam War, the president expanded the conflict by secretly bombing North Vietnamese forces based inside the neutral nation of Cambodia; followed a year later by Nixon’s decision to send in troops. This act of war was conducted with no Congressional approval or oversight, public knowledge or democratic controls. In a televised presidential address on April 30th 1970, Nixon announced the details of the clandestine operation. His announcement triggered riots on college campuses around the country, with 448 shutting down or going on strike. 100,000 protesters converged on the nation’s capital, creating an air of tension in Washington and the nation. On May 4 tragedy struck at an antiwar demonstration on the campus of Kent State University, Ohio. National guardsmen opened fire on a group of protesters wounding nine people and killing four. Till that point, the White House had managed to handle all major protests in Washington without incident. The largest student strike in history followed with over 250,000 demonstrators descending on Washington on May 9, once again shutting down college campuses across the country. Less than two weeks later, two more students were killed at Jackson State College in Mississippi.143

In the wake of the Kent State demonstrations and a spike in domestic bomb threats reported by the FBI, President Nixon sought to increase domestic intelligence gathering. In July 1970, he briefly authorised the ‘Huston plan’, named after White House aide, Tom Charles Huston who coordinated the effort. The plan, designed to give new powers to the intelligence community, would have permitted the Nixon administration to conduct domestic intelligence gathering without first obtaining a warrant to subvert the Fourth Amendment from the United States District Court.144 Nixon cancelled the program a week later in response to opposition from Attorney General, John Mitchell, and FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover.145 The incident undermined the president’s confidence in the FBI. Nixon believed they would not do what was necessary to protect the administration and the nation from radical opponents of the

142 Ibid.
145 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
war. Therefore, if the Nixon administration wanted something done, they now knew they would have to do it themselves.

With the emergence of the ITT scandal in 1971, the Nixon administration sensed that it was at war on the political front. The ITT affair centred on the charge that the Justice Department settled an antitrust case in 1971 against the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. on favourable terms to the company; shortly after ITT had pledged $400,000 to support the 1972 Republican National Convention being held in San Diego. Although Attorney General, Richard Kleindeinst, was convicted and served time for lying to the Senate in his confirmation hearings about his knowledge of the ITT case. No-one in the Nixon administration was charged with authorising such a deal, and the investigation by Special Prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, ultimately concluded there was no evidence of criminal conduct by ITT. The ITT charges looked to many in the Nixon White House as being manufactured to tarnish the reputation of the president and the administration. It created a climate where staffers were conditioned to treat all accusations as trumped up political charges. More importantly, it taught those within the Nixon administration to go after their opponents adopting the same ferocity with which they believed they were being attacked. The apparent state of siege which the Nixon administration was finding itself, was slowly conditioning White House staff to “react in certain ways” to the point where “even the most questionable acts were beginning to feel like normal responses to outside forces”.

The ‘national security’ mentality

The Nixon administration began illegally wiretapping journalists and White House foreign policy advisers in May 1969 due to growing concern about national security leaks. The public disclosure of the Pentagon Papers by the New York Times on June 13 1971, recounting America’s involvement in the Vietnam War from 1945 through 1967, cemented an all-encompassing national security mentality within the Nixon presidency. Daniel Ellsberg, a Pentagon analyst in the Johnson administration, had come to oppose the war, and orchestrated the leak. Jonathan Schell’s 1976 study The Time of Illusion argued that the

146 Ibid.
publication of the Pentagon Papers was the watershed when law-breaking within the executive branch became commonplace.\textsuperscript{151} This view was supported by Charles Colson. At the Hofstra symposium, he identified the release of the Pentagon Papers as a "pivotal point" after which the ground rules changed, and he and his Nixon White House colleagues had "crossed the line".\textsuperscript{152} This case also illustrates a double standard in that Ellsberg, who stole top secret government documents (the Pentagon Papers) and gave them to the press because he disagreed with the policy, was branded a hero, while those who tried to ferret out national security leaks in government became villains.\textsuperscript{153}

The Nixon administration felt that it was necessary to fight the issue of the Pentagon Papers leak legally, and in the court of public opinion. Despite their attempts to halt the disclosure of the Pentagon Papers, the Supreme Court ruled (in New York Times Co. v. United States, 403 US. 713 (1971)) that the federal government had no legal right to prevent its publication, as the issue of national security could not deter judges from scrutinising executive actions.\textsuperscript{154} Colson, who had been supervising 'black' operations to damage Nixon's opponents, was tasked with the goal to find anything "derogatory about Ellsberg".\textsuperscript{155} At Nixon's request, Colson leaked confidential FBI information and forged government documents concerning Ellsberg to Life Magazine.\textsuperscript{156} Leonard Garment, Special Counsel to President Nixon (from 1973 to 1974) argued at the time that:

The government was springing leaks to the press, leaks from the White House to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, leaks all over the place, and the government officials ordinarily in charge of plugging those leaks, particularly J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, did not want to do the job this time. So the White House started running its own ad-hoc counterintelligence operation.\textsuperscript{157}

Despite Ellsberg's public confession regarding his release of the papers on June 28 1971, Nixon instructed his aides to form a unit, both to look for the group behind the Pentagon

\textsuperscript{155} Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 28th 2008.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
Papers national security leak and to discredit his political enemies. In response to Nixon’s demands, Ehrlichman formed the Plumbers Unit on July 24th 1971. It operated within the Nixon administration, and acted outside of the FBI and the CIA. The plumbers were the group who effectively broke into Ellsberg’s psychiatrist’s office because he refused to hand over his confidential notes to the FBI, and later broke into the Democratic National Headquarters at the Watergate complex, as part of a clandestine intelligence gathering operation against the enemies of the Nixon administration. Interestingly Nixon’s personal physician since the 1950s, Dr John C. Lungren, who treated him throughout the Watergate period, asserted that Nixon’s response to the Pentagon Papers leak stemmed from his belief that the country was in the same situation that Lincoln saw himself during the Civil War; with “rebellious dissidents in the government, and radical protesters on the streets”, together forming an “antiwar movement” that was attempting to “break” him, and “drive him out of office”.

Arguably the Nixon administration had got to the point where any action could be justified in the name of ‘national security’; hence Nixon’s own remark in the Frost Interviews about a president’s inability to perform an illegal act. The danger with this justification, as has been outlined by Minority Counsel Member for the Senate Watergate Committee, Fred Thompson, was that “pretty good people are capable of some bad things, especially if they have some kind of a justification for it. If they feel like there is a higher good”. For Thompson the real problem was in defining what governmental actions are justified within the context of national security:

[For example] the misuse of the FBI, and taping people, and presidents getting dirt on the opposition and using the authorities to do certain things, [whilst] using national security as a defence. Every day we live with the question of the real line, ‘when is national security not national security?’

It is the misuse of the definition of ‘national security’ that proved vital, in the view of Power and Personality sympathisers, to the cause of Watergate. For example, Krogh highlighted that the Pentagon Papers leak was seen as “a matter of critical importance to national

158 The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Watergate Exhibit.
159 Ibid.
security”. Nixon had “ordered” him and his colleagues in the “Plumbers Unit” to find out who was leaking information and to stop leaks from occurring in the future. Yet what seemed to be a simple request resulted in Nixon White House staff “cross[ing] the Rubicon into the realm of lawbreakers”. Krogh asserted in November 1973 that he had pleaded “guilty to criminal conspiracy” for his involvement in the Fielding break-in, as he could no longer justify his actions in the name of ‘national security’. Krogh came to the conclusion that national security can have a “wide range of definitions”, but the protection of state should not impinge upon the civil liberties of innocent citizens. Krogh realised that “what had gone wrong in the Nixon White House was a meltdown in personal integrity”, as “without it” the Plumbers Unit “failed to understand the constitutional limits on presidential power and comply with statutory law”.

Magruder reframed the problem Krogh had raised. Magruder claimed that in comparison to the Vietnam War and the other issues the Nixon administration was facing, Watergate was insignificant. Such a view inadvertently justifies the actions that he and his colleagues undertook:

I don’t think I thought [approving the Watergate break-in] was very important in retrospect. A moral disaster but at the time it did not seem important...I mean it seemed somewhat innocuous in the context of what was going on at the time.

Like Magruder, Bruce Whelihan, a Staff Assistant in the White House press office during the Nixon administration, believed Nixon would pull through Watergate because many of the president’s defenders among the staff were talking about “the important stuff” Nixon was doing in “Foreign policy...and this Watergate issue is just a side thing over here. And I think we all kind of believed that, that it was going to go away”.

Davis saw the “misuse of the concept of national security” as an important and legitimate problem” which ultimately led the Nixon administration down the path to destruction: “I can

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162 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
168 Bruce Whelihan recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 10th 2009.
accept doing extreme things whose legality may otherwise be questionable in the name of national security”, but using “national security as a cover for things that didn’t have anything to do with national security” is “a problem”.\footnote{Evan Davis interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.} Davis felt the Nixon presidency maintained an overall “indifference to legality” which led to the president “authoris[ing] an illegal surveillance program of which the Watergate plan was part of”.\footnote{Ibid.} It is this triviality placed on unlawfulness by the Nixon administration that Davis contended led to Nixon’s resignation, as he had not upheld his presidential duty that “the law be faithfully executed”. Consequently Nixon was found to have been involved in “a constitutional high crime and misdemeanour” by the impeachment committee, because he had subverted his role under the Constitution.\footnote{Ibid.}

**The Power and Personality view of the administration’s presidential legacy**

‘The system worked’

When the 37th President resigned from office, investigative groups proclaimed that ‘the system had worked’.\footnote{The system worked argument was originally described by Michael Schudson in Watergate in American Memory. See discussion in chapter 1 of this thesis for a comprehensive discussion of Schudson’s findings.} As Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post detailed in his oral history interview, “What really happened in Watergate was that...It [was] a triumph of the system, [which] functioned magnificently...”.\footnote{Carl Bernstein recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, October 22nd 2007.} Bradlee supported Bernstein’s view, highlighting the Watergate Affair as the “classic case” of a newspaper’s ability to “make history” by holding the government to account.\footnote{Benjamin Bradlee interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.} Cheney saw Watergate as a great tragedy for the American nation. However, he also noted that the situation “resolved itself”, thus inadvertantly supporting ‘the system works’ perspective.\footnote{Vice-President Richard B. Cheney recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, December 19th 2007.} The view has led others like Rangel to contend that “the genius of [the] people who drafted [the] Constitution should be

\footnote{John Brademas recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 5th 2007.}
continuously respected...to make certain that the separation of powers is protected”\textsuperscript{177}. Similarly for Johansen Watergate had taught her about “the importance of the Legislative Branch”, and the “dangers of one branch of...government” usurping others, causing “the balance getting out of whack”.\textsuperscript{178} In Johansen’s view, the legislature played “an extremely important” role in ensuring that the other branches of government stayed “under control”, via the impeachment process and their ability to enforce complicity “with the Constitution”.\textsuperscript{179} She felt that it was imperative for the American people to know about the “dangers of a strong executive”, and the role of the legislature in executing “checks and balances” to ensure “an Imperial Presidency” did not transpire.\textsuperscript{180}

In a similar vein Holtzman argued that the Watergate episode allowed the nation to revisit the Constitution, renew commitment to the rule of law, and “rediscover something about”\textsuperscript{181} itself:

\begin{quote}
The impeachment process brought the country together, because whether you had voted for Nixon, whether you were a Republican, an independent, a Democrat, or an unaffiliated, you felt that the rule of law had finally been carried out, that the Congress had acted responsibly, that the other government institutions had done their job...the courts had done their job, the prosecutors had done their job, the Congress had done its job. So even if the president hadn’t, our system of government worked.\textsuperscript{182}
\end{quote}

Power and personality sympathisers also draw on the important role of impeachment in ensuring the proper functioning of the system, arguing that without the United States capacity for “self-examination” over its functions, an impeachment process could not take place.\textsuperscript{183} Davis saw the result of the Impeachment Inquiry as “a positive message about [the] constitutional system and how it works”, that “a serious inquiry” and “determination had been made” about “what was necessary to properly sanction...someone” who had “subverted the Constitution for their own purposes”.\textsuperscript{184} Gill also viewed the practice of impeachment as a vehicle whereby negativity within the system may be purged. In other words, the idea of a system that needs to work smoothly from a classical Republican model:

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{177}] Charles Rangel recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 28th 2007.
\item[\textsuperscript{178}] Robin Johansen recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
\item[\textsuperscript{179}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{180}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{181}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{182}] Elizabether Holtzman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007.
\item[\textsuperscript{183}] William Weld recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011.
\item[\textsuperscript{184}] Evan Davis recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.
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Overall I think that process was a high point in American democracy. It was a low point in the sense that some people got off track and...lost their perspective. But I think overall it was a cleansing process.\textsuperscript{185}

Although Senator George McGovern, who ran against Nixon in the 1972 presidential election, believed the Nixon case showed that “justice was done”\textsuperscript{186}, there were mixed views amongst other proponents of the Power and Personality school, in relation to whether they believed Nixon deserved his fate. Altshuler “disliked [the pardon] at the time, but [he] thinks it brought some relief to the country in some respects”. Yet he was “glad the country was spared the process of going through an impeachment trial and a criminal case too”, since Nixon “had [already] been shown to do bad things and had been removed from office”. This led Altshuler to conclude it was time for “the country...to move on”.\textsuperscript{187} Landsberg did not support the pardon initially. She was “furious” and “outraged” that Nixon could “walk away” from what he had “put the country through”. Subsequently, Landsberg recognised that she was being “vindictive” about the matter, and once she was able to reflect on Watergate and see it within a “larger context”, she came to “believe” that the pardon “was absolutely the right thing” to do.\textsuperscript{188}

Conway too felt that Nixon had been held accountable to a system of laws, “and it would have been a very very difficult time to have had any kind of criminal trial”.\textsuperscript{189} This view was supported by Gill and Davis who believed the pardon was appropriate, as nothing could be achieved by criminalising the issue. “There was enough national tragedy and personal tragedy”, Gill maintained, and having a criminal trial “would have turned it into a really nasty personal vendetta, an exercise that should never have happened”. “I am sorry that it cost Ford the re-election”, Gill said, “He did the right thing”.\textsuperscript{190} Senior Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Robert Sack, felt Nixon was punished enough, and thus determined right from the beginning that the pardon was an appropriate close to the Watergate saga:

\textsuperscript{185} Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.
\textsuperscript{186} George McGovern recorded interview by Kent Germany, August 26th 2009.
\textsuperscript{187} Fred Altshuler recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.
\textsuperscript{188} Dorothy Landsberg recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, November 7th 2011.
\textsuperscript{189} Micheal Conway recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2009.
\textsuperscript{190} Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.
To use President [Nixon's] phrase, ‘let's not wallow in Watergate’…The fact was that people knew it happened. It wasn’t like [Ford] pardoning the Watergate burglars at the outset. So my own feeling was, I was happy about it.  

Republican Senate Watergate Committee Member, Lowell Weicker, argued that the pardon brought closure to a tumultuous time in American history. Although like Gill, Weicker thought the pardon had been a “terrible thing” at the time, he now believed nothing positive could have come from the formal trial of the president, and agreed it was “the right thing” to do.  

Davis “remembers distinctly that [he] thought it was a good decision to give [Nixon] a pardon”. “I remember thinking in my mind that it made no sense and it was not dignified for a former president to be making mattresses in some penitentiary. It just seemed to me wrong”.  

Several members of the House Judiciary Committee and Impeachment Inquiry staff stood out because of their views in opposition to the pardon. Johansen argued that Nixon should have had to answer for what he did, because “it was important for us as a society to know that no one was above the law”. Johansen “had a strong sense of regret” about the pardon, suggesting that Nixon had got away with his crimes, albeit recognising that “the impeachment process had itself brought about the resignation”. Johansen noted however, that “very pragmatically” she “understood the need to move on”, and did not “think it was necessary or important” to “see Richard Nixon go to jail”, even though she had hoped “there could have been more of an accounting”. Fiss felt strongly that the pardon was a “betrayal” to the United States “commitments about the rule of law”.  

Lastly, Congressman Holtzman contended that the pardon set the wrong precedent, in the sense that it promoted the view that high public officials could be pardoned if they broke the law, setting “a double standard”. Holtzman did not believe the pardon healed the country, but rather argued that the Judiciary Committee’s actions had instigated the process. Holtzman claimed “the pardon was very unpopular with the American people”, and they

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191 Robert Sack recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 27th 2011.  
192 Lowell Weicker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 23rd 2008.  
193 Evan Davis recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.  
194 Robin Johansen recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.  
195 Ibid.  
196 Owen Fiss recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 28th 2011.  
197 Elizaberth Holtzman recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, April 5th 2007.
“remained angry enough to take it out on [Ford] in the next election”. Likewise Chairman Rodino and his assistant, O’Brien, believed the pardon to be “wrong”, describing it as “an injustice”. Although Rodino “understood President Ford’s motivation” for the pardon, “he didn’t think it was right”, because “he was very much a process person” and believed “the system” should be allowed to “carry forward”. O’Brien explained that he had a more “visceral reaction” to the pardon.

Noting the actions of Congress in response to the Watergate Affair, Cheney contended that although the activities of the Nixon presidency may have been seen as an instance of the presidency encroaching on the constitutional powers of Congress, he felt that the Congress’ response to reclaim “authority over the executive branch...was excessive”, arguing that legislation “like the War Powers Act...is unconstitutional” and “the Anti-Budget impoundment and Control Act...in effect...usurped executive authority”. These laws “came at a time [when] the presidency had been weakened” as a result of the Watergate “controversies and scandal” and “ended up sharpening that relationship”. This resulted in the presidency being depleted beyond “the constitutional authority and prerogatives of the office”, Cheney maintained.

In closing, those who ascribe to the view that Power and Personality is fundamental in understanding the reasons behind the breakdown of the Nixon presidency believe that Watergate left behind a legacy of hope. Power and Personality advocates maintain that their system of government is strong, and that the American people—through their elected officials and with the help of righteous people in the nation—can prevail over adversity.

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198 Ibid.
199 Francis O’Brien recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.
201 Ibid.
Chapter 4
The Precedent and Context School of Watergate Thought

The Precedent and Context school emerged as new information concerning the Nixon presidency came to light. With the declassification of materials and White House tapes making revisionism more popular, views of Nixon and Watergate have become less strident. As the school’s development has been reliant on the release of fresh data—beginning slowly and sparingly in the early 90s, but with substantial and more frequent releases occurring in the 21st century—the Precedent and Context school is younger than the other schools of thought. Its late emergence also stemmed from several Watergate actors later having had the opportunity to reflect on their time in the Nixon administration, forgive themselves and others for what occurred, and move on with their lives. It is this process of seeking closure that has contributed to the general feel of this school—the sense that its proponents are seeking to obtain a broader perspective on their views of Nixon and Watergate. This is amply demonstrated by narratives in the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum’s oral histories.

This chapter contains four sections. I will begin with a portrayal of the Precedent and Context school’s conception, highlighting the key events and groups that have contributed to its solidification in Watergate’s history and scholarly study, and identifying the way the school may be characterised.

The key themes of this school of thinking discussed in the second section largely centre on the debunking of supposed Watergate myths. Precedent and Context schoolers argue that one may not judge Nixon or Watergate without looking at the precedent that was set for Nixon by his predecessors, or providing context for Watergate within the Nixon presidency. The major myths the school focuses on relate to the atmosphere and staff in the Nixon administration, Nixon’s character, and Nixon’s domestic and foreign policy achievements. They are seeking to provide balance to the already established view of the Nixon presidency.

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Although subscribers to the Precedent and Context view have demonstrated a hypothesis on the causation of Watergate—‘Devil’s Advocate Theory’—it does not bear as much weight in this school’s overall depiction of Nixon and his administration, in comparison to the myth-busting provided. Nevertheless, the Precedent and Context’s Watergate hypothesis outlined in section three emphasises the organic nature of Watergate, and provides a realistic and less emotive view on the way Watergate transpired.

In the final section of this chapter I will conclude with a discussion of the lessons of Watergate that this cohort cites in their narratives.

**Origins**

Upon Nixon’s departure from the White House, those who placed the president at the centre of the Watergate scandal having characterised him as the ultimate Watergate perpetrator, along with advocates of the Power and Personality view who believed America’s great constitutional system had worked to purge a president who had violated the system of checks and balances, both now felt they could breathe easily as all that was wrong with their nation had been eradicated. It is this sense of restoration that Nixon’s successor, Gerald Ford, alluded to in his inauguration speech on August 9th 1974, when he proclaimed to his “fellow Americans” that their “long national nightmare” was “over”.³ Those that viewed the celebrations of Nixon at Centre and Power and Personality proponents to be short-lived contributed to the development of the Precedent and Context school of Watergate thought, which in nature and intent differs greatly from its counterparts.

Those who sympathise with the Precedent and Context view claim the ousting of Nixon from the presidency did not prevent future instances of governmental wrongdoing, such as the ‘Iran-Contra’ affair, the ‘Savings and Loan’ and ‘Abscam’ scandals, or ‘Whitewater’. Precedent and Context thinkers reject the description of Watergate as an unprecedented event. They point to examples of new political scandals as evidence for what Walter Lippmann once observed as the level of corruption in history remaining relatively constant, with its level of exposure varying, since “a community governs itself by fits and starts of

unsuspecting complacency and violent suspicion". This view was extended by Suzanne Garment in Scandal: The Crisis of Mistrust in American Politics. She argued that despite the growth in anti-corruption efforts that arose in the aftermath of Watergate, the number of political scandals in the United States has continued to increase. Garment attributed this not to an increase in corruption at the federal level so much as “our growing capacity and taste for political scandal production”. This evidence supports the conclusion that the actions of Nixon and his administration were not pioneering in terms of their venality and gravity. If we also take into consideration the example of Presidents Lincoln and Jefferson’s suspension of habeas corpus, it may be argued that such actions to limit civil liberties had been undertaken in the past, and would continue to occur in the future.

Precedent and Context thinkers may be characterised by the way they look to the actions of Nixon’s predecessors to gain an awareness of his directives as president, as well as the nation’s reactions to his misdeeds. Proponents of this view reject the commonly held position which sees Nixon as an aberration of the American presidential system, and argue that he was not the first president to involve himself in misconduct. Such a perspective ignores that Nixon is the only President, thus far, to have openly breached the Constitution in terms of the separation of powers in a manner that is illegal, forcing him into a situation where a cover-up was necessary. An example of this interpretation may be seen in Victor Lasky’s wondering about the hypocrisy of Democrats on the Senate Watergate Committee, who let Nixon go down in disgrace for doing what had been commonplace in Democratic administrations. Lasky also pointed to CIA foreknowledge of the break-in plot that Chairman of the Watergate Committee, Senator Ervin, did not investigate during the hearings. This issue was also raised by Republican Committee member, Fred D. Thompson, who claimed evidence of CIA involvement in Watergate was kept under wraps by the majority Democrats until he managed to uncover it; even then it received little attention. Warning about the dangers of portraying Watergate as an exceptional event, Thompson asserted: “By emphasising the uniqueness [of Watergate]...we are in danger of minimising [the real issue], in that traces of the elements of

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Watergate, or little pieces of it, are strewn throughout history and are still with us. Certainly, subscribers to the Precedent and Context view may argue that Nixon’s behaviour seems less bizarre, given the total “bulk data collection and spying on heads of states” undertaken by the National Security Agency (NSA) and its composite agencies, revealed in 2013.

Those who contend that Nixon and Watergate should integrate a broader and more balanced perspective in their depictions and arguments unwittingly established the vision of this school of Watergate thought. The roots of this aim can be traced back to the Impeachment proceedings of the House Judiciary Committee, when some Republicans found it difficult to execute their role, requesting that a broader context be given to the Inquiry. For example, Republican Congressman Sam Garrison argued that Nixon had been a good president—he accomplished the opening to a previously isolated China, and was hugely important in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Simply addressing Nixon’s transgressions to determine whether he should be impeached, Garrison argued, would ensure a distorted outcome. Although the Republicans on the Committee sought to allow the Nixon administration’s achievements to be weighed against their failures, their requests were disregarded. This omission of Nixon’s successes, resulting in the narrowed focus of the investigation of the Watergate Affair, was exacerbated by President Gerald Ford’s pardon of the president for any crimes he may have committed or participated in while in office. Ford’s action halted the impeachment trails and any criminal proceedings that may have expanded the scope of Watergate inquiries at an early time in its history.

The school concentrates on providing precedent and context to the study of Watergate, to achieve a more nuanced view of Nixon and his presidency. In seeking a refined view of Nixon, his presidency and Watergate, Precedent and Context thinkers recognise that Nixon’s legacy needs to be seen in light of his accomplishments, as well as his shortcomings. It is this endeavour that first surfaced during the reconstruction effort Nixon undertook to restore his reputation. Following his resignation on August 9th 1974, Nixon spent a period of time in the wilderness, as it has been described, before coming out of his self-made political hibernation

10 Bernard Nussbaum interview by Timothy Naftali, October 1st 2011.
in the mid-1980s. During this time Nixon commenced his rehabilitation effort and began moving, in a calculated way, back onto the national and international arena. He provided foreign policy advice for incumbent presidents, writing books and articles, performing presentations around the United States, and meeting with foreign dignitaries. The press not only covered Nixon favourably, but he received a standing ovation on May 9th 1984 when he appeared before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, as well as in April 1986 at the annual convention of the American Newspaper Publishers Association; only a decade after Nixon’s forced resignation.\(^{11}\) What may be described as the most astounding turnaround was by Nixon’s old nemesis, *The Washington Post*. Its publisher Katharine Graham was so impressed by Nixon’s address on the world situation at the publisher’s convention that she had *Newsweek* (owned by *The Washington Post*) give him a cover story with the headline: *He’s Back: The Rehabilitation of Richard Nixon*.\(^{12}\)

By the time of Nixon’s death on the 22nd April 1994, he had already made significant steps to reconstruct what was left of his battered reputation: he was writing books, forcing former Nixon-haters to write about him, and appearing on the political talk show circuit.\(^{13}\) It wasn’t until April 27th 1994, on the day of Nixon’s funeral, that his rehabilitation effort was truly complete. In the grounds of the privately run Richard Nixon Library and Museum, President William J. Clinton addressed a crowd of 4000 people who attended the funeral service, including former presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and their wives, a Congressional delegation, former Nixon staff, and members of the public. Clinton exclaimed: “We should remember the whole of Richard Nixon, not just the flaws, but the whole of the man”. Serving in both the Nixon and Clinton administrations, David Gergen described Clinton’s words as taking on “…a very generous and compassionate view of Nixon, it was a healing perspective, and I thought it was the right perspective”\(^{14}\). Gergen concluded that Clinton’s attendance at the funeral was very important for the nation’s rehabilitation: “It was nice for Clinton to let people be at peace”.\(^{15}\) Clinton’s effort, perhaps out of sympathy for a president who (like himself) had been accused of abuses of presidential power, unknowingly promoted the ideas of those who use Precedent and Context as markers for interpreting Nixon’s legacy. Clinton cemented their views in Watergate’s historiography, ultimately providing support for


\(^{14}\) David Gergen recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 5th 2009.
advocates of the school in their quest for a more nuanced portrayal of Nixon and his presidency.16

Precedent and Context sympathisers are characterised by their rejection of generalised and oversimplified depictions of Nixon and Watergate. In doing so, they strive to provide a more realistic view of human nature and the American presidency. In recent times, the act of giving colour to the study of Watergate, by adding a humanistic layer to its depiction, is becoming more prevalent in Watergate’s legacy. For instance, in 2006 the film adaptation of the 1977 Frost interviews, *Frost/Nixon*, displayed a more human side to Nixon than has generally been explored, particularly on the silver screen. This human element may also be seen in portrayals of Nixon’s character which argue that like all people, he had a good and bad side.17 This view was promoted by Republican Senator for the State of Wyoming, Alan Simpson, who retorted that “we all have flaws”, and therefore it would be wrong to magnify someone’s weaknesses.18 “If all of Nixon is just the scar of Watergate”, Simpson said, “then that’s a tragedy, that’s not right, it’s crude, it’s not history, it’s bias”.19 Simpson saw the rehashing of negative imagery with the release of archival materials by the Nixon Library as “disrespectful” to Nixon’s family.20 Simpson believes archivists need to be “honest” and ended his oral history interview urging the interviewer (Director of the Nixon Library and Museum, at the time, Dr Timothy Naftali), to “portray the man, not just the flaws”.21 Attempting to provide balance to the illustration of Nixon’s character and his presidential legacy, like Clinton, Simpson encouraged viewers to remember ‘the whole of Richard Nixon’.

Another defining factor of the Precedent and Context approach is their preference for highlighting a more complex appraisal of Nixon’s legacy, rather than an emotively charged one, adding to the reason why their portrayals of the Watergate Affair and Nixon’s presidential legacy come across as significantly more balanced than those who subscribe to the other schools of Watergate thought. Another way Precedent and Context thinkers emphasise balance in their depictions is by highlighting how past characterisations have been

15 Ibid.
16 For a discussion of President Clinton’s indiscretions see: Christopher Hitchens. *No One Left To Lie To: The Values of the Worst Family* (London: Verso, 2000).
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
exaggerated or distorted. In doing so, these proponents tend to gravitate towards revisionism by questioning Watergate assumptions; in a way that can often be uncomfortable for people that have longstanding Watergate beliefs. Such subscribers to the Precedent and Context view ask observers to take a wider view of the Watergate Affair, rather than focusing on narrow details, suggesting that one must view Nixon and Watergate within a broader continuum of history in order to understand where they fit. This perspective was echoed by Nixon’s Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, Stephen Hess, who warned observers about the dangers of generalisation, stating he believed it was impossible to know the American presidency by serving for only one term of office.\textsuperscript{22} By providing a more human, logical, balanced, and complex view of the Nixon presidency, Precedent and Context advocates may be seen to promote a realistic conception of Nixon and Watergate, whilst cautioning about the exaggeration of points and arguments.

Although those who follow the Power and Personality view may have dominated the legacy of Watergate in the past, the Precedent and Context mentality is making its mark in the new century. The publicly run Richard Nixon Library and Museum’s 2011 academic symposium, \textit{Understanding Richard Nixon and his Era}, showed that views of the 37th President have indeed softened. This was exemplified by the lack of emotive dialogue exchange about the president throughout the symposium, in comparison to the Hofstra Symposium on the Nixon presidency which took place a couple of decades earlier. The widespread nature of research topics presented at the Nixon Library covered every aspect of his presidency, rather than the focus on Watergate, Nixon’s character flaws and abuse of power centred on at Hofstra. The Nixon Library’s Oral History Project is also largely made up of participants who argue for the integration of Precedent and Context in the overall evaluation of the Nixon presidency, with some seeking to minimise the gravity of Nixon’s Watergate misdemeanours. In particular, among Nixon’s ex-staffers in the project, Precedent and Context thinking was ubiquitous, perhaps suggesting that over time a more forgiving view of Nixon and the Watergate Affair is becoming increasingly popular.

\textsuperscript{22} Steve Hess recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 19th 2009.
Key themes

Nixon’s misconceived administration

Many of the Nixon Library Oral History Project participants, who may be characterised as promoting the views of the Precedent and Context school, portrayed a different kind of Nixon administration than has generally been depicted in the literature on the Nixon presidency and Watergate, and popular culture found in film and television. The themes that generally come through these mediums are those of Nixon the villain, as well as an administration with a sinister underpinning that actively sought to undermine the ideals of government and nation. These themes were not present in the views of interviewees of the oral history project. The Precedent and Context advocates displayed here believed in the cause of the Nixon presidency, and carried out their duties as public servants with pride and honour. It seems logical, given their satisfying experiences serving in the Nixon presidency, that they view the Nixon administration as misunderstood, and argue that portrayals of Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate have been exaggerated. By sharing their stories, the Precedent and Context cohort seek to counteract this distortion by adding more depth to the way the Nixon administration is thought about and discussed.

Serving as Associate Director of the Energy, Environment and Natural Resources division of the Domestic Policy Council in the Nixon White House, Richard Fairbanks observed in the Nixon administration what he believed to be the most “talented” and “brilliant” cohort of people working in a presidency, incomparable to any other that he had served in later years. Fairbanks explained that both he and his wife worked in the Reagan administration, and he knew a lot of people who were employed in the Ford, Carter, Bush, and Obama administrations. Although Fairbanks “was not there at the creation” of the Nixon administration, and did not consider himself to be “one of the fire-ride believers from the campaign”, he claimed that what “distinguished the Nixon administration staff” was its “top-to-bottom...person-for-person...raw intellectual camel power”, which made it “the most talented group of any of the White Houses that [he had] ever seen”. The fact that so many Nixon White House staffers went on to become “CEOs” running prominent companies, is

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
proof for Fairbanks that they “were a pretty strong cohort”.26 Frederic V. Malek, White House Special Assistant for Personnel, tasked with recruiting talent into the Nixon administration, agreed with Fairbanks, stating “…the Nixon Administration had more talent than any administration [he had] seen in history”.27

Despite Nixon’s flaws, those who sympathise with the view that Nixon’s legacy should integrate a broader perspective, argue that the president still had the vision to collate an extraordinarily gender and ethnically diverse staff for his White House. More importantly, as Barbara Franklin argued, Nixon asked his recruiters to overlook prejudices and judge prospective employees on their merits.28 Franklin, whose role it was to employ an increased number of women in the Nixon White House, claimed “Nixon did not want only Republican women to be put in the administration”, he was looking for “competent” and “qualified women”, he did “not want [it] to be a partisan effort”—he wanted “the best people”.29 “The kinds of people who were appointed by that administration, men and women”, Franklin maintained, were an extremely accomplished group, “who went on later…[to do]…a whole lot of things in government and…elected office”.30

Staff assistant to Haldeman, Terrence O’Donnell, agreed with Franklin, stating:

Whatever anyone wants to say about the [Nixon] administration, you have to acknowledge that it provided a talent pool that served this country well for decades after the [presidency] and the term ended. The Ford Administration was rich with talent that came from the Nixon Administration. So was the Reagan Administration…[and both]…the Bush Administrations.31

O’Donnell saw the competency level of staff as a direct result of Nixon wanting “a strong White House personnel and recruiting effort”, and implementing a “very detailed process” that succeeded in “identifying qualified people to serve [at] the Cabinet level” and downwards.32 Likewise, Domestic Council staffer, James H. Falk, argued that the collective expertise of the Nixon administration, due to the recruitment choices that were made, led to the development of a magnificent policy making machine:

26 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
I think that the White House staff, the domestic policy staff, the domestic council staff, the national security staff, all of the people that I did business with on a day-to-day basis...were first rate people who did a first rate job.\(^{33}\)

Falk concluded that the policy making processes that the administration developed “ha[s] stood the test of time...”\(^{34}\)

It has been noted that Nixon’s ability to appoint intellectuals of such high calibre, with different world views to himself, stemmed from the confidence he had in his own intellect, his ability to take criticism on board, and his wanting to generate intellectual debate. Director of administration for the Committee to Re-elect the President, Robert Odle, described the “quality of people” in the Nixon administration as “amazing; an intellectual feast”.\(^{35}\) Serving on the Domestic Council staff, Geoffrey Shepard believed the reason why Nixon had so many talented people working for him was because he came into the White House with confidence, and hired opponents in top jobs to create a mixture of ideas:

> When [Nixon] hit the ground in 1969 he was eager and wanted to accomplish a great many things. He was so self-confident that the three top people that he appointed did not support him in the 1968 election. [Henry] Kissinger was a Rockefeller guy, [Arthur] Burns was [a] Conservative but not a Nixonian, and [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan was a Harvard Professor and liberal Democrat.\(^{36}\)

Shepard maintained that Nixon’s staff appointments were a result of his wanting “the ferment of ideas”.\(^{37}\)

Christopher DeMuth, who served as staff assistant to Daniel P. Moynihan, Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, explained that Nixon’s effort to bring intellectuals of such a high standard into his White House resulted in the generation of intellectual debate “in government at a high and serious level” which you “do not see often”.\(^{38}\) Of course, DeMuth recognised that Nixon would not have filled his administration with professors like Moynihan, Burns,

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
\(^{33}\) James H. Falk, Sr. recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 26th 2009.
\(^{34}\) Ibid.
\(^{35}\) Robert Odle recorded interview by Timothy Naftali and Meghan Lee, May 12th 2008.
\(^{36}\) Geoffrey Shepard I recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, May 26th 2009.
\(^{37}\) Ibid.
Kissinger, and Schultz, if he himself was not "capable of partaking in [debate] at [a] very high and sophisticated level".\textsuperscript{39} DeMuth concluded that he had "seen a lot of Washington since then, but nothing like that...".\textsuperscript{40} Like DeMuth, Malek also contended that Nixon was not threatened by different views:

\textit{To [Nixon’s] credit he had picked very strong, independent-minded Cabinet members. He had former competitors; he had rivals, he had people who were Governors: George Romney the Governor of Michigan who wanted to run for president, John Volpe the Governor of Massachusetts, Wally Hickel, who...had been Governor of Alaska. [Nixon] had some very senior political people who he knew were going to be independent in many of these jobs, and he worked effectively with them.}\textsuperscript{41}

Not only did Nixon actively seek highly competent people for his administration, but the effectiveness of the ‘Haldeman’ system of White House administration—developed in the Nixon presidency and still used today—has also been highlighted by Precedent and Context thinkers as evidence of the way the administration stood-out among its counterparts.\textsuperscript{42} Haldeman developed a “structure” with a set of “procedures” which detailed how information would make its way “to the president”; this ensured Nixon got “the best advice” when he needed it, so he could make appropriate policy decisions.\textsuperscript{43} Although it has been highlighted “the conventional wisdom was that somehow the way the Nixon White House had been organised...itself had caused Watergate”,\textsuperscript{44} O’Donnell, explained that Ford was unable to properly execute his role as 

\begin{quote}
\textit{In the first three days Ford was running [the presidency] like [a] Congressional office...He had staff coming in and out as they liked...and he was making policy decisions without communicating [with] them and staffing them out effectively.}\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{38} Christopher DeMuth recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 14th 2008.  \\
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{41} Frederic V. Malek recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 17th 2007.  \\
\textsuperscript{42} Richard Fairbanks recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 22nd 2009.  \\
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{44} Vice-President Richard B. Cheney recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, December 19th 2007.  \\
\textsuperscript{45} Terrence O’Donnell recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 21st 2009.
\end{flushright}
The situation was “chaotic” and “didn’t work”, O’Donnell argued, proving “the Nixon system was great”.46 Similarly, former Vice-President Richard Cheney, who served as a staff assistant to Donald Rumsfeld, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity during the Nixon administration, noted:

Now the fact of the matter is, as I look back on it and reflect now, most administrations sooner or later have come back and adopted...the Haldeman method of organising the White House. I believe today that is the best way to operate.47

For Cheney, in order to be effective, the White House needed to be structured with a “strong central staff system” that “protects the president” and provides staffers with what they need.48 These anecdotes suggest that perhaps Nixon’s conception of power in relation to the administrative functioning of his presidency was measured, despite his involvement in extra-legal activities.

A large number of Nixon Library oral history participants stated they cherished the time they spent serving in the Nixon White House. For instance, Deputy Special Assistant to the President for Presidential Appearances and Scheduling, and Nixon’s Appointment’s Secretary, David Parker, viewed his service in the Nixon administration as “the highlight of [his] life”, stating “it helped [him] a great deal professionally”.49 “Working in the White House was like a dream”, Parker said.50 Malek, who also served in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), saw working in the Nixon administration as the high point of his career: “My dad drove a beer truck in Chicago, delivering beers to taverns, and here I [was at] age 32, [in the role of] Under Secretary of HEW. It doesn’t get any better than that”.51 Malek described his appointment as “full of challenge…wonder, and discovery”, allowing him to really see “what the Federal Government [was] all about”.52 Similarly, former Nixon White House speech-writer, Lee Huebner, felt blessed to have served in the Nixon White House, despite some of his friends not having gotten over Watergate, which saddens him:

46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 David Parker recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 17th 2009.
50 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
[I] felt very fortunate to have been part of it because so many great things happened and it was just an extraordinary time...I look back on my time with Nixon as a very complicated but also a very privileged time in a sense...I don’t use that word lightly, [but] I was lucky to have the opportunity.53

O’Donnell also loved his time in the Nixon White House: “If I look back on the five years that I spent at the White House I wouldn’t have traded them for anything”.54 O’Donnell felt “fortunate to have worked for President Nixon” and held “a high regard” for the “very effective and diligent group” of “staff members who worked for him”.55 “To be on that staff was a huge privilege”, O’Donnell said.56 O’Donnell believed he “learned so much [working] in those [Nixon] years” and argued that “every young American should aspire to get into government” and “work in the White House [at] some point in their lives; it was an extraordinary experience...”.57 Noting the concerns of many Precedent and Context advocates, O’Donnell highlighted the “clouding” effect that Watergate has had on Nixon’s presidential legacy, arguing that the Nixon administration “did great things for America”, and regrets that “Watergate has become such a huge theme in the eyes of a couple of generations” of citizens.58 O’Donnell saw Nixon as “a very innovative and creative man...demanding terrific respect for the service he performed for the country”, and is hopeful that “history will help separate these things” out.59

It has been indicated that somehow “a sinister underpinning or motive...has gotten into the dialogue” when describing the Nixon administration, which Nixon’s Appointments Secretary, Dwight Chapin, argued “is not true”.60 Chapin claimed he had “never laughed as much as when [he] was in the Nixon White House”.61 There were so many “personalities”, like Ron Ziegler, Jerry Warren, Henry Cashen, Larry Higby, Kenneth Cole, John Ehrlichman, Henry Kissinger, and Alexander Haig, Chapin said, who had such “a wonderful sense of humour”.62 Chapin made “incredible friendships” with people on the staff, to the extent that they played

53 Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
“pranks” on each other. Although there were times like the “Pentagon Papers” episode when things got “tense”, Chapin disputed “references to an era of criminality”, and depictions “of a cloud that was [hanging] over the Nixon White House” with staffers “trying to rape the country of its democracy”. Chapin wrote these allegations off as simple fabrications. Chapin maintained that many issues, like the “enemies list”, got blown out of proportion, and saw the same distortions taking place with the “Bush” and “Clinton administration[s]”. “It always has this sinister twist”, Chapin said, “and to me as an observer, I just don’t think it’s fair, and I don’t really think that it is truthful of what’s there”.

Concerning the inner workings of the Nixon White House, Chapin rejected the commonly held view that Nixon made himself inaccessible to his staff, explaining that if someone had important information to get to Nixon, there was always a way to make sure that happened:

I have never been a subscriber to this ‘I couldn’t tell the president all that was going on. I think [John Dean] made a comment at one point about not being able to get to the president…I find all of this…mind boggling. John was the president’s attorney, it was encumbered upon him to tell Nixon certain things. And he didn’t do that. And while I am not an expert on Watergate, I am somewhat an expert on accessibility to Nixon…and anybody that needed to get in on something as important as [Watergate], and with [the] incredible denominator of criminality involved, there is something that does just not ring true with me [in relation to Dean].

Chapin highlighted that Dean and others blamed the “Berlin Wall” for their inaccessibility to Nixon, claiming that Haldeman and Ehrlichman, “the Germans”, created a wall around Nixon, and kept everybody else out. Chapin saw these accusations as a way of “slamming the president” through “Haldeman and Ehrlichman”. For Chapin, the administrative system employed in the White House worked the way Nixon wanted it to, similar to the structures developed for “corporations”, which ensured the “systematic” and “organised functioning” of

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63 Ibid.  
64 Ibid.  
65 Ibid.  
66 Ibid.  
67 Ibid.  
68 Ibid. The ‘Berlin Wall’ has also been noted in the work of Michael Genovese, in the *Watergate Crisis*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 40; and Fred Emery’s *Watergate: The Corruption of American Politics and the Fall of Richard Nixon* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), 370.
“the administration”. Chapin believed the notion of the “Berlin Wall…got a lot of support in the media” as a result of certain staffers who were not used to functioning in such an organised system “leaking” information to the press. And “so Washington being Washington”, a town which “thrives [on stories like] that”, the tale simply spread…”, Chapin stated, “nobody really took a step back to analyse what [was] going on here and why it existed”.

Like Chapin, Nixon’s Personal Assistant who later served as his Appointments Secretary, Stephen B. Bull, and Nixon’s Staff Secretary, Jon Huntsman Sr, both of whom worked closely with Nixon’s inner circle of staff, argued that the depictions of many Nixon White House aides got caught up in the hype of the Watergate scandal, and were misconstrued. For instance, Bull believed Ehrlichman to be a “good guy”, but when he appeared on television during the Senate Watergate Hearings, the camera took extreme “close up” shots of him, which made “every pore” on his face visible. This caused him to look like a “devious guy, when he was not”—he “was a real pleasant guy”, Bull said. “Ehrlichman was the tour director in the ‘68 campaign”, Bull explained, “everyone loved him, he [had] a good sense of humour and [was] a lovely guy”. Likewise, Huntsman described Ehrlichman as always being “gracious”, “kind”, and a “fine man to work with”. Huntsman was sorry to see Ehrlichman get involved in Watergate, because he felt he was a “great gentleman” and “scholar”. Huntsman worked with Ehrlichman almost every day on position papers, and respected his hard work and tenacity.

Similarly, Bull saw Charles Colson as a “friend” and “very bright” individual. Colson “worked on the Hill, [was] an Attorney, [and] had a good background in politics, [with] a great sense of humour”, Bull contended. Bull added that a lot of what has been written about Colson is fictitious: “I don’t think that he has gone nearly as far as he has been given credit for going”. Likewise, although Huntsman knew Colson “was assigned by Haldeman to do undercover and investigation work”, he still believed Colson to be a “fine man, [who] worked hard, [and]

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Jon M. Huntsman, Sr. recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, March 10th 2008.
75 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
was always trying to protect the president”.\textsuperscript{79} In reference to Attorney General and CREEP Chairman, John D. Mitchell, Bull explained he used to “love introducing” him to “Nixon haters” in the “post resignation days” after Mitchell was released from prison, “because he was such a delightful guy”, and it caught people by surprise.\textsuperscript{80} The views of Bull and Huntsman in relation to Haldeman and Ehrlichman were supported by Huebner who argued he was saddened that Nixon’s right-hand men were generally thought of as scoundrels: “One of my greatest shocks is still to see that people think of [them] in the great Watergate villain category...”.\textsuperscript{81}

Those who aim to provide balance to depictions of the Nixon presidency argue that many aspects of the Nixon administration have been distorted to the point where the reality is almost no longer recognisable. President Johnson’s speech-writer, Ben Wattenberg, who also partook in the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project, described this process of distortion as being caused by a large scale game of ‘Chinese Whispers’, which has continued to embellish and exaggerate the Nixon administration’s misdeeds since Nixon’s resignation.\textsuperscript{82} “It was said that Watergate shows [Nixon] was trying to have a fascist coup to take over America, I think that’s baloney...[Watergate] was terrible and ugly, [but] it wasn’t a threat to the nation’s wellbeing”, Wattenberg said.\textsuperscript{83} For Wattenberg, the Nixon administration “tried” some “bad things”, but “a lot” of it “just occurred”, and then it “got out of hand”.\textsuperscript{84} Wattenberg conceded that Nixon “committed crimes and he was forced to leave”, but ultimately concluded that “Watergate was overstated”, and that Nixon “was a pretty good president in a lot of ways”.\textsuperscript{85}

Presidential Counsel during the Watergate trial, Richard Hauser, described one of the causes of this distortion as stemming from the context of mistrust that surrounded the Nixon White House during the Watergate scandal.\textsuperscript{86} Hauser believed the “whole town” was “so suspicious” of everything that the “president’s team was doing”, that relationships became “wry” and tense”. For example, Hauser outlined an incident where he drove the wife of a

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Jon M. Huntsman, Sr. recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, March 10th 2008.
\textsuperscript{82} Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
\textsuperscript{83} Ben Wattenberg recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 14th 2010.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Richard Hauser recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 21st 2009.
House Impeachment Inquiry staff member to the hospital at “3am in the morning”, because “she was having a medical difficulty” and she “didn’t have a car”. This matter somehow made its way to the press and it was reported that he, as a “White House staff[er]” had a “cozy relationship” with an “Impeachment Inquiry member”. Hauser worried about “how distorted and strained the perceptions of relationships became”. “I [was] representing the President of the United States, Hauser said, “in any other situation this would be seen as a noble enterprise”, but it turned into a situation he learned about in “law school”, that of “representing unpopular clients”. Hauser saw working in the Nixon White House as a “unique experience” as he was able to see “the carnage that occurred” to “the best meaning people”.

But more importantly, Hauser realised how “fragile” the White House was, and recognised that “everything...that surrounds the president” is routinely “magnified” to the point where the “most innocuous matters or issues” attract “scrutiny”, rendering “anything” as “an embarrassment or a problem”.

Interestingly, one point that has been made by Nixon speech-writer, Pamela Bailey, who later served in a number of presidencies, was that life went on in the Nixon White House during the Watergate period, and did not impact the good work the administration was doing in other areas. Bailey explained that while things were heating up in 1974 due to the Nixon administration’s involvement in the Watergate Affair, her team was still “very focused on insuring that it did not stop...the sense of momentum [they had], and the sense of attention to the nation’s continued needs”. Although the Nixon administration was carrying on with their job governing the nation, Nixon White House Press Secretary, Jerry Warren, maintained that the nation’s preoccupation with Watergate did not cease. Warren claimed the press shop attempted to put out a daily Nixon White House message to highlight executive directions, but he was constantly interrupted about Watergate: “The entire focus was on Watergate. Every message we might have had prepared for them got lost in Watergate”. For Warren, although there were many more important presidential issues to discuss, Watergate had disproportionately overshadowed all of the Nixon administration’s great initiatives.

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87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Pamela Bailey recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, April 16th 2009.
90 Jerry Warren II recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 29th 2007.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
Deputy Director of White House Communications, Jeb Stuart Magruder, who later went on to serve as Deputy Chairman for CREEP, made the argument that “except for the activity at Watergate”, the Nixon presidency “had good people” who “ran a good administration”. “On the whole”, for Magruder, “it was a very positive situation”.93 Similarly, Parker promoted the view that the Nixon presidency should be recalled in its entirety. Although Parker saw Watergate as a “seriously sad chapter”, he believed “people [were] starting to recognise that there was a lot more to that administration than just the ending of the administration. So [he is] very proud of the fact that [he] had the privilege to be there”.94

The human Nixon

Keeping in line with their overarching aim to provide a more nuanced depiction of Nixon, Precedent and Context schoolers argue that his character is too complex to pigeon hole. Rather, they seek to portray an admirable, but flawed character of history. In this vein, Garment argued that although he has “tried his best” Nixon’s “complex, multifaceted, persona” is “beyond anybody’s ability to capture”.95 For Garment, Nixon “just didn’t allow himself”, as far as he “was concerned”, to be “examined” and “understood”. For this reason, Garment contended that Nixon “will continue to be a secret”.96 Nixon’s former speech-writer, Raymond Price, and his protégé, Gergen, argued that in order to understand who Nixon was one must balance out his good and bad characteristics. For Price, this balancing act is essential to understanding human subjects—mortals who are not perfect.97 “People forget [Nixon] actually was human”, Price emphasised in his oral history interview. “A lot of people may not believe this but he was”.98 Naftali responded by adding that people often “don’t expect [their] presidents to be human”, causing both men to laugh.99 Gergen offered a similar view, explaining that once he was able to “accept Nixon as a human being”, “flaws” and all, he could see “that there were other sides to him”, which allowed him to recognise that “there was much about Nixon that was admirable”—more so than he first realised.100 Once Gergen

94 David Parker recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 17th 2009.
96 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 David Gergen recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 5th 2009.
observed Nixon with this lens, he “found his assessments” on foreign and domestic policy “to be really quite apt”.101

Although Nixon has generally been presented as an emotionless caricature, Gergen retorted that once you got closer to Nixon, you could see “a personal vulnerability and loneliness”.102 Gergen described a time when he took a speech over to Nixon at the Executive Office Building bowling alley, in the evening when Nixon was there alone. Gergen claimed Nixon looked like the loneliest person he had seen in a long time and he felt so sorry for him: “ultimately, he was a very lonely man, and part of you just wanted to say ‘it’s going to be ok’”, but as a staff member “you can’t say that”.103 Gergen believed it was this vulnerability, and essentially Nixon’s humanness, that surfaced on Nixon’s resignation day when he made his farewell speech to staff.104 Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post also described the speech as an “intensely human moment”, where it was clear that Nixon was “talking from the deepest place inside him”.105 For Gergen, Bernstein, and many others who observed Nixon’s behaviour on August 9th 1974, there was confusion about the Nixon they were seeing as it was so different from the man they had learned about in the press and popular culture. Nixon was displaying a side of himself that the general public had not yet witnessed, and may never have known existed.

Bull claimed the reason for this distorted image of Nixon was that:

People only knew the president [that] was projected by his staff. He was the steady president, the institutional man, and was never really permitted to show that he was a real human being.

Bull contended this situation arose “in response to the [Johnson] presidency” and the perception that he had “demeaned the image of the presiden[t]”.106 This caused the Nixon administration staff to want to present an image that was “more professional”, rather than someone who behaved like “Johnson”, who on one occasion “lift[ed] up his shirt to show [the] scar [he was left with after] “his gall bladder operation”.107 The by-product of this effort

101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Carl Bernstein recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 22nd 2007.
107 Ibid.
was that “people didn’t know Nixon the man”. As an “observer” of Nixon in his role as “president”, Bull claimed Nixon “was an individual that had the full spectrum of emotions”, explaining that if just once the public were advised that, for example, Nixon “got so angry” after he found out about a “unanimous veto” that he “threw an ash tray”, ultimately the public “would have understood” this. Rather, the staff’s “response was always ‘[Nixon] was very moderate, and he decided that he would study the budget and we would go on from here’”. “By concealing” Nixon from “the American people, Bull felt his staff “did him a disservice”.

The presidential image that was created for Nixon had grave consequences for him and his presidency: “When President [Nixon] committed what I thought was a very normal human act”, that being to “help...his buddy and old friend John Mitchell” when he heard that he “may have been responsible for an illegal act” that could “hurt him politically”, “people could not understand that, they could not anticipate that coming from Richard Nixon because” he had already come to be known as “a one- dimensional plastic president”. For Bull, the result of always forcing the emotionless image of “the president” was that he and his colleagues “never” allowed Nixon to “be a multi-dimension human being”. If we move away from the persona that has been built for the president, Bull argued, we can get a clearer picture of the real Nixon, a collage that does not deal with rigid definitions in character, but one that is capable of displaying all human emotions, with the ability to make mistakes without sinister intent.

Bull’s views have been echoed by D. Todd Christofferson, law clerk to Judge John Sirica during the Watergate Grand Jury. He does not believe Nixon to be bad through and through, instead he saw Nixon as a human and decent man, who did not have the courage to be ethical. “There were some people who thought Nixon was inherently evil, some being from another planet”, Christofferson said, with “nothing good about him”. But Nixon was “a man of great talent” and “ability”, Christofferson argued, with “significant accomplishments to his credit”. “Unfortunately”, he was “a man that would not always stand by principle, come what

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
may” and that “caused what could have been a tremendous record of achievement to be blackened with his resignation”.116

Christofferson described a time when Nixon’s humanness surfaced in a way which solidified his views; when he was tasked with looking for a “Watergate conversation” within the White House Tapes.117 Christofferson heard a fraction of a conversation between Nixon and his daughter Julie, and realised at that point that Nixon was also “a dad”, a “common man”, and it was evident that “he loves his daughter, and she loves her father”.118 Unexpectedly, Christofferson could see that Nixon was “a real person” with “many wonderful qualities”, and this “all...came through with the inflection of the voices”.119 Like Bull, Christofferson believed Nixon’s decision to get involved in the Watergate cover-up was to “protect...Mitchell...as a friend” initially, which “led him” deeper and deeper, reaching the point where he did not have the “courage to say ‘stop’, ‘this is wrong’, ‘no more’, ‘we’ll suffer what we have to suffer but we’re not going to do this’”.120 Christofferson argued that if Nixon displayed this courage “he would have finished his term and gone out with a lot of respect, much more than he ended up with”.121 “There were people” who thought Nixon “was just a bad man”, Christofferson concluded, but he just didn’t “see that”.122

Those who use precedent and context as markers for interpreting Nixon’s legacy claim outsiders could not believe Nixon was remorseful about Watergate and what it did to his staff, because they were unable to see Nixon as having human qualities. Nixon was seen as a villain that was not concerned about the carnage Watergate inflicted on the careers of those in his administration. Many of the narratives presented in the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project contradict this image. Media figure and long-time Nixon friend, Art Linkletter, argued that Nixon felt “very sad” about Watergate, and described it to him as a “bad chapter” in his “life”.123 Colson claimed Nixon acknowledged that he had made “mistakes” with Watergate when he went to see Nixon at his home in San Clemente to provide a Sunday morning worship service after he got sick with Phlebitis.124 Chapin too sensed that Nixon “felt very bad

116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
about things” when he took his daughters and wife to see Nixon after he was released from prison.\textsuperscript{125} Garment was on “the call list the night before” Nixon resigned from office, during which Nixon expressed his feelings of sorrow and regret for “letting him down”, and asked for his forgiveness.\textsuperscript{126}

Huebner believed Nixon also felt bad about the effects of Watergate on the administration’s young staff. When Huebner was leaving the White House in January 1974, he met with Nixon to say goodbye. In passing Huebner said that his time in the presidency “had been fun”. “Fun?”, Nixon responded, “Well I know what you mean but I get sad to think about all of those young people” and “what would happen to [them]...because of Watergate...”, Nixon said.\textsuperscript{127} Huebner believed Nixon had the ability to “identify with all the kids who had found themselves working in the White House”, which to them, was like working in “dreamland”.\textsuperscript{128} “They would never have expected” something like Watergate “to happen” and probably “thought they could have “coast[ed]” through “their life”, but “then realised that [Watergate] would be something that [they] would have to explain away for the rest” of their lives.\textsuperscript{129} Huebner claimed he “honestly sensed [Nixon’s] emotion and sadness”, which in essence stemmed from “early hopes which had been dashed because of the Watergate stuff”.\textsuperscript{130}

Those who follow the belief that Nixon’s image has been misconstrued, claim it is impossible for someone to project the same image at every moment in time. For example, one may need to present a certain appearance or personality type at their place of employment which they may otherwise not display within their home life. Nixon chose to subdue certain behaviours deemed to be unacceptable for public life, such as using profanity. This becomes evident when listening to the language that Nixon uses on the White House tapes in comparison to his choice of words in the public sphere. Many of Nixon’s friends claim they never encountered the Nixon that was on the White House tapes, and were very surprised to hear how much he cursed.\textsuperscript{131} Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget during the Nixon administration, Paul O’Neill, only saw one of Nixon’s personas in action:

\textsuperscript{125} Dwight L. Chapin recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave, April 2nd 2007.
\textsuperscript{127} Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
...The president that we now know from the tapes, the vulgar, prejudiced president person that surfaced in the tapes, I never saw that. One might say that I saw the president with the public policy veneer, which frankly is ok with me.\textsuperscript{132}

O’Neill claimed he “never saw that ugly part of Nixon”, instead he witnessed “the unbelievably intelligent person that was in that body too”.\textsuperscript{133} O’Neill put this down to there being “quite a few people” within Nixon, but on the whole the person that impacted him “was a thoughtful, intellectual person” who had reflected “about the role of government and how he could shape it”.\textsuperscript{134} The problem here is that when the Nixon to be found on the White House tapes surfaced, it was believed that he was being dishonest and hiding his true self from the public, which would mean that he had a dark side that influenced negative behaviours and decision making.

For those who advocate the Precedent and Context standpoint, these assumptions about Nixon’s character have been exaggerated. Price described this distortion effect, stating that Nixon’s good and bad sides are “both part of the real Nixon”.\textsuperscript{135} Price believed Nixon to be “a very complex guy”, who would only express anger “in private” around people he felt he could “let down his hair with”.\textsuperscript{136} For Price, “the pressures that the president is under” make it vital for them to “have a [private] forum” where they “can release [that] pressure”.\textsuperscript{137} Nixon “did that with some people, and unfortunately the tape was on”, Price argued\textsuperscript{138} Price explained that Nixon expressing these feelings did not necessarily mean he was going to act out what he was saying, Nixon was “much more thoughtful” and “judicious about that”.\textsuperscript{139} To “understand” the way Nixon worked and executed his role as president, “you have to understand the multiple layers of him and the interaction among the multiple layers”, and recognised “they’re all part of the same person”.\textsuperscript{140} “I think most of us have multiple layers but maybe not as complex...or as far-reaching...as his”, Price said.\textsuperscript{141} Price concluded that

\textsuperscript{132}Paul O’Neill interview by Timothy Naftali, September 21st 2009.
\textsuperscript{133}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141}Ibid.
with Nixon “you have to take the whole, not just the parts”, “and the whole”, he argued, “was on balance pretty good”. 142

To depict the complexity of Nixon’s character, Safire used a “layer cake” analogy to portray the multiple layers of Nixon’s personality. Safire described the cake as consisting of tiers that include “a patriot” on top, with a “mild” case of “paranoia” underneath, as well as an employer who is “thoughtful”, “not at all abusive”, and “very good to people who work with him”. 143 Lastly there is a “hard-liner” that sits on the bottom. 144 Safire contended that the different facets of Nixon’s persona cannot be separated out. If one wants to know what the real Nixon is like, they must “cut down [through] the seven or eight layers and take a spoon full”, allowing you to taste “the confluence of flavours”. 145 Safire considered the complexity of Nixon’s personality to be the reason why he is “still the subject of plays, movies, dramas and controversy”, compounded by him leaving “more biographical information than anyone ever wanted him to”. 146

Those who subscribe to the Precedent and Context mentality disagree with the view that Nixon was the central figure behind Watergate, arguing that taking Nixon’s persona on face value has led to misconceptions of his complex character. An example of this may be seen in Nixon’s illustrations of Jewish people on the White House tapes. “You can be misled by the tapes”, Safire said, “unless you’re listening to what [Nixon] was thinking, instead of what he was saying”. 147 Safire observed that Jews like himself, “Garment”, “Herb Stein” and “Arthur Burns”, were “given great authority and opportunities” by Nixon, and since he did not experience any direct racism from the president, he finds it hard to believe that Nixon was prejudiced towards Jews. 148 Safire also highlighted Nixon being Israel’s “strongest supporter” as evidence that he “wasn’t anti-Semitic”. “To be anti-Semitic is to hate Jews, and he certainly didn’t”. 149 Seeking to quash Naftali’s suggestion that Nixon’s directive to investigate the number of Jews employed at the Bureau of Labour Statistics was a prejudiced act, Safire explained he believed Nixon “saw Jews as liberals, as New Yorkers, as people, who had

142 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
been against him from the start”. “It was liberals he hated”, Safire exclaimed. Safire argued that Nixon’s views may be described as “the towel snapping locker room kind of anti-Semitism, and not...something [Nixon] carried out” in his role as president.

Safire’s interview reveals a nuanced Nixon, a mixture of good, bad, and ugly. For Safire and others who assess the Nixon presidency from the Precedent and Context standpoint, Nixon is seen as possessing positive and negative qualities simultaneously. It is argued by such proponents that all of the facets of Nixon’s character need to be examined in order to understand the president and his legacy in their entirety.

**Nixon as progressive politician and statesman**

Those who sympathise with the Precedent and Context view have argued the Nixon administration advanced domestic and foreign policy initiatives that were extremely progressive for a conservative Republican politician, and contend Watergate obscured that legacy. For example, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Frank Carlucci, highlighted that Nixon came into presidential office knowing he wanted to improve relations with China. National Security Council staff member, Morton Halperin, agreed with Carlucci, and rebutted arguments that Kissinger formulated the Nixon administration’s China policy. The opening to China was “all Nixon”, Halperin stated, as did Nixon’s Secret Service detail officer, Mike Endicott, who explained that Kissinger himself stated (at the Hofstra Symposium on the Nixon Presidency) that Nixon formulated his administration’s foreign policy, and he had implemented it.

By 1972 Nixon had opened a dialogue with China, and with his visit to the country in February, he ushered in a new era of Sino-American relations. This political move also pressured the Soviet Union to seek détente with the United States, fearing the possibility of a

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150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Frank Carlucci recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 26th 2007.
154 Endicott argues that Nixon enjoyed working with Kissinger on foreign policy matters because they had a similar global world view. Endicott believes their working relationship was successful because they were both mission driven. From a geo-political standpoint, Endicott maintains Nixon made it seem as though Kissinger was the one making foreign policy decisions because the press were nicer to him; but Kissinger supported the view that Nixon developed his own foreign policy, and he was tasked with implementing it. In Mike Endicott recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, July 27th 2007.
Sino-American alliance. Nixon used improving relations with the Soviet Union to address the topic of nuclear peace. Following the announcement of his visit to China, the Nixon administration proceeded with negotiations for him to visit the Soviet Union; the trip took place in May of 1972. On Nixon’s visit he met with Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Alexei Kosygin, the Head of State, Nikolai Podgorny, and other leading Soviet officials. He engaged in intense negotiations resulting in the summit agreements for increased trade and two landmark arms control treaties: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT 1), the first limitation pact signed by the superpowers, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), which banned the development of systems designed to intercept incoming missiles. The success of these negotiations motivated Nixon and Brezhnev to proclaim that both superpowers had entered a new era of ‘peaceful coexistence’.

Seeking to foster better relations with the United States, both China and the Soviet Union cut back on their diplomatic support for North Vietnam and advised Hanoi to come to terms militarily with Saigon. Although Nixon may be said to have not backed down from a policy of aggression against North Vietnam, by using bombing strategies and running illegal operations through Cambodia; Nixon’s family friend, Hubert Perry, believed Nixon’s Quaker background encouraged him to find solutions to the Vietnam War in an amicable way. For Perry, the policy of ‘Vietnamization’ was an example of this sensibility in that American troops were being replaced by the Vietnamese in order to bring the Americans home, but leave the Vietnamese in a position to defend themselves. Perry also believed “a lot of the things [Nixon] did as president in the Vietnam War were indicative of his attempt to find a solution...peaceful[ly]”.

Although Nixon’s actions in the international arena would support the characterisation of Nixon being a political realist, his sense of morality while executing foreign policy has also been highlighted in his dealings with Turkey and his efforts to halt their opium trade; said to be providing the United States with 80% of its heroin. Nixon’s threat to cut off “all military

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156 Hubert Perry recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 25th 2007.
157 Ibid. 
158 Ibid. 
assistance to Turkey”, if they did not “agree” to cease the production of opium, resulted in Turkey being “wiped out” as one of the globes “major opium grower[s]”.160

Nixon’s expertise in formulating responses to foreign policy issues was recognised by subsequent presidents. President Reagan’s plea to “bring Nixon in” to assist him in “dealing” with “the Soviet Union” has been highlighted as evidence of Nixon’s skill in developing effective foreign policy.161 Nixon “encouraged” Reagan to shift gears from a “confrontational” to “negotiating” approach, with Reagan’s efforts leading to the collapse of the USSR.162 Former Congressman and Director of the Office of Management and Budget during the Clinton presidency, Leon Panetta, claimed Clinton too was impressed with Nixon’s knowledge of the world:

Clinton really felt that he had received very good advice from Nixon, particularly on foreign affairs, that he had a very good sense of what he as president needed to do in the world, understood the different areas, whether you were talking about Asia, China, Middle East, Africa, South America, Latin America. Nixon had a very good sense of those issues and shared them with Clinton, and I remember Clinton telling me that he had been very impressed with the meeting that he had with Richard Nixon.163

Proponents of the Precedent and Context mentality, such as Franklin and Halperin, argued that Nixon’s foreign policy feats needed to be brought to bear within the tapestry of the Nixon presidency. Yet neither of them, or any other Precedent and Context advocate for that matter, acknowledges Nixon’s less-savoury foreign policy achievements, such as his successful sabotage of President Lyndon Johnson’s Vietnam War peace talks in 1968, his sanctioning of the secret and illegal bombing campaign of Cambodia in 1970 during the Vietnam War, and his authorisation of CIA intervention in Chile to destabilise the newly democratically elected Government of President Salvador Allende resulting in a coup in 1973. Instead Franklin described Nixon’s pursuit of a new foreign policy with China in 1972 as a “very important strategic move in world affairs...you can look back on that now [as] even more profoundly strategic...than it was at the time. It was sheer genius”.164 Halperin concurred with Franklin, stating that although Nixon was an awkward character, he was

160 Charles Rangel recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 28th 2007.
161 Frank Carlucci recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 26th 2007.
162 Ibid.
highly intelligent in the foreign policy arena.\textsuperscript{165} Halperin explained that Nixon “seemed like the most insecure and ill-at-ease person he had ever met”, but then he had the occasion to see “a different side” to him when the Council sent Nixon “400-page briefing books”. They would often get them back the next morning with a question on page 327 in the middle of a paragraph that they had not called his attention to.\textsuperscript{166} This gave Halperin the impression that Nixon “understood things”, was “perfectly sensible”, “clearly smart”, and “interested in...foreign policy”, as he was now beginning to “learn” about Nixon’s domestic policy efforts.\textsuperscript{167}

On the home-front, Nixon pushed forth a collection of domestic policies under the umbrella of ‘New Federalism’ which sought to decentralise and devolve power from the federal government to state and local elected officials. As federal programs and legislation used to be passed without the input of those who would be implementing them, Domestic Council staffer, James F. Falk Sr, stated that “an effort was made to make a new coalition of Governors, Mayors, county officials...[and]...state legislative leaders, so that [the Nixon administration] could benefit from [them] telling us [what] the[ir] needs were”.\textsuperscript{168} “Nixon’s idea was to redistribute money to the elected officials”, so if citizens didn’t “want to have the money spent that way they [had] the right to vote to kick them out of office”.\textsuperscript{169} This was impossible in the past due to President Johnson’s Great Society program which employed “unelected” officials to implement “categorical grants for everything from trash collection to airports”, which meant that the cities with the “best grant applications were going to get the most money”—leading to inequitable distribution of federal funds.\textsuperscript{170}

Price argued that Nixon wanted to “design a free and open society”, with “the focus being on people, not institutions or lawyers or government”.\textsuperscript{171} The goal was to create an environment where “people [may be] free to do as much as they could, and it was open as wide as

\textsuperscript{165} Morton Halperin recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, June 25th 2009.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
possible”.\textsuperscript{172} Thus, Nixon made way for government help, but not interference, in that he sought to have “the powers of decision back closer to the local level and closer to the individual...”.\textsuperscript{173} Other examples of Nixon’s search for equality may be seen in his wanting domestic policy to “take account of the working poor” through a negative income tax,\textsuperscript{174} his “commitment to welfare reform” via the Family Assistance Plan,\textsuperscript{175} and his seeking to treat low income people on a legal basis by providing a “progressive income tax system” to limit the possibility of discrimination against states with less natural resources.\textsuperscript{176}

Nixon’s Secretary to the Cabinet and later Under Secretary of the Interior Department, John Whitaker, claimed the Nixon administration was also committed to creating new parks because the president remembered not having a park close to his home that he could visit as a child. Nixon was noted to say that it was a “long drive from Yorba Linda to Yosemite”.\textsuperscript{177} It is Nixon’s appreciation of nature which has been said to feed into his progressive thinking on the environment. Whitaker claimed in his oral history interview that Nixon was brave enough to concentrate on the economic side of the environment. Even though Nixon was criticised for this action back then, it is generally how it is thought about in politics these days.\textsuperscript{178} Domestic Council staffer, Edwin Harper, argued Nixon “recognised” the need “to be in front of the parade on protecting the environment, and sewers and water” so the Nixon administration oversaw the implementation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Council on Environmental Quality, and supported initiatives such as: The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Clean Air Act of 1970, and the Clean Water Act of 1972.\textsuperscript{179} According to Whitaker, even “real rabid environmentalists” were starting to say “Nixon did a good job”. “They don’t like anything else about him, but they think he did a good job on the environment”, Whitaker argued.\textsuperscript{180}

On the financial side of things, to counteract inflation at its highest rate in a century in August 1971, Nixon implemented temporary wage and price controls that Congress had granted him

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} John Price recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 21st 2007.
\textsuperscript{175} Frederic V. Malek recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 17th 2007.
\textsuperscript{176} Paul O’Neill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 21st 2009.
\textsuperscript{177} John Whitaker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, Sam Rushay and Brooks Flippen, March 19th 2007.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} John Whitaker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, Sam Rushay and Brooks Flippen, March 19th 2007.
power to impose in 1970. This allowed the United States dollar to float against other currencies, and ended the convertibility of the dollar into gold. Although Nixon’s policies dampened inflation throughout 1972, their after-effects contributed to inflation during his second term and into the Ford administration.\(^1\)

Within the administration of the executive branch, Nixon also looked to substantially re-organise the government by reducing the number of its departments to eight. Nixon proposed that the existing departments of State, Justice, Treasury, Defense, and Executive Branch departments be made into ‘Super Cabinets’ of Economic Affairs, Natural Resources, Human Resources, and Community Development.\(^2\) Although Nixon’s plan did not succeed, the United States Post Office Department was dissolved, and later became the United States Postal Service in 1971.

Another area where the Nixon administration has been described as producing ground-breaking policy was in health. In February 1971 Nixon proposed health insurance reform, which included a private health insurance employer mandate and the federalisation of Medicaid for poor families with dependent minor children and support for health maintenance organisations. In October 1971 Nixon extended Medicare to those under 65 who had been severely disabled or had end stage renal disease. House and Senate hearings on national health insurance were held in 1971, but no bill had the support of House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committee chairmen, Wilbur Mills and Senator Russell Long. O’Neill’s oral history interview was revealing on this matter in that he claimed:

> The president was really inquisitive about health and medical care, and he directed us to look at the aspects of health and medical care in a full way…[For example] we were proposing a Family Health Insurance Plan to go hand in hand with the case Family Assistance Plan…[Essentially] the old and new Clinton health care proposals are all a product of Nixon’s framing of the health and medical issue.\(^3\)

Nixon also declared a war on ‘Cancer’ and ‘Drugs’. Jerome Jaffe, who was tasked with developing programs to counteract the drug issue, stated that “Nixon’s original war on drugs

\(^1\) Aitken, *Nixon: A Life*, 399-400.
\(^3\) Paul O’Neill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 21st 2009.
was a re-balancing of what was going on before that”, which emphasised “law enforcement and arresting people”.

For Jaffe:

This was the first time in the history of the country where more resources were going into treatment and research and prevention, than law enforcement. And there were very few people who opposed that.

Nixon’s emphasis on rehabilitation to tackle the drug issue led to him authorising the development of a program to assist soldiers addicted to heroin coming home from the Vietnam War, which Jaffe oversaw. Jaffe claimed Nixon wanted to work towards the destigmatisation of Vietnam veterans with reference to drug use.

Nixon was noted by those interviewees in the oral histories as having a reformist side, particularly in the area of civil rights. Franklin cited Nixon’s efforts to foster gender equality within the executive branch, as an example of his revolutionary work in this area. Franklin claimed Nixon had supported the Equal Rights Amendment Bill (ERA) since his time in the “Senate in the ‘50s”, and believed Nixon’s promotion of the “advancement of women” came from him having strong “self-made” women in his life, such as his mother, wife, and daughters. Franklin also argued that Nixon valued the opinions of females on policy early in his career—since he often turned to his administrative Secretary, Rose Mary Woods, because of her frank advice. Nixon felt that women should be able to decide whether they wanted to have a career inside the home or outside of it, Franklin noted. The “ERA was a big” issue “during the ‘70s, and there was a lot of momentum behind it”, Franklin explained, but although “both houses had passed” the Bill “in the Congress”, “it got stopped three states short of ratification”, when it “went to the States”. But this did not stop efforts within the Nixon White House to create gender equality in the workforce.

On August 8th 1969, Nixon issued Executive Order 11478 which prohibited discrimination in government employment on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex, national origin, handicap,

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164 Jerome Jaffe recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, July 29th 2009.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
or age. After Nixon and his staff forged an action plan that would seek to bring more women into government than in the past, a “Presidential Task Force on Women’s Rights and Responsibilities” was set up in 1969, to which Franklin was appointed. It was argued that this particular effort stemmed from a news conference held on February 6th 1969, when a female reporter (by the name of Vera Glaser) stated the Nixon administration had only appointed three women out of “200 high level Cabinet and other policy positions”, questioning whether women were “forever going to be the lost sex”. The president replied amid laughter, “would you be interested in coming into the Government?”, and stated, “very seriously, [that he] had not known that only three [positions] had gone to women, and [committed to]...see that [the administration] correct that imbalance very promptly”. Franklin explained that the first time she met Nixon he was “very gracious, and it was very clear that he thought...advancing women in government was important, and that’s what he wanted me to do.”

Nixon’s Communications Director, Herbert G. Klein, argued that Nixon also wanted to work on gaining civil rights for African-Americans, not for political gain, but because he thought it was right: “He felt strongly about the African-American issue, that we should have better civil rights for them, and he was anxious to get into that role early on in his job as Vice-President”. Nixon oversaw the implementation of the Philadelphia Plan affirmative action program and the employment of people from ethnic minorities such as the black and Hispanic communities in the White House and executive branch. Panetta’s personal view of Nixon was that he had been very sympathetic to civil rights issues because of his Quaker background:

As Vice-President, [Nixon] had made decisions regarding filibusters in the Senate that were...very pro civil rights, he had been involved in some committees dealing with advocating civil rights, [and] his voting record was pretty good on civil rights issues.

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193 Ibid.
196 Malek was tasked with the role of creating a ‘New Majority’ in the Nixon White House. In Frederic V. Malek recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 17th 2007.
Panetta believed that “deep down [Nixon’s instincts were to…try to promote, not retreat from the civil rights promise of the country”\textsuperscript{196}. Likewise, Ed Nixon believed his brother wanted him to attend Duke University in the South, so he could see for himself how parts of America were racially prejudiced towards African Americans. Ed contended that Nixon wanted him to witness the different extremes in the United States that needed to be addressed, and to experience an environment other than Southern California, giving him the opportunity to observe “how Whites behave toward other humans”\textsuperscript{199}.

The Nixon years witnessed the first large-scale integration of public schools in the South, and by September 1970 less than 10% of black children were attending segregated schools\textsuperscript{200}. By 1971, however, tensions over desegregation surfaced in Northern cities, with angry protests over the busing of children to schools outside their neighbourhood to achieve racial balance. Nixon personally believed busing to be discriminatory, and disagreed with the courts enforcing orders to take people out of their communities to achieve a social goal, rather than educating the nation about the importance of civil rights\textsuperscript{201}.

In relation to Native American policy, the Nixon administration enacted reform that ended the policy of termination in American Indian tribes, which stipulated that: “Indians should be assimilated into white [American] society”, that “the tribal relationship was a dependent relationship that wouldn’t work”, and that “tribal sovereignty should be terminated…”.\textsuperscript{202} Garment outlined that the Nixon administration assembled “the Indian program” which consisted of a “medley of remedial [efforts] under the slogan ‘self-determination without termination’”, that “made for very significant change…”\textsuperscript{203}

It has been highlighted by subscribers to the Precedent and Context view, that Nixon may have been wrongly labelled as a conservative president, as the policies he implemented lend the argument that he was actually liberally inclined. Republican Senator and long-time Nixon friend, Robert Dole, argued that Nixon’s policies would not be considered conservative today, as “today’s conservatives”, who form part of the neo-conservative revolution, “are very

\textsuperscript{197} Leon Panetta recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 23rd 2007.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{199} Ed Nixon recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 9th 2007.
\textsuperscript{200} Herbert S. Parmet. Richard Nixon and His America (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1990), 595-597, 603.
\textsuperscript{201} Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, August 17th 2007.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid.
“different” to the types of Republicans that Dole saw coming through politics in the Eisenhower era, when platforms centred on “cutting taxes” and “stopping spending”. Similarly, Ed Nixon stated that his brother would not have been a Republican if he had been alive today, as “the Republican Party [had] gone too far to the Right [for him].” Republican House Judiciary Committee Member, Trent Lott, who served on the Impeachment Inquiry, stated that many Republicans thought Nixon was “not sufficiently conservative...[as] he was pretty moderate on a lot of subjects. So they were unhappy”. Director of Congressional Relations for the Nixon administration, William Timmons, claimed “Nixon did a lot of things” that a traditional “Conservative Republicans wouldn’t do”, such as “wage and price controls...”. Timmons added that “Nixon spent more money on welfare, food stamps and Medicare” than Democratic President Johnson did in “his Great Society” Program, and argued that Nixon was both “a conservative and a liberal”, who would “try all kinds of things to see if they would work”. Examples of this may be seen in the development of the “Office of Economic Opportunity” and the “Legal Services” program.

Like Timmons, Nixon administration domestic policy staffer, John Price, saw Nixon as “a guy with a portable middle...like the bubble in a builder’s level”, due to his willingness to be “inclusive” and obtain policy advice from both sides of the political spectrum before making a decision on the best way to approach a problem. In this sense Price was arguing that Nixon could be described as a policy pragmatist. Raymond Price supported this view, depicting Nixon as a “very practical” man who tried “to find things that worked”. For Price, “things that work are often a mix of what you would call a conservative and liberal”. To resolve a policy problem successfully, Nixon chose to be practical. Price made the argument that Nixon’s pragmatism generated criticism among diehard partisans, as “a lot of the people who were aligned with the left or the right don’t care whether [a policy] works, as

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205 Ed Nixon expressed this view with Bobbie Kilberg when he was giving him a lift home after Nixon’s funeral. In Bobbie Kilberg recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, November 19th 2007.
206 Trent Lott recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, December 8th 2008.
207 William Timmons recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 27th 2009.
209 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
long as it is ideologically pure”.212 Nixon “didn’t care about ideological purity, he cared about results”.213

Both John and Raymond Price’s views have been echoed by Shepard who claimed “Nixon [was] criticised by conservatives as being much more of a pragmatist than being a true conservative”.214 For Shepard, this criticism had substance “because there was no way” Nixon was going to be able to get a policy through a liberal Democratic “Congress”, if he did not “talk about principle and what the [conservatives] wanted done in government”.215 Ed Nixon saw his brother as someone that wanted to try anything to see if it would work, explaining that Nixon would not mind if something “failed” as long as the administration could “learn” something from the experience.216 Ed believed that this attitude led his brother to be “accused” of “going way too far with government intervention”. Yet this did not bother Nixon as he felt it was his job as president to “test all these things to see if they will work”. The goal was to see an idea, along with its “consequences”, through to its end, Ed explained.217

Nixon is considered by many proponents of the Precedent and Context school to be a progressive moderate president, who was largely misunderstood by his contemporaries. Franklin saw Nixon’s support of government subsidised day care centres as confirmation of this.218 Similarly, Harper contended that it was likely that “...a lot of people who mischaracterised President Nixon” just didn’t “really understand him...”.219 Bobbie Kilberg, who served on the Nixon administration Domestic Council policy staff, thought of Nixon as an “extraordinarily progressive Republican”, who achieved a lot more than most people have given him credit for.220 Kilberg pointed to Nixon changing the “direction of Native American policy”, putting an “extensive amount of money into historically black colleges”, and moving “the desegregation ball forward in very very important ways” as evidence of this view.221 Kilberg also cited the creation of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and “reform to pension laws” as extremely progressive in nature.222 Nixon also “created the

212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Geoffrey Shepard recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, May 26th 2009.
215 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
National Endowment on the Arts” and “for the Humanities”, and “was a progressive on his foreign policy”. For Kilberg, when “you add” up Nixon’s entire domestic and foreign policy track record “together...my goodness gracious...he was progressive beyond his time”. Kilberg thanked Naftali for executing the Oral History Project, as the general focus on the Nixon administration has always been on foreign policy, and from her perspective, the presidency achieved so much more on the domestic policy plane that is worth highlighting.

Advocates of the Precedent and Context viewpoint claim Nixon is wrongly remembered for Watergate more than for the progressive policies he executed as president. “An awful lot of things did happen on the domestic front that are not as well remembered today”, Huebner stated. To exemplify this argument Huebner drew on his experiences as Professor of Media and Public Affairs within the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences at George Washington University, where he teaches a course about the Nixon presidency. Huebner explained that on the first day of class he asks his students to identify what they think about Nixon, of which the usual words that generally come up are ‘Watergate’ and ‘I am not a crook’. Since Nixon’s domestic policies are rarely mentioned, Huebner seeks to teach his students about this record throughout the course. Huebner’s actions highlight the view that Nixon’s domestic achievements should be noted in order to achieve a more objective view of his presidency.

Like Kilberg, Timmons supported the efforts of the Nixon Library Oral History Project in portraying “the ups and downs, the good and the bad of Richard Nixon’s presidency”, to provide a holistic view of Nixon’s legacy to students. “Most people don’t realise that the Office of Management and Budget” was created during the Nixon administration, Timmons said, as well as “the Domestic Council”, the “Office of Consumer Affairs”, the “Federal Energy Administration”, the “Council on Environmental Equality”, and the “Space Shuttle”. Timmons is saddened that these Nixon administration successes are not thought about when people “reminisce on the period”, but rather, when “people...think of Richard Nixon...they

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223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
225 Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
227 Lee Huebner recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 7th 2009.
228 Ibid.
229 Ibid.
230 William Timmons recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 27th 2009.
think of Vietnam...the opening to China, [and] they think of Watergate and the resignation. That’s kind of it”.232

Franklin made the same argument, highlighting the effect that Watergate had on women’s issues. As Franklin explained, although there was a “consensus growing in society” about the need for gender equality in the workplace, and some very good “headway” was achieved during her time in the Nixon administration, Watergate quickly “became front and centre”, forcing many other important concerns to be put on the “back-burner”.233 The effect Watergate had on the legacy of the Nixon presidency was that some things like “China...pop out”, whilst “some of the other very progressive things that happened there” were “dampened down because of Watergate”,234 Franklin maintained. Office of the Management and Budget staffer, Walter Scott, supported Franklin’s argument stating that many of Nixon’s domestic and international achievements should have had more of a “lasting impact” but have “gotten lost along the way because of the Watergate failure”.235

The oral history participants noted in this section ultimately argued that the Nixon presidency should be seen from a broader perspective. But instead of looking outwardly to provide context to the Nixon administration by placing it in a continuum among its presidential peers, they have looked inwardly at the policies of the Nixon administration in their attempt to provide balance to Nixon’s presidential legacy.236

The cumulative effect of misconception: Watergate as an organic problem

Proponents within the Precedent and Context school argue that Watergate needs to be examined in a less emotive way, as without this negative charge one can see the truth of the affair with objective eyes. Consequently, Watergate will be depicted here as an incremental problem which emerged organically within the Nixon administration. The narratives used in this chapter’s final analysis will argue that Watergate emerged from the lack of understanding that existed within the Nixon White House and the nation about the type of person Nixon was, the way he operated as president, and the administration he created. The following

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231 Ibid.
232 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
235 Walter Scott recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, November 15th 2007.
discussion seeks to highlight the effect misconceptions about Nixon and his presidency had on the emergence of Watergate, and how it was received by the public.

Devil’s Advocate Theory

Those who follow the Precedent and Context line of thinking see Watergate as a cumulative effect, which stems from staff in the Nixon White House making assumptions about the president and actions he wanted executed. It is argued that the failure of some to see both sides of Nixon’s personality, the good and the bad, led to inappropriate operations within the Nixon administration. It has been highlighted by both Colson and Raymond Price that Nixon liked to play ‘Devil’s Advocate’ with his staff. Colson observed that Nixon “enjoyed getting people in conflicting debates” about any decision he needed to make.\textsuperscript{237} Nixon would “ask devil’s advocate questions and get conflicting memos” by playing people against one another, who had very different views and social values. Nixon would then “listen” to the result of the debate and “make his pick”.\textsuperscript{238}

Similarly, Price explained that Nixon would often “use conversations as a way to challenge other people to elicit their responses”.\textsuperscript{239} For example, he “would make a statement, not because he meant it necessarily, but because he wanted to see what the other person’s reaction was, so he could put that reaction into his calculations of the whole thing”.\textsuperscript{240} These conversations were “not supposed to go anywhere”—they were “just part of [Nixon’s] research process”;\textsuperscript{241} Price maintained. People need to recognise how much is at stake when one finds themselves in the role of President of the United States: “The stake of the presidency, the future of the presidency, the future of the nation, the future of the Western world, the future of freedom in the world”.\textsuperscript{242} It was for this reason that Price outlined the responsibility for presidents and those around them to:

\textit{...explore all options, legal and illegal...considering the stakes. Because...unlike those on the outside, the president is responsible for the consequences of what}

\textsuperscript{236} William Timmons recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 27th 2009.
\textsuperscript{237} Charles W. Colson recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, September 24th 2008.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
happens...the critics on the outside [don’t] have to worry about consequences. They [can] be as pure as they wish.  

For Price, a president could not “function” successfully “if he were pure”, which was a fact he complained “people [don’t] like to face”. “One of the reasons [why Nixon] was as successful as he was”, was because he did not function within this constraint. Price considered Nixon to be ‘human’ and a ‘realist’, which he deemed necessary to be a good president. Yet, it is this seemingly innocent analytical process which Price described that turned out to be a major problem for the Nixon presidency.

During this “process of analysing” complex issues, Price said, Nixon would execute a system of “deciding, un-deciding, and re-deciding”, where he would say “we’ll do this’, and then he’d say ‘no, we’ll do that’”. Price noted that the people around Nixon that really knew him understood they were supposed to take what Nixon said during this “research process” with a grain of salt. Rather than carrying out orders during this phase, Nixon needed to be given “time to think about it”, because when he did have time to stew “the final conclusion was usually a pretty good one, but it was...all part of the process”. For Price, the failure of some people within the Nixon White House to recognise this process and understand “the multiple layers of [Nixon] and the interaction among the multiple layers”, led to orders being executed at a time when they believed Nixon was being definitive about what he wanted. Some “would assume that this was the real Nixon and so forth, and go out and act on it”, whereas those that “knew him” and the “kind of guy he was”, did not even have to ask him if he meant it, because they knew he did not. “I think all of us from time-to-time, when we’re under pressure...may say things that we don’t expect to have happen”, Price stated. Whenever Nixon was displaying anger, the thoughts he was expressing “were never part of the conclusion” and “that is the key thing” that observers need to understand—that Nixon “had [a] process”.

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242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
248 Ibid.
249 Ibid.
Price cautioned that Nixon administration figures like Colson would jump in at the wrong time in this process, when for example Nixon would “wish somebody would run over [some] guy with a truck”. It is this issue that Price contended contributed to a lot of the Nixon administration’s problems. Colson for example “was much more likely to do things that were not really meant to be done, just because he thought he had the authorisation”. Price’s views have been echoed by Klein, who explained that sometimes Nixon “would say” some really “harsh stuff”, but if he “just ignored him”, in a couple of days Nixon would be glad that he didn’t carry out any unnecessary actions. Klein explained that “part of the problem that occurred with people like Colson was that he would take a harsh statement and make it worse”. Like Price, Klein outlined that those who knew Nixon like they did “for all those years...never did that”. Klein saw this issue as “a serious problem” impacting the Nixon presidency. Nixon White House Congressional liaison officer, Patrick O’Donnell, explained how Haldeman had the ability to calm Nixon down, and unlike Colson, would not automatically carry out orders just because the ‘president’ said so:

Nixon had a temper...and he would react sometimes, shot from the hip...Haldeman got to the stage where he could handle that stuff and he would ignore some of...the president[l’s orders], and talk to him the next day and say ‘Mr President, I really can’t do that’, and then [Nixon] would say, ‘yeah you’re right’, or he would say ‘I don’t care, do it anyway’, and then Haldeman would filter that to reality.

In essence, responding to Price and Klein’s charges, during his oral history interview Colson conceded he knew there were times when he “couldn’t” and “shouldn’t” act on Nixon’s wishes, and for example, “carry out orders when Nixon was in a drunken rant...in the middle of the night”. In these instances he would “listen” and pretend to “agree with him”, like the time Nixon asked him to fire “all of the people over at the Bureau of Labour Statistics”. Yet,
although “there were many times that [he] did not do what [Nixon] said, and got the person involved that should stop him, there were [also] times when [he] didn’t, and wish[ed he] had….” 260 “You didn’t have to work really hard to bring…out” Nixon’s anger, Colson said, “it was always very close to the surface”. The reason for this was Nixon was “a gut fighter” and “his first reaction was to fight back” and “get even with people”, 261 Colson contended. Colson believed he and Nixon’s other staffers would have served the president well if they “gave him a warm measured reaction”, but on too many occasions they went about it the “wrong way” and said “let’s go get those guys”:

On reflection now, if I regret anything about the Nixon presidency years, there were a lot, but the thing I probably regret the most was that I didn’t take those occasions to try and help Nixon moderate those views. Haldeman and Ehrlichman say they were given orders like I was given, but they didn’t carry them out, but that’s not been my experience. They did exactly what I did. 262

Colson mentioned an example where he, Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Nixon were out on the presidential yacht, the Sequoia, having drinks on deck when they were discussing the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Arthur Burns, and his lack of support for one of Nixon’s money supply initiatives. Nixon believed Burns was lobbying for a raise and asked Colson to put his efforts out to the press. Even though Colson agreed he would do it, he explained he had no intention of carrying out the order, because he knew that Burns wanted the raise to be put into effect after he left the Chairman post. The next morning Colson went to Haldeman and said “Bob this isn’t a good idea…we should not do that”, but Haldeman exclaimed “you have your orders, go do it”. 263 Colson saw that as “a case where [he] was being wise for once, which wasn’t all that common, and [Haldeman] was saying, “no no, go for it. And that happened…frequently”. 264 Colson happened “to remember that [incident] vividly because it turned out to be a very bad thing…The story went up, and of course it was false, and discredited, and it came out that he had planted that story”. 265 Colson concluded that the result of that matter was “bad for Nixon” and “bad for the country”. 266

260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
When Garment was asked in his oral history interview, how he believed Nixon could have become involved in Watergate, he replied:

[Watergate was a] part of a set of activities that were of a highly questionable nature, either forced upon him by his Attorney General and friend, or by his staff, or by people taking his angry instructions and running with them to serve their own lunatic purposes.  

It is this human approach, the idea of a set of frail, mortal circumstances that lead to an event, which Garment also offered when explaining why he was no longer shocked by each disclosure while he was legally representing the president during the Watergate trials:

Of course one of the features of these events, or series of events, was that one event hardens you to the next event, so you reach a point where you become psychologically numb, so that nothing is that much of a surprise.

Garment saw many of the Watergate players as “victims of their own aimless activities”, in that they were hostages to the various historical forces they thought they could control, but could not. Garment believed “Nixon understood that, when he finally came to thinking about it and writing about it”. Together these statements sum up the rationale of the Precedent and Context school: that those around Nixon had misconstrued his analytical process for executing orders; and on the level of the actors involved, one small problem led to another, which eventually snowballed out of control until Watergate was the result.

Many of those who follow the Nixon at Centre and Power and Personality lines of thinking view the White House tapes as evidence of both Nixon’s impact on Watergate, as well as evidence of his abuse of power. However, those who use Precedent and Context as markers for interpreting Nixon’s presidential legacy argue that the White House tapes made issues seem more powerful and incriminating to those who heard them. This had the effect of magnifying Nixon’s role and misdeeds. For example, Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Michael Conway, believed the tapes had a powerful but superfluous impact on the House Judiciary Committee members. Conway explained that when the committee first heard the tapes in an executive session “they were startled”, because there had been “a tremendous

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268 Ibid.
269 Ibid.
build up” causing “so much hype” that it was like “a new movie [was] coming out”.\textsuperscript{270} Every time the tapes were played, they just had a disproportionate impact”.\textsuperscript{271} “In every instance the information was more powerful and incriminating hearing it than reading it”, Conway argued, even though the transcripts the Committee made were “absolutely accurate”.\textsuperscript{272}

Conway noted one occasion where reading the transcript distorted the meaning of the tape. Nixon and his advisers were talking “about making payments to people to be quiet” when “someone said after a particularly incriminating statement, ‘watch out Mr President, you’ll be hurt’, and Nixon said ‘no I can take care of it myself’”.\textsuperscript{273} “It looked terrible on the printed page”, Conway said, but when he actually “heard that tape” he realised Nixon was “moving around the room…and knocked something over…there was a [loud] clatter, and someone said ‘watch out Mr President you’ll be hurt’, and he said ‘I can take care of myself’”.\textsuperscript{274} “That was the only example where it was more benign to hear the tape”, Conway contended, but 99 times out of a hundred the tapes were actually much more powerful and…incriminating”.\textsuperscript{275} Likewise, Conway’s colleague on the staff, Richard Gill, claimed the tapes portrayed a clandestine quality that was not evident in the transcripts:

\begin{quote}
The tone of it, the conspiratorial, almost locker room talk about how…do we fix this, and we can get to him this way. It’s something that you have to hear in the tone as well as the words on the paper that is shocking.\textsuperscript{276}
\end{quote}

The effect of listening to the tapes has been described by a House Judiciary Committee Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Jeffrey Banchero, who was given the task of developing transcripts of the tapes for the Committee. Banchero outlined that there are many reasons why the tapes are “shocking” to listeners, and that one could be “surprised on a number of different levels”.\textsuperscript{277} On a superficial level it is “surprising to hear the President of the United States on tape…to hear a tape of the day in the life of the president…no-one knew this could be, and all of a sudden it was”.\textsuperscript{278} On another level, Nixon “had a way of speaking” to which

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{270} Michael Conway recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2009.  
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{275} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{276} Richard Gill recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 30th 2011.  
\textsuperscript{277} Jeffrey Banchero recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 28th 2011.  
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid.}
“the people that knew him publicly” were not privy. 279 “He spoke in a different way on the tapes”, Banchero said. 280 “Then there was the expletives”, the portions of the tapes that were deleted, and “the substance of the tapes themselves, the comments on Watergate”. 281 Finally, and particularly for the Impeachment Inquiry staff, “there was the difference between the White House transcripts” of the tapes and the ones that the House Judiciary Committee” put together. 282 As all of the members on the Judiciary Committee were lawyers, they knew the importance of evidence, and they found it “shocking” that the White House could put forth transcripts that were different from what was actually on the tapes. 283 Banchero also highlighted that, on occasion, the tapes brought out emotions in the listener that could alter the meaning of the content. 284 For this reason, Special Counsel to the Impeachment Inquiry, John Doar, did not listen to the tapes; instead he only worked with the transcripts, as he felt that it was the statements that were important, and did not want Nixon’s voice to get in the way of what was actually being said. Collectively, these considerations may have come to bear on Nixon for not wanting to give up the tapes. 285

For Price, the problem with the White House tapes was that they did not effectively show Nixon’s analytical process at work, but rather magnified Nixon’s anger. What was left out was the rational decision that Nixon may have made somewhere down the line. This in turn, Price believed, had an effect on the way Nixon has been perceived by the nation, and the way his character and images of Watergate have been exaggerated:

One of the many problems with the tapes [was] because [Nixon would] say ‘we’ll do this’, but it wasn’t decided until it was done, because he would always be re-examining from several different directions and changing his mind…I can think of a lot of conversations I’ve had that I wouldn’t want to have made public. 286

279 Ibid.
280 Ibid.
281 Ibid.
282 Ibid.
283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
285 Ibid.
In relation to the transcripts of the White House tapes, Price argued that “a lot of the blanks...may have [been] filled in incorrectly”.287

Like Price, Impeachment Inquiry staff member, Joseph Woods, argued that the White House tapes are one-dimensional and can very easily be misinterpreted:

There were so many grunts and umms and errs that I think the opportunity for misinterpretation of the meaning of things is tremendous, [particularly if] there’s some visual communication that’s going on...288

Interestingly, Woods stated that when he listened to the tapes they actually put him to “sleep”:

I wondered if that was the way that government affairs at the highest level were conducted, [and] wondered if anything much gets accomplished.289

Colson agreed with Woods: “the problem with the tapes is they are one dimensional...they won’t tell you everything".290 As a result of spending “a lot of time public speaking”, Colson claimed he had learned that “body language”, “facial expressions”, and “the emphasis you put on things” is far more important “than just the words...you hear”.291 Colson also highlighted the danger of “listen[ing] to a conversation out of context” and the impact this action has on one’s ability to “understand” the “real intent...of [a] conversation”.292 More importantly, the two things that Colson believed did not come through to listeners of the tapes were “when Nixon was kidding”, which he did “a lot”, as well as “when [Nixon] was playing devil’s advocate”:

You won’t know when he was fermenting the kind of disagreement within the staff that got him the kind of opinion he wanted to hear, and there is a lot of that that you can’t take from the tapes.293

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287 Ibid.
288 Joseph Woods recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 27th 2011.
289 Ibid.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid.
Ultimately, figures like Price, who see Nixon as a creature influenced by Precedent and Context, perceive the president as a misunderstood character. They argue that critics have often overlooked his talent and the sacrifices and challenges that Nixon had overcome to be president. It is these factors which they believe need to be remembered when appropriately evaluating Nixon the man, and his presidency. As Price was being interviewed for the Oral History Project, Naftali commented: “It’s a challenge I think for historians to understand the complexity of the man”. Naftali then asked Price to comment on “what [historians] usually miss” when they evaluate Nixon. Price replied pragmatically:

I think they actually miss [Nixon’s] phenomenal analytical intelligence and the seriousness of purpose, the habit of looking at things from 17 different angles and trying to figure out what to do. I think they miss the vastness of the things that he had to deal with, and that he had to balance among. I think they often miss the challenges of the political environment in which he had to try to get something done, and of the international environment of which he had to get something done. None of this was simple...[and]...in that office you have to do a lot of things you otherwise wouldn’t do in order to get the important things done. You have to make a lot of compromises, you have to, in some cases, sacrifice a lot of virtue. You may not have to sacrifice virgins, but you may have to sacrifice virtue sometimes. And that is the only way to get things done in the real world. And it is the real world, and a lot of the critics tend to forget that the world is real.294

The Precedent and Context view of the administration’s presidential legacy

Those who are sympathetic to the views of the Precedent and Context school argue that the Nixon presidency and Watergate need to be portrayed in a more balanced way. Their efforts may be seen as an example of the tendency in American historiography to rehabilitate presidents who might be deemed to have been poor in the past; one example may be found in the scholarship of President Harry Truman. Those who abide by the Precedent and Context view may be said to see individual actors as minimal figures in a broader context of historical forces—material, economic, or social—which occur outside of their control. They grapple with the problem of historical determinism and the nature of the effect of individuals

293 Ibid.
294 Raymond K. Price, Jr. recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, Paul Musgrave, and David
on history discussed by Sidney Hook in *The Hero in History*, when he asked whether men determine history or if history determines men? Ultimately Hook contended that history is the result of the interaction of men and their environment; “determined by its actors themselves, within the limits set negatively by the rest of nature”. Stephen Skowronek put forth a similar argument in *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*, which “addresses [the capacities of] presidents as agents of political change”. Skowronek concluded that “structure plays some role in the analysis of leadership” By placing more emphasis on structure than agency, advocates of the Precedent and Context view contend that a historical figure’s role, in this instance Nixon, can be exaggerated.

To exemplify this point these advocates point to the humanness behind the errors of Watergate and illustrate the affair as an emotional tragedy for the people involved. Although Carl Bernstein of *The Washington Post* may not be one who abides by such a view, toward the end of his oral history interview, he alluded to Precedent and Context themes. He stressed the importance of displaying the human side of the Watergate story, one which portrays “a reflection of Richard Nixon’s life, and his aspirations, and his family, and his accomplishments, and his failures”; an image which newspapers “aren’t so good” at portraying, Bernstein conceded. Bernstein reflected on the night of August 8th 1974 when Nixon announced his resignation. He noted that the Post’s publisher, Katharine Graham, his editor, Benjamin Bradlee, and his colleague, Bob Woodward, watched the unfolding events in silence:

> I think we were exhausted and awed by the knowledge that we had had a role in this and that it had come to this, and the human dimension of it was also evident, that this was personally tragic. That it did almost have the elements of classic tragedy in some way, given what this man had spent his life trying to do, and all along there had been this human element of the girls and Pat, and so, [there was] utter silence.

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297 Carl Bernstein recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, 22 October 2007.

298 Ibid.
Safire, too, highlighted the emotion he felt when the resignation was announced. He stated that it was a “tough moment” for him:

*Because you don’t just remember that moment, you remember it in light of….the good times and the opportunities and the defences that you put up against hateful attacks. And [Nixon] did a lot for me in opening up doors for my life, and so I felt down, that was a down moment.*

Similarly Cheney saw Watergate as “a great tragedy for the nation and for President Nixon certainly, and his family”, but attempted to weigh the affair against Nixon’s foreign policy feats in his overall assessment of Nixon’s presidential legacy:

*[Nixon] had done some things very well as president, I was proud to be part of his administration. I thought a lot of what he accomplished with respect to China and the war in Vietnam and so forth…[and] what he was able to do with the Russians and the Soviets”, he “managed a number of very complicated problems very well and I think he was a very good foreign policy president, but obviously in this one area, in terms of…Watergate, we ended up with, it was a real drama for the country.*

Bruce Whelihan, Staff Assistant for the Nixon White House press office, came at the issue of Nixon’s presidential legacy from a different angle. He highlighted the efforts of the staff in the administration and contended that there were many staffers that served the country well. It is for this reason that he saw the conclusion of the Nixon presidency as a tragedy. Whelihan cried during his oral history interview, when discussing all of the great people with whom he had worked and what ended up happening to them collectively. His emotional display, like Warren’s and Chapin’s, who also cried in their interviews, shows that they had very high hopes for the administration and were really saddened by the events that transpired. Watergate was seen as an unnecessary event given that the Nixon presidency was doing such a great job and their fond memories of their time working in the Nixon White House made it hard to believe that the affair could have occurred.

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301 Bruce Whelihan recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 10th 2009.
Some like Odle argued that if it were not for Watergate, the Nixon presidency and their re-election campaign would have been seen as the most effective in history:

*Even with Watergate it has been argued that it was the first time that the Republicans got out the vote better than the Democrats. It was said that some senior Democrats said ‘This was the first time the Republican’s beat us at our own game’.*

Domestic council staffer Frank Zarb also believed that Watergate had disproportionately affected Nixon’s presidential legacy: “If it weren’t for the events of Watergate, it would have gone down as one of the best presidencies in our history...The quality of the Cabinet was outstanding.”

In contrast to subscribers to the Power and Personality way of thinking, those who claim Precedent and Context should be taken into consideration when evaluating Nixon’s legacy argue that the lesson of Watergate should centre on that fact that Nixon resigned, was pardoned, and the presidency still ran smoothly throughout this time period. Precedent and Context advocates ultimately contend that one should not judge until they have walked a mile in another person’s shoes. Drawing on what this means for the legacies of the Nixon presidency and Watergate, proponents of the Precedent and Context school ask that observers look at the entire historical context, and steer away from letting emotion play the most significant role in judging the effectiveness of a president or an administration.

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Chapter 5
The Nixon as Victim School of Watergate Thought

The Nixon as Victim school has had a small, outlier presence within Watergate’s historiography. The three groups which dominate the school—conspiracy theorists, Nixon loyalists, and legacy extremists—have consistently sought to highlight the role of external forces on the Nixon administration, accentuate Nixon’s beneficial traits and policies, or absolve Nixon of his Watergate sins. What these three groups have in common is their view that Nixon did not play the dominant role in instigating the Watergate Affair; however, their perspectives differ on whether Nixon deserved his fate. In an attempt to demonstrate this thesis I will again be drawing on the fresh narratives presented in the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum’s oral histories.

This chapter contains six sections, starting with a portrayal of the Nixon as Victim school’s conception, highlighting the key players who contributed to its solidification, and pinpointing the way the school may be characterised.

Next the key themes the school allude to will be depicted, outlining the different groups, which they argue have had an effect on Watergate’s emergence: the Eastern establishment, the press, the Kennedys, Watergate investigative groups, and the intelligence bodies. Advocates within the school have labelled these groups as ‘enemies’ of Nixon. Illustrating where the hatred of Nixon within the nation stems, those who subscribe to the Nixon as Victim school use this discussion to highlight how the actions of these groups affected Nixon’s presidency. The themes discussed in this section are used as a backdrop for the remainder of the chapter—a portrayal of the Nixon as Victim’s perception of the Watergate Affair that surfaced from the oral accounts.

This story consists of three sections, each stemming from the thematic discussion presented, and showing how those who promote the Nixon as Victim interpretation have attempted to make sense of the Watergate events. Sections three and four detail the role the ‘Berlin Wall’ played within the Nixon presidency and will argue that rogue decision-making existed in the Nixon White House which made it possible for the Watergate break-in to occur. In the fifth section the actions of renegade staffers in the Nixon administration will be highlighted. It will be argued that the Nixon as Victim school, in their theory of Watergate, emphasises the
behaviour of those who acted without presidential authority, thereby focusing on matters external to Nixon, and pushing the examination of Watergate causality away from the president.

In the final section of this chapter I will conclude with a discussion of the lessons of Watergate that this cohort cites in their narratives. Nixon is portrayed as a pawn in a game out of his control, and it is concluded that he was used as a scapegoat to take the fall for the country’s ills. Nixon as Victim sympathisers see Nixon’s resignation as detrimental to the country, and argue that his potential was frustrated.

**Origins**

The Nixon as Victim school emerged from the views of those who reject conventional Watergate wisdom and believe the external forces at play in the Watergate Affair need to be recognised. The claims of such advocates have generally been categorised as ‘conspiracy theories’, and have their roots in the views of Nixon, as well as Watergate insiders Harry Robbins (HR) Haldeman, Nixon’s chief of Staff, John Ehrlichman, Nixon’s Special Assistant for Domestic Affairs, and Nixon’s Attorney General and CREEP campaign chairman, John N. Mitchell. The beliefs of these men follow on from the tradition that Richard Hofstadter identified in his article *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*: “I call it the paranoid style simply because no other word adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind.” Hofstadter discussed the role that conspiracies have played in American political history since the 1700s, beginning with the hysteria over “Masonry” and “Illuminism”, the panic over “disguised Jesuit agents”, “little-known papal delegates” of the Catholic Church, and “shadowy international bankers of the monetary conspiracies”, leading on to the “paranoia” present in Hofstadter’s time: that of the Communist threat.

Yet the type of conspiracy thinking present in the views of the Nixon as Victim school of thought differs in their orientation. Instead of fearing the actions of minorities in their supposed attempt to possess the American nation by force or manipulation of hearts and minds, endorsers of the Nixon as Victim view see the threat as arising from within

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governmental institutions and stemming from groups and individuals in American society that already have power. Hofstadter saw the beginnings of this attitude too, in 1950s America, illustrating it as an evolved strain of the paranoid style. For Hofstadter, then, this was the voice of the “modern right wing” who found “conspiracy to be betrayal from on high”, emanating not from “outsiders and foreigners as of old but major statesmen who are at the very centres of American power”.  

The major factor which has instigated the presence of conspiracy theorists in Watergate’s historiography is the existence of gaps in Watergate knowledge, which can be traced back to the night of November 14th 1973, when White House lawyers, Joseph Fred Buzhardt, Leonard Garment and Charles Alan Wright heard the now notorious 18 and a 1/2 minute gap on the White House tape recordings. It was later established that the gap was conveniently placed at a time when President Nixon and Haldeman were discussing the arrests which transpired at the Watergate complex. Apart from this gap, two missing tapes were identified from the list of recordings subpoenaed by Judge John Sirica, with the White House claiming the tapes never existed. Whether these tapes were deliberately destroyed is a question that has not been answered to this day, but what is clear is that there were other attempts that were made to ensure that certain parts of history were not ‘preserved’.

John Dean’s testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee revealed that Haldeman instructed his aide, Gordon Strachan, to destroy evidence from his office, including what Dean called “wiretap information from the Democratic National Committee” that could link the White House to the burglaries; Haldeman denied these claims in his 1978 memoirs The Ends of Power. In addition, the testimony of acting FBI director Patrick L. Gray before the Committee also revealed that he had burned folders of evidence given to him by Dean and Ehrlichman in late December 1972. These folders, which came out of Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt’s safe, contained: CIA psychological profiles of Pentagon Papers leaker, Daniel Ellsberg; pages from the Pentagon Papers; memos to and from Nixon’s Special Assistant for Public Liaison, Charles Colson; falsified top-secret diplomatic cables implicating the Kennedy administration in the 1963 assassination of Vietnamese President, Ngo Dinh Diem; and a dossier on the personal life of Senator Edward (Ted) Kennedy. It was later established that

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3 Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics, 81.
5 Evan Davis recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 29th 2011.
Hunt had been investigating the Kennedys’ chequered past, particularly the Chappaquiddick tragedy of 1968 in which Senator Kennedy drove his car into a lake, drowning his companion for the evening, Mary Joe Kopechne.

Lastly, from the time of Nixon’s resignation until President Gerald Ford implemented the Presidential Recording and Materials Preservation Act of 1974, when it was uncertain whether the Nixon White House documents would be turned over to Nixon as his personal property, 46 million pieces of paper and 950 reels of recording tape were being packed into boxes and stored throughout the White House and the Executive Office Building. It was brought to Ford’s attention that White House aides still loyal to Nixon were stuffing documents into burn bags at an extraordinary rate and the White House burn room, where documents are chemically destroyed, was overflowing with cartons of documents stacking up in the halls.⁷

It is impossible to know exactly what other attempts were made to alter Watergate’s historiography. Coupled with President Ford’s pardon of Nixon, and subsequent halt of the impeachment trial and further criminal investigations, it is clear that many of the mysteries of Watergate may never be solved. As District Attorney for the Watergate Grand Jury, Earl Silbert explained: “To this day, I think the question for the motive of the break-in is uncertain, to this day, 35 years later...”⁸ What is apparent is that the gaps in Watergate knowledge have not only provided avenues for analysis and theory development by conspiracy theorists, but have also solidified the Nixon as Victim tradition in Watergate studies. Nixon as Victim sympathisers see these gaps as proof that there are other factors involved in the scandal that have been swept under the Watergate rug, and argue that Watergate has not yet fully been explained. They tend to focus on what is not known about Watergate, with the origins of the Watergate break-in providing endless enthusiasm and opportunity for examination by advocates of the school.

Garment is one who promoted this view. He stated that with Watergate “there were so many strands and so many inner pressures, inner mysteries and forces that were going on”, and concluded that he didn’t believe it had “completely been dissected yet, despite all of the

⁸ Earl Silbert recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, September 17th 2008.
hundreds of books and articles". It must be noted here that Garment has the most complex set of views present in the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project. His assessments of the Nixon presidency are characteristic of all four schools of Watergate thought. In relation to this particular quote however, Garment contended there is a great deal we still don’t know about Watergate. Such a focus sits at odds with the views of those who subscribe to the Nixon at Centre and Power and Personality schools of thought, who put greater emphasis on what is known about Watergate: that Nixon participated in a cover-up, and abuse of presidential power took place, thus highlighting Nixon’s culpability in the Watergate Affair. There is evidence to suggest that by ignoring the cover-up proponents of the Nixon as Victim view tend to neglect the reason for Nixon’s departure from office. Yet, by doing so, they have been able to move away from placing the Watergate spotlight on Nixon, and instead point out that external elements need to be addressed.

The presence of the Nixon as Victim school within Watergate’s historiography differs in comparison to the other schools of thought, for we only see moments of its impact when a conspiracy theory emerges that captures the public’s imagination. Unlike the other schools and their arguments which have dominated the Watergate narrative at a certain point in time, and subsequently lost their influence, the Nixon as Victim’s presence has been sporadic for a number of reasons. Firstly, the documentary evidence used by conspiracy theorists is generally obtained through Freedom of Information rather than normal declassification channels, rendering the disclosure of evidence as random, not sequential. This has contributed to the school’s conspiratorial feel, given that evidence obtained in this manner appears to have been purposely buried and found to the detriment of the person or group that initially sought to hide the information. Another reason why the views of conspiracy theorists have remained on the fringe of Watergate’s historiography has to do with Nixon as Victim advocates raising more questions than they answer. Most of the work that emerges from this cohort is based on circumstantial evidence, displaying more a series of hypotheses rather than convincing conclusions. It has left this school starkly open to criticism as their credibility appears to be limited and their arguments unsubstantiated.

Ultimately, while new conspiracy theories constantly pop up, their influence is never strong enough to challenge the dominant views on Watergate’s legacy—particularly those endorsed by supporters of the Nixon at Centre and Power and Personality schools of Watergate.

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thought. Nevertheless, the emphasis initially put forth by Nixon and his closest aides has succeeded in widening the scope of Watergate studies beyond the conduct of Nixon and his administration, to encompass the actions of external groups and individuals, and their alleged impact on the scandal.

Although early on conspiracy theorists held a dominating presence within the Nixon as Victim school, more recent times have seen an influx of Nixon loyalists paying homage to the tradition. The Nixon loyalist cohort is generally made up of former Nixon administration staffers, as well as Nixon’s family and friends. They are distinguished by their strong focus on Nixon’s positive characteristics and impact of the Nixon presidency and their policies, as well as their lack of acknowledgement of Nixon’s negative personality traits or actions on the presidency and United States foreign policy. On most occasions Nixon loyalists attempt to rationalise Nixon’s misdeeds as president, like Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs, Peter Flanagan, who dismissed Watergate altogether, stating “the whole thing was just politics”. The arguments of the Nixon as Victim school differs in aim to those who tend to follow the Precedent and Context line of thinking; whose inclination is to provide balance to the story of Watergate and the portrayal of the Nixon presidency.

Nixon loyalists contend Nixon played an insignificant role in Watergate, and when faced with proof advising otherwise, are inclined to brush it off or choose not to focus on such evidence. For instance, Republican Senator during the Nixon administration, and long-time Nixon friend, Robert Dole, did not turn his back on Nixon after the release of the ‘Smoking Gun’ tape, when it was clear that “it was [all] over” for the Nixon administration. Instead, Dole refused to believe that Nixon was involved in Watergate and argued that the president should have burned the White House tapes because they were nobody’s business. Similarly, some who subscribe to the Nixon as Victim view do not give much weight to Watergate in the overall story of the Nixon Presidency. An example of this perspective may be seen in the interpretations of Raymond Price and Ed Nixon, who see the Watergate episode as unimportant and deserving little attention in their oral history interviews.

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10 Ibid.
The final group of Nixon as Victim sympathisers may be characterised as legacy extremists, since they have made a career out of building and shaping the legacy of the 37th President, in their effort to absolve Nixon of his Watergate sins. This objective was cemented with the establishment of the privately run Nixon Library and Museum in 1990. Although there existed an opportunity to display some of the pitfalls of the Nixon presidency in the Museum’s Watergate exhibit, Nixon’s downfall was portrayed as a coup d’état, emanating from Nixon’s detractors in the Senate Watergate and House Judiciary Committees, the Press, and the Watergate Special Prosecution Force. The exhibit argued that these groups had aimed to “reverse… the [election] decision of the people in November 1972”.\(^{14}\) It has been noted that in the beginning, only those who were considered ‘friends’ of Nixon were permitted to conduct research at the Nixon Library’s archives; notable figures such as Dean, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of *The Washington Post* were prevented from visiting and presenting at the Museum.\(^{15}\)

Other marked efforts of this cohort took place when the legislation enacted in response to Watergate placed presidential material in the hands of the government. This ensured they would not be destroyed. A legal battle ensued between Nixon and his loyalists, the state, archivists, scholars and advocacy groups, which lasted decades. The tug of war concerned Nixon’s privacy on one side and access to one of the richest and important documentary records in United States history, on the other. Although the materials deemed to be “private” and returned to Nixon during this time were finally deeded to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in 2007, amalgamating all of the Nixon materials, the battle over Nixon’s legacy did not end there. NARA brought the Nixon Library into the federal presidential system in 2006, promising strictly factual exhibits. This resulted in the updating of the library’s Watergate exhibit to provide an illustration of history that was not seen to be Nixon’s version of the events.

The Nixon Library’s newly appointed Director, Dr Timothy Naftali, argued that the two lessons the old Watergate exhibit projected were that: 1) “All presidents break the law and Nixon’s only crime was getting caught. Nixon was the victim of a double standard that JFK did not have to live up to”; 2) “The United States system of government is weak and can easily be


hijacked by partisan forces. The president should not have had to resign, but the Democrats wanted to undo the election." The previous proprietors of the Library, Naftali explained, the Nixon Foundation, developed a team they called ‘Search Light’, whose task was to counter the views that he and the Library’s NARA employed archival team produced for the exhibit. The Foundation promotes Nixon’s actions as not being unique, whilst emphasising his lack of knowledge of the break-in. They demonise Dean for making a deal for judicial protection and the press for acting to bring down the Nixon presidency, and see Nixon’s forced resignation as an unfortunate event.

The objections raised by the Foundation resulted in the exhibit’s refurbishment process taking over three years to complete. The force of the action taken by the Foundation to impart their views of Nixon being a victim on others, in an attempt to alter Nixon’s legacy throughout the Library’s history, has not only attracted criticism for seeming to exonerate Nixon for any wrongdoing whilst president, but has caused this cohort to be construed as fanatics. It is for this reason that this group may be seen as the radical branch of the Nixon as Victim view. Interestingly, the battle between the Nixon Foundation and the Nixon Library’s NARA team demonstrates two opposing views that have solidified in Watergate historiography: the Power and Personality and Nixon as Victim schools of thought. Their conflict over the content of the Watergate exhibit exemplifies each school’s attempts to create a stronger presence within the overall legacy of the Nixon presidency.

Legacy extremists draw on the roles played by Nixon’s ‘enemies’ in the media, the FBI and the CIA, the domestic and international sphere, as well as the staff of the Senate Watergate

18 Millers Centre, Watergate in Nixonland.
and House Judiciary Committees. They contribute alternative explanations to the Watergate problem, and provide an image of Nixon and his presidency that goes against the grain. Like those who use Context and Precedent as markers for interpreting Nixon’s legacy, those who endorse the Nixon as Victim mentality are also proponents of revisionism. Yet, it is the connection that has been made between the actions of Nixon’s adversaries and the downfall of the Nixon presidency that lies at the heart of the views of legacy extremists, who see Nixon as a victim, and is the cornerstone of their Watergate rationale.

Key themes

The Eastern establishment

Those who find Nixon to be history’s victim believe a hatred for him exists that can be traced back to his involvement in the trial of Alger Hiss, which disputed Hiss’s allegiance to the United States Communist Party during the period from 1933 to 1938.19 According to Whitaker Chambers—the short, stocky, rumpled Columbia drop-out, and confessed former Communist from a poor and troubled Philadelphia family—Hiss—a tall and handsome Harvard-trained lawyer—was a dedicated Communist engaged in espionage, even while working at the highest levels of the United States government. Hiss denied the claim and any membership to the Communist Party. Although many doubted Chambers’ story, Nixon, who was a member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities at the time, chose to pursue the claims.20

The Committee voted to make Nixon chair of a subcommittee that would seek to determine who was lying, Hiss or Chambers, at least on the question of whether they knew one another. The inquiry hit a turning point when Chambers produced 35mm film he hid in a hollowed-out pumpkin on his Maryland farm, including photographs of State and Navy Department documents, providing “strong evidence” that Chambers not only knew Hiss “long

after mid 1936…but also that Hiss engaged in espionage”.21 From this point on the debate had shifted from Hiss’s Communist allegiance to whether he was a Soviet spy. Fortunately for Hiss, the statute of limitations for espionage was five years and the incriminating evidence concerned documents passed over a decade earlier. However, the statute of limitations was not an issue “on the question of whether Alger Hiss committed perjury”.22

Hiss’ perjury trial began on May 31st 1949, with the defence team assembling an impressive batch of character witnesses from the ‘Eastern establishment’, who appeared on behalf of Hiss. “The list included two United States Supreme Court justices, a former Solicitor General, and both former (John W. Davis) and future (Adlai Stevenson) Democratic presidential nominees”.23 On the question of Hiss’s reputation, Justice Felix Frankfurter described it as “excellent”, whilst Justice Stanley Reed stated he had “never heard it questioned until these matters came up”.24 At the close of the second perjury trial on January 20th 1950 the jury found Hiss guilty on both counts, and on December 7th 1950, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed Hiss’s conviction. “Three months later, by a vote of four to two, the Supreme Court declined to review the case”.25 Congressman Nixon’s efforts on the case had the effect of catapulting him “to national fame”, and led to his election to the Senate and selection as running mate to General Dwight Eisenhower, who later became president, placing Nixon in the Vice-Presidential role.26

Many, who tend to abide by the view that Nixon was a victim of history, agree with the president’s argument that the Hiss case “left a residue of hatred and hostility toward [him]—not only among the Communists but also among substantial segments of the press and the intellectual community—a hostility which remains even today…”27 In *Six Crises*, Nixon described his role in the Hiss case as having a two-pronged effect. On the one hand, he “gained the deadly enmity” of Communist sympathisers who supported Hiss.28 On the other, he also came to be opposed by “the anointed apostles of anti-Communism in America” who “resented the fact” that he would “not go along with their extremes”. Instead they consistently

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
supported “what some of them consider[ed] to be ‘liberal’ international policies, like foreign aid, reciprocal trade, collective security pacts and adequate appropriations for information and Foreign Service programs”.29

Nixon believed the attitudes of these people to be hypocritical, since they would “speak up most vigorously about the threat of Communism at home”, while simultaneously “oppos[ing] programs designed to deal with the same threat abroad”.30 Nixon firmly believed that he experienced an “utterly unprincipled and vicious smear campaign” throughout his next 12 years in Washington’s “public service”, due to his involvement in the Hiss case. Nixon claimed he was accused of “bigamy, forgery, drunkenness, insanity, thievery, anti-Semitism, perjury”, and “the whole gamut of misconduct in public office, ranging from unethical to downright criminal activities”.31 These accusations were “hurled” at him, either “publicly” or via “whispering campaigns”, which he claimed were “even more difficult to counteract”.32 But perhaps more importantly, Nixon contended some Americans stated they disliked and “mistrust[ed]” him for no particular reason, apart from exclaiming in a confused manner that he was “mixed up with that Hiss character”.33

Nixon maintained that his support for ‘liberal’ policies internationally, coupled with his opposition of those who assumed a Communist ideology, spawned a widespread hatred towards him. Price and Nixon’s former Communications Director, Herb Klein, extended Nixon’s assumptions to justify their belief that the Hiss case created Nixon enemies among the American nation’s elite. Hiss “wasn’t just any communist spy”, Price explained, he was “a pillar of the Eastern establishment”. This meant that when Congressman Nixon pressed on to “nail” Hiss, Price said, this powerful group “all rallied to [Hiss’s] side...”.34 What made matters worse for Nixon, Price argued, was the “colourful” press coverage of the trial, which succeeded in portraying “the perceptions of anybody who was” involved as a “McCarthy[ist]”.35 For Price, then, “even though Nixon was the opposite of McCarthy in terms of method and everything else”, the efforts of the media had caused anybody who was “not a

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Communist” to be portrayed as a “McCarthyite”.36 Once this message had “carried over into...the public consciousness”, Nixon had to carry the “burden” throughout the remainder of this career, which made it increasingly difficult for him to “govern”.37

The result, Price added, was “a lingering hostility” directed towards Nixon that “pervaded the press, the media, [and] the news media”, with most of those who possessed this bias “tend[ing] to be unconscious of [their] own prejudices”. Although it is easy to “recognise the prejudices of others”, Price said, “we don’t” always “recognise our own”, which “is very true of the news media” who became “very upset” when they were “accused” of “prejudice” when it came to Nixon because they could not “see it” in themselves.38 Hubert Perry, a long-time friend of the Nixon family who attended school with Nixon in Whittier, concurred with Price’s views on Nixon’s adversaries within the nation’s elite. Perry observed that “they were out to get [Nixon]...from the get go”, all because he “wasn’t an Ivy League graduate and he picked on...Hiss who was...and I think from then on they were really out to get him”.39

Klein understood the matter in a different way. He argued that “Hiss was a great favourite of the press”, and although Nixon had a good reputation with the local Californian press, Hiss was a “popular figure” in Washington, and Nixon “was an unknown”.40 Since the press found it hard “to disbelieve Hiss”, they distrusted and disliked Nixon instead, Klein said.41 Given the context of the “McCarthy era” witch-hunt on Communists, Nixon thought “he had been treated as someone who was...trying to expose somebody, and people found it hard to believe that one of their favourite people, Alger Hiss, could do such things”.42 The result was that Nixon was “alienated” by “the Washington press”, Klein argued.43

Ed Nixon supported Price and Klein’s views, but also highlighted the effect that this problem had on the downfall of the Nixon presidency. Ed contended that the Hiss case created enemies for Nixon, which had increased in number since 1949 and conspired to bring him

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Hubert Perry recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 25th 2007.
40 Klein, like Garment, may be said to have views that are characteristic of a number of the different schools. In Herbert G. Klein recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and David Greenberg, February 20th 2007.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
down.44 Nixon had a “duty” to prosecute Hiss, as he was “elected” to do the job, Ed said.45 Yet, Nixon’s actions “created a whole cadre of haters who never forgave him for putting Hiss in jail for something so simple as perjury”.46 “There is no doubt about it. People have alluded to [this] many times”, Ed explained.47 Summing up, Ed Nixon stated: “So [Nixon] did it (indicted Hiss), [he] took a lot of heat, gained a lot of enemies, and they’ve multiplied since”.48

The press

For Ed Nixon, the hatred for Nixon that existed among the press ranks following the Hiss case resulted in his 1962 Californian Gubernatorial campaign loss. Connections were wrongfully made by the press between Richard and their brother Donald’s monetary loan from American business magnate, Howard Hughes, Ed maintained, and had detrimental effects. Although Donald obtained the loan to expand his business with Japanese entrepreneur, Aki Kawaguchi, the press alleged that Vice-President Nixon gave Hughes political favours in exchange for the funds.49 Ed saw the “Hughes loan” matter as “a joke”, explaining that his “mother [Hannah’s] property” on “East Whittier Boulevard” was used as collateral; “assessed at $425,000”.50 “So a $205,000 loan came out of the Hughes establishment to Nixon Incorporated” which “drew in all kinds of criticism” from those who believed Nixon “had arranged it”, which Ed argued was not the case.51 “Don arranged it, Dick wouldn’t do it, he wasn’t entrepreneurial enough”.52 Ed claimed that “Dick’s” name was “attached” to “Don’s” dealings with “Hughes” by the press but it “had nothing to do with Dick or any other special favour”.53 “When Don’s company went bankrupt, the property was taken for twice the value of the loan” and Hannah “was left with nothing but the house she lived in on Beach Boulevard”.54

Jonathan Aitken, author of the biography Nixon: A Life, is also not convinced Richard provided a quid pro quo to Hughes, even though he acknowledges Hughes may have initially

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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
given the loan with the impression that he would obtain political influence from Vice-President Nixon. Aitken noted that Attorney-General Robert Kennedy’s investigation into the matter uncovered no misdeeds on the part of the Nixon family, and the notion that Hughes gave Donald the loan in exchange for governmental favours assumes Richard had more power over the executive branch than he had. Aitken observed that the affair turned out to be a catastrophe, since Donald failed in his businesses, so “the resulting embarrassment all round destroyed any prospects for influence peddling”. Aitken also contended that Richard was shocked when he learned about the loan and encouraged Donald to give the money back. Nixon’s other biographer, Stephen Ambrose, was similarly unable to find evidence that Hughes received political favours in exchange for the loan. Ed highlighted how Donald “blamed himself for [Richard’s] loss of the ‘62 Governor’s race”, but rejected this view, stating he “was not the cause” of his brother’s defeat. Ed believed the source of the problem to be “haters”—in this instance within the press—who he explained “cause losses for everybody”, and continued to have a destructive effect on his brother Richard’s career, particularly during his presidency.

In relation to the image of Watergate that has been cemented in its legacy, Noam Chomsky argued in The Essential Chomsky that the press emphasised Watergate over other important contemporary events, and omitted parts of the Watergate story in their newspaper reporting, which resulted in gaps in our Watergate knowledge. Chomsky observed that the news of Watergate came out simultaneously with the Church Committee Hearings’ revelation of the FBI’s COINTELPRO program, a series of covert operations that had been running from 1956 to 1971. The operation was designed to execute surveillance and infiltrate, discredit, and disrupt domestic political organisations, using methods including forgery of documents, planting false media reports, harassment, wrongful imprisonment, illegal violence, and assassination. Yet, in comparison to Watergate, COINTELPRO received minimal coverage in 1973 and is still largely unknown today. For Chomsky, the media’s actions may only be attributed to their subservience to power at the time.

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58 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
In addition, Chomsky highlighted in *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies*, and *Manufacturing Consent*, that the ‘corporate run’ media emphasised Watergate over more important issues such as the secret bombing of Cambodia and Laos. Chomsky saw the “decision to focus attention on Watergate, hailed by the media as their proudest moment, [as] yet another cynical exercise in the service of power”.63 Chomsky pointed out that although Congress knew that the Cambodian incursion had killed hundreds of thousands of people, they only became outraged when they learned Nixon had usurped their authority.64 “It is one thing to attack the left, the remnants of the Communist Party, a collapsing liberal opposition, or those in the bureaucracy who might impede the evolving state policy of counterrevolutionary intervention”, Chomsky said, but it is something else to use these same weapons on those with power in American society.65 Chomsky brings his argument back to the break-in at the DNC headquarters, which he argued “represented powerful domestic interests, solidly based in the business community”.66 For Chomsky, “the watchdog only began to bark when it threatened the privileged”.67 Interestingly, although the examination of Chomsky’s works on Nixon show that he was never a fan of the president, he could still argue that Nixon might have been misunderstood in a certain context.68

Making a similar point on the role of the media, Edward Jay Epstein argued in *Agency of Fear* that it is highly likely that knowledgeable members of the Washington Press Corps knew of the power struggle going on between Nixon and executive agency officials during his presidency, yet “the Watergate Affair was still reported in completely moralistic terms”.69 The reason for this, Epstein contended, is because doing so would mean that journalists’ sources would need to be named. And it has been widely noted that the “heroised investigative reporters, Woodward and Bernstein, established a new low watermark for using unnamed sources”;70 both in their newspaper reporting of the Watergate scandal and in *All the President’s Men*, which described their role in Watergate’s legacy.71 Although the journalistic

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
67 Chomsky and Herman, *Manufacturing Consent*, 300.
duo won the Pulitzer Prize for their coverage of Watergate, they omitted information concerning any struggle within the American government where informants may have been using journalists to embarrass their opponents.

The press had the opportunity to examine why leaks and disclosures were being made to them by officials of the Nixon government, allowing them to question the motives of those planting stories. Yet, it is likely that such an examination would only expose the press as conduits for leakers seeking to publicise their views, while possibly having ulterior motives for leaking information other than educating the nation on the inner workings of the Nixon administration. Essentially the actions of the press resulted in knowledge of the institutional rivalry, then evident in Washington D.C, not being discussed in detail until the advent of the Nixon as Victim school. Consequently, it was less likely that such a portrayal would penetrate Watergate’s legacy, since the Nixon at Centre and Power and Personality schools of thought had already largely been cemented in Watergate’s historiography. One such example of an examination of the power struggle evident in the nation’s capital during the Nixon era may be seen in Tian-Jia Dong’s Understanding Power through Watergate: The Washington Collective Power Dynamics.⁷²

For Chomsky, Epstein and Dong, Watergate concerned a power struggle playing out in Washington and the greater nation of the United States, which was perhaps executed or used to bring Nixon down, even if it was not portrayed this way in the press. Summing up Nixon’s relationship with the press, Klein’s Deputy Director of White House Communications who later went on to serve as Deputy Chairman for CREEP, Jeb Stuart Magruder, explained:

_There were obviously some people in the press that were supportive, and some newspapers were supportive, but on the whole, both the news editorials and the TV were not pro-Nixon people._⁷³

The Kennedys

There is a cohort within the loose grouping of scholars and historical actors that subscribe to the Nixon as Victim mentality, that are also inclined to argue that the Kennedy clan took

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action to destroy Nixon’s presidency. This was first largely publicised in the Nixon Library and Museum’s new Watergate exhibit, which argued that Nixon believed he faced a conspiracy of former Kennedy and Johnson officials who sought to leak classified documents, such as the Pentagon Papers, to destroy his Vietnam policy; however discussion about the role of the Kennedy cohort began much earlier.\(^{74}\)

For some, the role of the Kennedys in the story of Nixon’s political career began during his early campaign efforts, where it has been noted that a man by the name of Dick Tuck routinely made attempts to destroy Nixon’s election endeavours. We then see the mention of John F. Kennedy buying the 1960 election, only winning by a very narrow margin, with Nixon not taking action to call for a recount as he believed it would be detrimental to the country. Throughout his entire presidency, Nixon believed he was never given the benefit of the doubt or painted in a balanced manner in the press as the Kennedys were. The mere fact that Ted Kennedy’s involvement in the Chappaquiddick incident did not get much play in the press, when he fled the scene of a fatal crime, is seen as evidence of this perception. During the Watergate scandal a Kennedy supporter was employed as Special Prosecutor to investigate the scandal, with Kennedy family members present as Archibald Cox was sworn in, leading Nixon to believe the inquiry was biased.

In *The Secret Plot to Make Ted Kennedy President: Inside the Real Watergate Conspiracy*, Geoffrey Shepard, who also served on the Domestic Council in the Nixon administration, argued that Ted Kennedy and his allies used Watergate to take down Nixon in order to usher in another Kennedy as president of the United States.\(^{75}\) Shepard observed that it didn’t take long for the Kennedy clan to act after the Watergate break-in. They sought to exaggerate and prolong the scandal, not merely to destroy Nixon, but to undermine the entire Republican Party and pave the way for Ted to become president in 1976.\(^{76}\) Shepard claimed the Kennedys worked closely with the media to attack Nixon’s character, which has succeeded in tarnishing the nation ever since.\(^{77}\)

Importantly, Shepard illustrated the depth of the Kennedy conspiracy. He believed it included members and staffs of the Senate Watergate Committee, the House Judiciary Committee,

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\(^{74}\) The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, *Watergate Exhibit*.


\(^{76}\) Ibid.
the Justice Department, and the office of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force, who acted to delay and postpone indictments and avoid bringing to trial those who Shepard considered to be the real Watergate criminals. Shepard concluded that the actions of Kennedy cronies dwarf that of the Nixon administration they savaged. Advocates of the Nixon as Victim view, like Shepard, resent that the Kennedy era is often referred to as ‘Camelot’, whilst at the same time Nixon is portrayed as a presidential demon.

The Watergate investigations

Shepard identified another area where Nixon was unfairly treated during the Watergate investigation. One of the issues highlighted by participants of the Nixon Library’s Oral History Project was the discrepancy between the size of the prosecution and defence teams working on the Watergate case. Although sympathetic to the Power and Personality way of thinking, Presidential Counsel during the Watergate trial, Richard Hauser, is able to offer some insight on this issue, stating that in comparison to the prosecution team, the White House defence team was minuscule. Hauser claimed the “House Impeachment Inquiry”, the “Senate Watergate Committee” and the Watergate “Special Prosecutors Office” all had staff that were significant in size, and each of these groups were taking the Nixon administration to trial in separate hearings. This matter was compounded by the incidence of “private litigants all over the country...filing suits against the president” with “civil litigation” and “criminal trials” all needing defence to be prepared. The “numbers were big”, Hauser maintained, and the defence team was “a very small group by comparison”, even by what “subsequent White House Counsel’s office’s had [at] the best of times”. But the fact of the matter was that “White House Counsel work had to go on as well”, Hauser said, which points to the presidential defence team fighting a losing battle from the beginning.

Garment also made reference to the size of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force: “I mean it was a huge group of 100 lawyers and they were all hell bent on nailing Nixon”. Garment’s assistant on the White House Counsel staff, Douglas Parker, also highlighted how their office was handicapped by having no investigative resources, which constrained their

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77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
defence capabilities of the president during the Watergate trials, and had the effect of making it impossible to find out what the facts of the case were. Additionally, since talking to people could be misconstrued as obstructing justice, the White House Counsel staff was perceivably working with their hands tied behind their backs. 83

The other problem Parker observed related to his and his colleague’s lack of “access to all the material in the White House”. 84 This was the case with “Haldeman’s notes” which were “in a safe” that only Haldeman “had the combination to”, and was “under guard by the FBI and later by the executive protection service”.85 This meant that “Haldeman had access to his notes whenever he felt [it was] necessary”, even “long after he left” the presidency, but the president’s lawyers “did not”.86 Parker argued that this working situation was not conducive to him providing “adequate representation to [his] client”.87 Likewise, when it came time to examine Dean’s testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee, the Counsel staff’s lack of knowledge of and access to the White House tapes made it extremely difficult to compare Dean’s statements to the facts.88 These circumstances have generated sympathy among Nixon as Victim advocates, and have provoked the notion that Nixon’s defence team never stood a chance.

In relation to the Impeachment Inquiry, senior adviser for the House Judiciary Committee, Robert Sack, who has largely sought to provide balance to views of Nixon and Watergate, stated he was “very much concerned” about what he initially perceived as Inquiry staff who were “out to make a case” against Nixon, instead of establishing whether there was a case at all.89 Sack used a metaphor to describe this issue: “if you’re told to look for a needle in a haystack, you’re going to find a needle. You’re out there, you’re not going to say, ‘well I looked so thoroughly and there was nothing there’”, this is “against human nature”.90 Sack outlined that he maintained these reservations when he was tasked by Chief Counsel for the House Judiciary Committee, John Doar, with being the first staff member to listen to the White House tapes, and find out if there was anything worth pursuing.91 Sack explained that

83 Douglas Parker recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, 1 September 16th 2011.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Robert Sack interview by Timothy Naftali, September 27th 2011.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
while he was carrying out this assignment he worried about the possibility of not finding anything they could use, resulting in people a “thousand years from now” looking back and wondering “what the hell [they] were doing [there]”.92

Congressman Trent Lott, who served on the House Judiciary Committee, concurred with Sack further arguing that the areas in which the Inquiry staff were examining, that ended up being drafted as articles of impeachment, led him to see the investigation as a witch-hunt against Nixon.93 In particular, Lott cited the articles concerning Nixon’s approval of the Cambodian incursion and a tax deduction Nixon obtained for the donation of his presidential papers, as examples of “political gambit”.94 Lott saw the actions of the Committee as an effort to “tarnish” or “try to get President Nixon”, which “was just mean spirited, partisan Democratic politics”.95 Lott outlined that he had the opportunity to sit “over on the Democratic side” of the “House as a staff member”, but was very uncomfortable. He not only disagreed with their “philosophical” approach, but realised there was a lot of “negativeness” and “mean spiritedness”.96

During the Impeachment Inquiry, Lott “resisted right across the board, [and] was identified as one of the 10 hard heads on the Judiciary Committee”, since “not all of the Republicans on the Committee took his position”.97 Lott, too, changed his mind when he read a transcript of the ‘Smoking gun’ tape, but explained that although he realised “one article of impeachment for obstruction of justice was going to be unavoidable”, he would not support the others that he felt were exaggerated and unnecessary.98 Lott’s experience on the “Nixon impeachment hearing” was a “defining moment in [his] political career”. It taught him about the “ugly” and “partisan side of Congress”, as well as “how the media conducts itself”.99 Lott’s involvement in the Committee resulted in him being “a pretty tough partisan for a long time”:

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92 Ibid.
93 Trent Lott recorded interview by Timothy Naftall, December 8th 2008.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
I did not respect the Democrats, I lost a lot of respect for a lot of them, and I developed quite a dislike for them in the House, and it took me probably about 20 years to get over that.”

The intelligence bodies

The alleged role of the CIA as the true conduits of the Watergate scandal has been widely noted by scholars who see Nixon as a victim. Precedent and Context proponents, like Victor Lasky and Fred Thompson, also subscribe to this view, both pointing to CIA foreknowledge of the break-in plot that failed to be pursued by Senator Ervin during the Senate Watergate hearings. The role of the CIA has also been highlighted by the participants of the Oral History Project, such as Price, who argued that the CIA had their paws all over Watergate, which resulted in the Nixon White House not being able to properly understand the Watergate problem. Given the Nixon administration was so unsure about what it was they needed to get “on top of”, they found it increasingly difficult to fully grasp the nature of the affair. “New things kept popping out of the woodwork”, Price claimed. Once Watergate was over and he had time to reflect and “learn more about it” after he was “safely out of the way”, he realised that “so many things floated in entirely different directions from the White House” and “there seemed to be CIA connections in everything”.

For instance, the Watergate break-in was “planned in a public relations firm that was a CIA front” and Howard Hunt “had his own direct line to the director of the CIA throughout” the entire operation. Also “every target that the plumbers hit”, from “Ellsberg’s psychiatrist” to the “publisher of the Las Vegas Surf”, was of “more of interest” to the “CIA” than to the Nixon administration. Price pointed out that there was even information that surfaced at a later date that uncovered a “CIA conspiracy” in a joint effort with “the Mafia...to assassinate

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100 Ibid.
102 Although Price mentions the supposed efforts of Nixon’s detractors in the press and the CIA as having an effect on his presidency, for the most part Price seeks to provide balance to the depictions of Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate, which is why I do not consider him to be a Nixon as Victim proponent. See Raymond K. Price, Jr. recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, Paul Musgrave, and David Greenberg, April 6th 2007.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
Cuban Watergate burglar, Eugenio Rolando Martinez, supported Price’s contentions, and revealed his involvement with the CIA throughout the entire Watergate Affair. Martinez enlisted with the CIA officially in 1961. Although he was already involved with the CIA when he was a boat captain, this made it official. Martinez signed an agreement of secrecy which he upheld, even when Judge John Sirica specifically asked him if he had worked for the CIA. Martinez was later prosecuted for perjury and was issued an extra five years on top of a 40 to 50 year sentence. During his oral history interview with Naftali he claimed that, although he was dishonest at the time, he was now disclosing all he knew. Martinez strongly affirmed he was “convinced” Hunt was still working for the CIA during the Watergate episode, since Hunt was employed at “Mullen and Company”, a Public Relations firm that was a CIA front, when he approached Martinez about covert employment for the Nixon White House. Despite Hunt’s explanation that he was “retired” from the CIA, Martinez recognised there was a possibility Hunt could be lying, as he had also stated he was no longer working for the agency, when in fact he was:

> When [the CIA] got rid of all of my friends and those that were [working] with me they gave me my severance pay and gave me an emblem, so [during the Watergate Affair] I continued working for the CIA...[and] I did not believe Hunt when he told me he was retired.¹¹¹

Another point that raises questions in reference to the CIA’s role in Watergate was provided by Domestic Council staffer, Raymond Waldmann. He argued that one cannot be certain Nixon ordered an action just because the CIA carried it out. Waldemmann highlighted the deficiencies in the argument that Nixon must have ordered the CIA to block the FBI’s investigation into the money trail, because this action was executed. Notwithstanding the

¹⁰⁷bid.
¹⁰⁸bid.
¹⁰⁹bid.
‘Smoking Gun’ tape provided evidence of Nixon’s authorisation of CIA participation, Waldmann discussed how the office of the president was able to retain some degree of plausible deniability when it came to the approval of operations. Waldmann stated that appeals were made to the “Attorney-General and his staff” about national issues and concerns by the “intelligence agencies” and “people in the government generally” when they were concerned about “something that was not appropriate”. Yet this was done to keep issues “out” of the “front pages” of the “press”, and to keep matters from becoming “political issues”.

Yet, as Waldmann explained, although “these people” raising concerns “work[ed] for the president” on any given matter, “the specific actions that the CIA was undertaking did not necessarily have his approval”. In other words, “he is not the one, or the vice-president is not the one who would be authorising a particular break-in or an activity or intelligence gathering manoeuvre…” By explaining the system was set up to ensure the president did not have “direct” involvement in “activities that are quite different from domestic policy or other national security diplomatic policies”, Waldmann was inadvertently highlighting the possibility that the CIA could undertake operations that were not directly approved by the president, and therefore undertaken without his direct knowledge. Waldmann contended that many prominent political players (e.g. National Security adviser during the Ford administration, Brent Scowcroft, and former Vice-President who served as a staff assistant to Donald Rumsfeld, and Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity during the Nixon administration, Richard Cheney), have known about and been involved in this process for “20, 30 years”.

The decision to approve the Watergate break-in: a rogue operation

Nixon as Victim thinkers paint a picture of the evolution of the Watergate scandal which stems neither from Nixon, nor the way he structured his administration or presidency. Some proponents of this view argue that Watergate can best be explained by examining the

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111 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
motivations of Nixon’s presidential aides, arguing that renegade staffers in the Nixon White House acted without any presidential authority. The discussion that follows highlights the power that certain staffers had, and thus their ability to shield the president from what they chose, and approve actions, operations and policies on their own accord, aiming to benefit them.

The ‘Berlin Wall’ concept

Although Precedent and Context sympathisers do not agree with the existence of the ‘Berlin Wall’ concept, advocates of the Nixon as Victim view argue that the phenomenon was a reality they experienced. As Dwight Chapin, for a time Nixon’s Appointments Secretary, explained, the ‘Berlin Wall’ was an analogy used to describe Haldeman and Ehrlichman as ‘Germans’, who created a wall around Nixon so no-one else could get in to see him: Haldeman could block channels administratively; whereas domestic policy channels were controlled by Ehrlichman.\textsuperscript{118} An example of this notion may be seen in a comment by Garment, who outlined that when he was in the White House, Ehrlichman was his access to the president. Although Garment spent a “fair amount” of time with Nixon “during the campaigns” he didn’t “spend much face to face time with the president during his presidency”.\textsuperscript{119} Garment didn’t have a problem with this arrangement, as “he had nothing really to say to [Nixon], and it was more effective to say things to him through Ehrlichman”.\textsuperscript{120}

Yet, others like Governor of Virginia during the Nixon administration, Linwood Holton, did have an issue with the structure. He asserted that it was in effect shielding President Nixon from outside influence. Holton explained that he and Nixon “had very pleasant relations” and he was generally “in and out” of his office, without “any friction or unpleasantness”.\textsuperscript{121} However, Holton “never really” felt “welcome in the inner part of the administration except by Nixon himself”, as “Ehrlichman and Haldeman had a wall built” that “Governors” could “never [get] over”.\textsuperscript{122} Although Nixon had personally told Holton that all he had to do to reach him was “call”, all of the other Governors with whom Holton associated advised they could not “get a call through to the president”, as his “staff” would not let them “talk to him”.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{118} Dwight L. Chapin recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali and Paul Musgrave, April 2nd 2007.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
Nixon’s Special Counsel to the President for Public Liaison, Charles Colson, claimed the reason why he was brought into the White House in the first place was because Nixon felt suffocated and wanted to find a way to connect with the wider community:

_The old man was feeling strangled by the ‘Berlin Wall’, Haldeman, and Ehrlichman, and he needed someone who could get him out of that and get him in touch with the broader world—the power bases of Washington—and help him politically because he wasn’t getting that from Haldeman and Ehrlichman._

Nixon’s former Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs, William Timmons, argued that the ‘Berlin Wall’ extended beyond just Haldeman and Ehrlichman. It included the likes of Nixon’s Press Secretary, Ronald Ziegler, and Nixon’s National Security Adviser and later Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. In one example, Timmons highlighted that Secretary of the Treasury, John Connally, refused to take orders from Nixon’s staffers and stated that if he was expected to give a speech for Nixon, the president would have to tell him himself. Timmons took on the same attitude. He stated he “wasn’t going to have staff tell him what to do.”

Interestingly, Carl Bernstein of _The Washington Post_ outlined that the only reason staffers in the Nixon administration were willing to talk to him and his associate Bob Woodward about the Watergate Affair, was because they believed Nixon was not involved and there was a lot he did not know about the scandal as a result of the ‘Berlin Wall’: “They told [us] what they knew, and mostly in defence of Nixon. There were a lot of people that were high up in the White House that we were talking to.”

The problem highlighted by supporters of the Nixon as Victim perspective is the mere existence of the ‘Berlin Wall’ made it possible for those close to Nixon to execute orders and make it seem like it came from the president. This issue has been described by Domestic Council staff member, Bobbie Kilberg, who explained that the Nixon White House was “very top down” and “the power was clearly in the senior White House staff, not in the Cabinet agencies”.

This meant that “if John Ehrlichman walked out of the Oval Office and said ‘that’s what it’s going to be’, [then] that is what it [would]...be. You didn’t see any push back

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124 Colson also has views that may be seen as characteristic of all of the schools of thought. In Charles Colson recorded interview by Timothy J Naftali, August 17th 2007.
125 William Timmons recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 27th 2009.
from Cabinet members, or very rarely". Kilberg observed that no-one "knew Ehrlichman well enough to know when he was bluffing" or when he had gone "to the president about an issue and then communicated what the president wanted" to the staff. Rather, "everyone would just comply" with Ehrlichman’s orders.

The problem Kilberg saw with this process was that “it was such a closed White House that" she and others “never knew what was [coming from] Richard Nixon and what was [coming from] John Ehrlichman”. Kilberg described an incident where she was working on a policy proposal for the Domestic Council. Ehrlichman walked out of the Oval Office and said that Nixon had approved the project at the cost of a million dollars. Kilberg claimed her colleagues then went off and executed the project. Later on Kilberg asked Ehrlichman if Nixon had authorised the proposal and he just “smiled and winked” at her, leaving her never knowing if Nixon really approved the project or if Ehrlichman simply went ahead with it. As Kilberg related:

> Whatever came out of the Oval Office, or whatever everyone thought came out of the Oval Office as iterated by John Ehrlichman or Bob Haldeman, that’s what it was. Now I can’t tell you that’s how foreign policy worked, but that’s clearly how domestic policy worked.

Kilberg explained that this system was very different to the one she experienced while serving in the Ford administration, where:

> Anybody could walk into the Oval Office at any time and have discussions. Ford really believed that he was going to return civility and openness to the White House and that was the way to return that sense of camaraderie and trust to the American people, and it was the most open White House I have ever seen.

As an “associate counsel to the president” in the Ford administration, Kilberg “was part of the lower rung of the senior staff”, but she “could” still “walk into the Oval Office”: “...not frequently, but I could...It was a very different system”.

\[128\] Ibid.
\[129\] Ibid.
\[130\] Ibid.
\[131\] Ibid.
\[132\] Ibid.
\[133\] Ibid.
\[134\] Ibid.
In another example outlined by Nixon’s friend and television personality, Art Linkletter, what we see is the ability of those within Nixon’s inner circle to bypass a direct presidential order and execute an action they would prefer. Linkletter described a scene where he met with Nixon for breakfast and on the way over to Washington was greatly offended by an article he read in the newspaper about marijuana use; since his daughter died from a drug addiction. The article drew on an interview with a high-ranking appointed official in the Nixon administration who claimed marijuana use was a “lot of nonsense, not a heavy drug at all...no worse than a cocktail”. Linkletter explained his concern about the story to Nixon. He exclaimed: “We don’t need [those] kind[s] of comments...because Marijuana is a gate-opener for bigger drugs”. Linkletter claimed Nixon “got mad...picked up the phone...got his Secretary...and said...I want so and so out of the building and his desk cleaned out and gone before dusk tonight”. Linkletter displayed concern that he had ruined someone’s career but Nixon said: “If I have a man in my...group...that thinks that way, I don’t want him in there...he’s out”. At this moment Linkletter realised just how powerful the president was, and decided to call Nixon’s “two chief guys”, Haldeman and Ehrlichman, to explain and rectify the matter. Haldeman said: “yeah, that happens sometimes...we’ll get a hold of the guy and hide him for a while somewhere, hide him somewhere in the administration. If he’s a good guy we’ll talk to him about it”. Linkletter concluded that Nixon’s staff “had ways of getting around the president”. In essence, this shows that Nixon may not have had as much control or authority over his administration as generally perceived.

Rogue decision making in the Nixon White House

Jon Huntsman Sr, who served as Staff Secretary for the Nixon administration, drew on the example of Haldeman’s 10am staff meeting to illustrate the amount of control the Chief of Staff he had over Nixon’s presidency. The meeting was attended by Dean, Colson, Malek, Chapin and Ziegler, as a forum for staff to raise any major concerns or proposals for changes in policy. Huntsman explained that Haldeman would have his back towards the staff, and then spin his chair around and ask each person on his left to speak in turn, with the staffers

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136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
sitting in a semi-circle facing him. If a staff member didn’t have anything to say they would pass, but if they did have something intelligent to say there would always be repercussions. For Huntsman, Haldeman’s committee was the most powerful in Washington. Some meetings would only last two minutes, and some an hour, but would always end with Haldeman pushing the red button on his phone and saying he was going on to see the president; and that would be it. The picture Huntsman depicted is of Haldeman as a domineering figure, showing how a serious issue could be dramatically altered in the space of 30 seconds during that meeting. More importantly, the worth of a cause was ultimately at Haldeman’s discretion and whether he chose to pass on information to Nixon.\textsuperscript{142}

Huntsman contended that Haldeman created an exorbitant amount of power for himself in the Nixon White House, and drew a line from this excess to “Nixon’s downfall”.\textsuperscript{143} Huntsman believed Haldeman created a “zero defects” environment, where there was no room for “error” or “apologies”. “It was the worst working environment I have ever seen in my life”, Huntsman claimed.\textsuperscript{144} The “atmosphere” created by “Haldeman was so negative and so creative to doing what he wanted done” that “everyone was so frightened” and “intimidated”, Huntsman said.\textsuperscript{145} They “knew that [Haldeman’s] wrath was so strong” that if he asked them to do something, whether it was “right or wrong”, they had better do it or they would have to live with the consequences.\textsuperscript{146} It is “easy” for Huntsman to “see” how “Watergate could take place under that kind of “corrupt, dishonest, atmosphere”, since “one man was running the show and everyone...had to obey...”\textsuperscript{147}

In light of this situation, Huntsman contended that it was understandable that staffers would “lie” and do whatever they could to “protect themselves” from Haldeman’s ‘zero defects’ system when something went “wrong”. This made cover-ups inevitable because the pressure to perform and produce was so great. “They are going to tell the juries wrong answers, they were going to commit perjury, they were going to do whatever they could to not incur the wrath of Haldeman”, Huntsman stated.\textsuperscript{148} So “it didn’t come as a great surprise” to Huntsman “that all of these young men were ruined” in the aftermath of Watergate: “They were trained on how to please and pacify an individual who was a

\textsuperscript{142} Jon M. Huntsman, Sr. recorded interview by Timothy J. Naftali, March 10th 2008.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
complete autocrat”. Huntsman believed President Nixon had no idea “that most of this atmosphere existed”, and sensed that “Nixon turned over the administrative reigns to Haldeman and let him run it the way he wanted to run it”. Since “Haldeman got results for the president”, Nixon believed “everything was going perfectly”, so he did not question Haldeman’s methods. “Maybe that’s how the president wanted it. I can’t make that judgement”, Huntsman said, “All I can judge is what I saw and did”.

Huntsman found it increasingly difficult to work with Haldeman, as he did not want to carry out questionable orders on his behalf or be “his errand boy”. On one occasion Haldeman asked Huntsman to use his personal resources (a manufacturing plant he owned in California) to dig dirt on a Congressman, but he refused. Huntsman found himself feeling like an outsider in the administration because he was unwilling to carry out such actions. Huntsman could not force himself to violate his moral compass and do what Haldeman wanted him to do, rather than what the president wanted him to do. His inability to be a ‘yes’ man made it impossible for him and Haldeman to get along, so he decided to cease his employment at the White House. From Huntsman’s perspective he had always been forthcoming in telling people about what he believed the cause of Watergate to be—the processes that Haldeman developed for the Nixon White House. Huntsman believed Haldeman acted without Nixon’s knowledge, to satisfy his need for power.

Renegade staffers

As was highlighted in the Nixon at Centre school chapter, decisions and actions can take place through one of three ways in a presidency: through presidential orders, through the White House system and culture that has been created and through rogue decision making. Proponents of the Nixon as Victim mentality focus on the third in their Watergate explanation, highlighting the motivations and behaviours of staff and groups without direct presidential authority for their actions. As CREEP was not part of the White House and the break-in at the Watergate Complex did not occur as a result of a direct presidential order, but instead

148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
through the authorisation executed by Nixon’s chief aides, proponents of the Nixon as Victim school promote the rogue operation view. This perspective deflects from the culture that Nixon created in the White House and for his administration. Nixon as Victim sympathisers do not see the root of Watergate as emanating from Nixon’s conception of the presidency, but rather argue that Nixon had people around him that chose to do ill for their own benefit. As has been explained by Colson: “That was the trigger that later became the undoing of the Nixon presidency—guys running off with reckless abandonment”.155 This chapter’s final analysis will highlight the actions of Nixon’s staffers and their impact on the way Watergate took place and surfaced.

Watergate has been described by those who see Nixon as a victim as resulting from power hungry staffers doing ill for their own purposes. It has been argued that the root of this problem stems from the attitude of staffers in Nixon’s inner circle, who saw themselves as “gifted big shots”.156 Domestic Policy Council staffer in the Nixon White House, Richard Fairbanks, described this problem:

> My theory was the ones who got in trouble in the Nixon White House, or in any White House, are the ones who convinced themselves that there was a nation-wide talent search for their job and they won. But the ones who convinced themselves that this job was there before they got there and will be there after they leave, and who took on that perspective, they got by without their ego getting larger than life and all of outdoors.157

Fairbanks also confirmed the concerns of Kilberg and Linkletter, in that he observed administration officials in the executive branch getting orders from Nixon’s inner circle staffers, but were too afraid to question them, because they knew if they tried to contact Nixon for his confirmation, Haldeman would not transfer the call to the president. In this sense, Fairbanks is also pointing to the problem of staff like Haldeman having too much power in the Nixon White House and the ability to have their needs met without question. This is different to the rationale provided by Nixon at Centre sympathisers who argue Nixon offered too much power to those around him, and in essence resulted in them vying for his

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157 Ibid.
attention (‘Dead Mouse Theory’). What Fairbanks has argued, on the other hand, is that some of Nixon’s closest aides took this power for themselves.\footnote{158}

Robert Ellsworth, who served as the United States Permanent Representative to NATO between 1969 and 1971, claimed Mitchell was an example of a staff member who was always looking for more power:

**Mitchell’s ambition was to be the Deputy President, and when he became Attorney General, it was a disappointment because he didn’t have the propinquity to the president. But he was determined to be the Deputy President, even from the Attorney General’s office.**\footnote{159}

When Naftali asked Ellsworth whether he felt Mitchell wanted policy preferences or power, Ellsworth sharply answered “power”. He stated that he believed this fervently and explained he did not need to have conversations with Mitchell about the issue for his suspicions to be confirmed, as Mitchell’s intentions were apparent by simply looking at the way he “worked”.\footnote{160} Of course, technically, Mitchell was the one who approved the Watergate break-in by passing on these directives to his Deputy Chairman Magruder, to be executed via Gordon Liddy—the Watergate burglar running the intelligence operation.\footnote{161}

Working as the Nixon White House liaison for the Departments of Housing, Transportation, Postal and Civil services, Henry Cashen, too, observed what he described as Nixon administration staffers with their own “personal agenda”. He explained that the “guys” over at CREEP were “ambitious” and “self-motivated”.\footnote{162} To exemplify this point Cashen described a time when Magruder first came on board as Deputy Director of White House Communications, and asked Cashen to “tell [him] ways that [he could] enhance [his] reputation around town”, stating “it [would] give [him] a better chance of dealing with the press”.\footnote{163} Cashen established that all Magruder wanted was a “good story”, which worried him, as he believed having such an attitude as a White House staffer was “dangerous”.\footnote{164}
Cashen put Dean in the same category as Magruder, along with “crazy” Liddy, and all the other “guys that were over at CREEP”.165 Cashen believed this problem to stem from these staffers not having “gotten their stripes working for Nixon”, and not really knowing how to “run a campaign” like the “guys” in the White House who were with Nixon in 1968. Cashen concluded that the staff over at CREEP were a “bunch of amateurs” that “didn’t know what they were doing”, and appeared to be “out to prove a point for themselves”.166

Frederic V. Malek, who started off as Deputy Under Secretary of the Department of Health Education and Welfare and was transferred to the role of White House Special Assistant for Personnel, prior to his promotion to Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget, argued that Watergate was caused by “over-achievers” in the White House. Malek saw certain staff within CREEP taking action which they believed would “please the powers that be”. Instead their behaviour was not indicative of the types of actions that Nixon would condone, Malek contended, leaving him to assume that certain staffers in the Nixon White House were only acting to satisfy their own egos.167 Malek believed there to be some “reasonably insecure people” employed at CREEP, who had “pressure from people like Chuck Colson to be tough”, “get more information”, and “do whatever” they could.168 “Nobody ever said break into the Watergate, nobody ever said break the law, but there was an awful lot of pressure to perform and to get intelligence on what the other side was doing”.169 Although Malek believed it was “common place” for both the “Democrats and the Republicans” to “divert press conferences” and “feed-back intelligence”, he held the view that “some of the people who were under pressure to perform just kind of took it to an extreme”.170 “I don’t think there was ever anybody that directed them to do what they did, and I don’t think the president ever knew what they did. I don’t think he would have sanctioned that, as he was not that insecure, they were insecure”, Malek argued.171

Discussing how it was possible for the White House, and in particular Nixon, to be oblivious to what was going on at CREEP, Malek explained how the United States has a “vast government, in a vast political system”.172 Given that the election “campaign is not part of the

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165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
White House” and even though “there is a liaison” (Gordon Strachan), for Malek it makes sense that the staff would not “tell the White House everything they do”.173 Even if they wanted to, Malek believed it would have been impossible. In light of this, Malek stated that “if you have some people in the campaign who are somewhat renegade”, then it is likely “they are going to go off and do what they think is in the best interests” of the president.174 “I am sure they had good intentions, they weren’t trying to be evil, but in the process [they broke] the law without actually knowing about it”. For Malek, “that’s something” that the president, or anybody else for that matter, couldn’t “control”.175 Like Fairbanks, Malek is showing a different perspective on the ‘Dead Mouse Theory’ in that he highlighted Nixon’s innocence in the equation, and Watergate as emanating from renegade staffers, rather than an atmosphere that Nixon himself created for his administration. Essentially, the striking difference between the views of the Nixon at Centre school and the Nixon as Victim school is the way that Nixon’s role or influence on the emergence of Watergate is either brought to the forefront and emphasised, or placed in the background and toned down.176

Similarly Powell Moore, who worked at the Justice Department before being transferred to CREEP against his will, claimed he was reluctant to be re-assigned because he “had some doubts about the judgment of the people who were involved in the campaign”.177 In particular Moore believed Liddy broke into the DNC headquarters just to “prove he could do it”, knowing there were “no political benefits to the operation”.178 Moore described Liddy as someone who took satisfaction out of being known as a clandestine “second story man” with a “law enforcement background”, and this encouraged a lot of the inappropriate activity he was involved in.179 Like Moore, D. Todd Christofferson, Sirica’s law clerk during the Watergate Grand Jury, believed Liddy’s “crazy plans” to be the cause of Watergate. As far as Christofferson was concerned, the motive for the Watergate break-in, as well as the other “elaborate schemes” outlined in the Gemstone plan, among them “kidnapping” people scheduled to make a “speech” at the “convention”, “intercepting mail”, and “eavesdropping”, all “came out of Liddy’s head”.180 “Somehow”, Christofferson said, Liddy ended up in Mitchell’s office proposing these ideas to him and Dean, and requesting “funds and

173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Powell Moore recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 19th 2009.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
permission”. Christofferson explained he will “never understand why” Liddy was not “summarily fired, dismissed, and thrown out”. Instead, in his opinion, Mitchell tried to let him down gently, and stated that the “million dollar price tag” was “too expensive”. But Liddy “didn’t take the hint” because he returned with a “$500,000 version”, and then a “$250,000” one.

It became clear to Christofferson and Sirica that Mitchell “didn’t realise that he had a nut-case on his hands” and should have got “rid of the man”. He certainly should not have “approve[d] anything that he was talking about, let alone keep him on”, Christofferson said. Unfortunately, Christofferson explained, Liddy “got his OK on the third time around, with his more limited proposal”, he brought “Hunt” and the “Cuban Americans” on board, and they broke into the Watergate twice. Robert Odle, Director of Administration for the CREEP, also saw Liddy as “the most persistent man [he has ever] met in [his] life”. Odle argued that “if Liddy had never been born…Nixon would have served both terms as [Liddy] wouldn’t have kept pushing and pushing and pushing to do something that everybody thought was nuts”. Odle believed the break-in was “wrong and stupid”, and did not think a “normal human being” working for Richard Nixon could do such a thing. In terms of the Gemstone operation, Martinez contended that although Hunt believed he had the authority over the Watergate enterprise, it was Liddy that really had control, as the plumbers resorted to him for guidance.

Malek on the other hand believed Magruder to be the main Watergate culprit:

Well I liked Jeb... in those days, he was a gregarious intelligent guy, but he was also somewhat insecure and he was always kind of looking around and figuring out what his next step would be after, if we won re-election. And I think that kind of coloured his performance and his thinking.

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181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
Malek argued that if the Nixon presidency “had a stronger person in that job we would have never had a Watergate break-in”.\textsuperscript{190} For Odle, the issue with Magruder was the absence of an internal value system, “a lack of a moral compass” on Magruder’s behalf.\textsuperscript{191} Flanigan, who had also served as Murray Chotiner’s Deputy Campaign Chairman for Nixon’s 1968 presidential election, equally believed that the Watergate break-in was solely Magruder’s doing. He stated that Magruder exercised Mitchell’s authority inappropriately, when all he wanted was some information on the Democratic Party’s election campaign strategy.\textsuperscript{192} Flanigan’s hunch was that Magruder did not bring the revised Gemstone plan to Mitchell after he first rejected it for being ‘crazy’, or if he did, Mitchell must not have been paying attention as he was distracted by other concerns: “I don’t think [Mitchell] is the person who designed the stupidity of Watergate”, Flanigan concluded.\textsuperscript{193}

Although Klein accepted that Colson pressured his former Deputy in the White House Communications department to make a decision on the Gemstone plan, he still claimed the person who played the largest role in bringing about Watergate was Magruder. Klein’s “theory” centred on Mitchell being preoccupied with caring for his wife Martha: while the two of them were holidaying in Florida, Gemstone was approved.\textsuperscript{194} Klein argued that Magruder “came down with a list of things that he wanted to approve for the committee” and “he waited until about the last of Martha…yelling at John saying, ‘Get rid of that young guy and come on back here’, and so [Mitchell] just sort of checked it off quickly and let it go”.\textsuperscript{195} Klein believed Mitchell “was too smart to do something like that deliberately”.\textsuperscript{196} Interestingly, Klein also pointed out that his telling Magruder stories about harmless intelligence gathering efforts on the 1960 presidential election campaign may have resulted in Magruder setting “out to do something more cutting edge”. “I think that’s partly how Watergate occurred”, Klein stated.\textsuperscript{197}

Bruce Whelihan, staff assistant in the White House press office during the Nixon administration, believed the destruction of the Nixon presidency to be a joint effort between Magruder and Dean. Whelian saw both men as “the perpetrators” of Watergate, and argued

\begin{footnotesize}
190 Ibid.
192 Peter Flanigan recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, Paul Musgrave, and David Greenberg April 3rd 2007.
193 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
that although Dean attempted to come across as an innocent figure, he knew about the ins and outs of the operation “from the get go”, and communicated this to “Magruder”. Since “everyone” in the White House thought that “Nixon had no prior involvement” in the Watergate Affair, “and didn’t orchestrate anything that happened at the DNC”, Whelihan explained that his colleagues felt Watergate would eventually dissipate if they kept their heads down and continued working.199

Others like Cashen, Angelo Lano and Perry come at the Watergate problem from another angle, focusing solely on Dean’s role in the affair, with particular reference to the cover-up. As a former FBI agent who was leading the investigation into the Watergate scandal, Lano traced the role Dean played right from the beginning. He argued that Dean lied about knowing Hunt had an office in the Old Executive Office Building, was briefing witnesses prior to their FBI interview and had destroyed Hunt’s two notebooks which contained damaging material. All in all Lano maintained that Dean played the most significant role in the cover-up: “I put in my mind 95% of it on Dean’s shoulders”.200 Cashen contended that Dean drew Nixon into the Watergate scandal to save himself and believed the affair ‘snowballed’ out of control from that point on:

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\text{Dean was in there up to his eyeballs and I guess he figured the only way that he could get out was to draw the President of the United States in...And once it start[ed] going, I just had this sinking feeling that it was going right downhill, [and] it did.}^{201}
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Likewise Perry concluded that Dean was “more than a bit [of a Watergate] player”.202

For some like Martinez and Lano, the conspiracy line of thinking ran a little deeper, but this time they focused on the actions of Hunt, McCord and Liddy and their effect on the Nixon administration. Martinez believed the Watergate burglars were set up, rejecting the view that someone of McCord’s “record” with the CIA would “write a letter to Sirica, [to] plead guilty to finish the whole investigation”.203 Martinez also saw McCord leaving the tape on the door in the Watergate Complex as suspicious. When the tape was removed for the first time by Wills,

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197 Ibid.
198 Bruce Whelihan recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 10th 2009.
199 Ibid.
201 Henry C. Cashen recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, March 10th 2009.
202 Hubert Perry recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, October 25th 2007.
Martinez and his men tried to “abort the operation” but McCord refused and ordered them to “go ahead”.\textsuperscript{204} “We had a key man who could open the door without any tape”, Martinez explained, but “McCord went through the front door of all these offices and came down and put on tape”.\textsuperscript{205} Martinez explained that the burglars had already “been inside”, so there was no need for the “tape”.\textsuperscript{206} “So we opened the door, and when we came back with the key man, McCord said that he had to go to the lookout which was the Howard Johnson building across the street. When he [returned], we asked him ‘did you remove the tape?’ and he said ‘yes’, [but] he did not remove the tape, the security guard found it”.\textsuperscript{207} Martinez also found McCord’s instructions for the burglars to “turn off the[jr] walkie talkies” to be unusual. “I mean too many things happened that was ridiculous”, Martinez stated.\textsuperscript{208}

Lano, too, believed there was something suspicious about the Watergate burglary scene and the Metropolitan police department’s response to the break-in. Lano argued that the first police officer on the scene worked burglaries and thus should not have been “out [patrolling] the street” at “two o’clock in the morning”.\textsuperscript{209} In terms of Hunt’s Watergate Hotel room, “everything was kind of neatly placed, the money, the books, and…the envelope…addressed to [Hunt’s] country club, and you look back at the money and the books, and everything on the bed is neat. It’s like everything is arranged like somebody knew it was going to happen”, Lano stated.\textsuperscript{210} Lano also explained how McCord “disappeared for almost two hours” in search of “batteries” for the wiretaps, driving to Maryland because apparently nowhere else was open, but when he returned he had “6D batteries” that would not fit in the smoke detector they wired with listening devices.\textsuperscript{211}

Like Martinez, Lano also found it hard to understand why the burglars would put tape on the doors to get into the Watergate when they had an “expert in key entry and burglary” on their team. But even harder to figure was why McCord would put the tape back on after it was removed by the Security Guard, why tape was put on six doors, when only one was necessary and why the FBI was never able to find the roll of tape after “all of the searches

\textsuperscript{203} Eugenio Rolando Martinez recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 25th 2008.  
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{209} Angelo Lano recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 28th 2009.  
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
that had been done”.212 “To this day I still think that one of those guys tipped off the police department, and it was either Hunt or McCord [believing that] this had to come to an end”, Lano said. “Because...if everything is true, Hunt is the one who almost backs out that night” thinking that “they shouldn’t go forward, but...they go forward”.213

Lano was also sceptical about three other points he has never been able to resolve: First, the burglars initially put the wiretap on the wrong phone, Oliver’s instead of O’Brien’s, which he feels was a stupid mistake as you could clearly tell which person was the more prominent staff member by looking at the size of their offices.214 Second, the FBI never found out why Martinez had a key on him to Oliver’s secretary’s desk, a point which Nixon as Victim scholars (Colodny and Gettlin) use as evidence that the burglaries were really an attempt to get sexual dirt on the Democrats and information on a supposed prostitution ring in Silent Coup: The Removal of a President.215 And third, that the first time the burglars broke into the Watergate Complex, they only took four insignificant photos of the office, like they just wanted proof they were there.216 The second time they broke in they were apprehended in about 15 minutes so they didn’t have the time to take more photos.217

Ultimately Martinez saw Hunt and Liddy as wannabe spies who made a mockery of Nixon’s need to have people put a halt on national security leaks. Martinez believed Nixon should have had more experienced people working for him. Hunt was a “dreamer” whose own wife, Dorothy, thought he was “the worst spy she had ever met”, Martinez said.218 Martinez noted an example of Hunt’s inappropriateness. Hunt wanted the plumbers to “protect him” while he went after a person who had assaulted him when he was in college at Yale. On another occasion Hunt stated he needed to be excused because he was going to “inject” his “glutes” as they were “drooping”—Martinez did not see this as appropriate behaviour for a professional “CIA man”.219 In relation to Liddy, Martinez explained: “I mean there is no question about it, he was a courageous man...[yet] I don’t really share his view of

212 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
216 Angelo Lano recorded interview by Paul Musgrave, May 28th 2009.
217 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
courage...tying himself up on a tree to defy lightning and all of those things”. Martinez believed the plumbers “were recruited for national security” as part of a genuine “effort” on the part of the Nixon White House to plug leaks. But what happened instead was the “combination of Hunt and Liddy” which brought “disgrace” to “the United States” via “Watergate”.

Ed Nixon made a similar point, claiming that although Richard Nixon may have wanted information for the campaign, the people around him should not have gone forth with any action they believed to be illegal:

When the [Watergate] thing all broke out in the course of the campaign, it looked to me [like] those guys made a big boo-boo, they didn’t need to go in there. Dick might have suggested that there might be a way to solve some things, but if so, why do it? If you know it’s not legal don’t do it. Well they did it, and all hell broke loose and I wasn’t even aware of it until ‘73 or so when it all began to hit the fan.

The Nixon as Victim view of the administration’s presidential legacy

In order to make an assessment of Nixon’s overall presidential legacy, those who see Nixon as a victim of history cite the many talents he possessed, and argue that Nixon was a highly skilled and intelligent individual that was simply “thrown away” by the nation. The competencies that have been cited by this school throughout the Nixon Library Oral History Project are vast. They centre on Nixon being an expert strategist in domestic, international, and campaign politics who had to overcome great hardship to achieve greatness. Also noted was Nixon’s exceptional writing, public speaking (he could adlib without notes), and analytical thinking skills, which he has said to have attained as a result of hard work and

220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
diligence, and due to being an avid reader of history. Advocates of the Nixon as Victim school also portray Nixon as being great with his staff: claiming he was supportive and pleasant to his colleagues and aides; provided constructive feedback on their work; was attuned to their personal difficulties; and would remember the smallest details about them. Nixon has been depicted as a patriot that loved his country and respected the presidency, but was seen differently by the public in relation to what he was really like. Some of the striking differences in Nixon’s character, in comparison to his public image, provided by the Nixon as Victim cohort, relate to Nixon being great with children; being kind and welcoming; possessing sensitivity and generosity; being a lover of sport; and having a good sense of humour.

Nixon’s resignation has been described by those who see him as a victim as detrimental to the country. It is generally argued that Nixon’s potential was frustrated, and he paid a high price for Watergate, a price that he may not have deserved. For instance, Timmons did not believe Nixon should have been thrown out of office, but rather, he saw the lessons of the Watergate Affair as “What could have been”. Timmons contended that “if it hadn’t been for Watergate [Nixon] could have gone on to do great things”, like nuclear arms control, seeing through détente with the Soviet Union, budget control, and tax reductions to stimulate the economy.

Another way this point has been described is through the argument that Nixon could have in fact survived Watergate, if he had chosen to come clean about those who did the wrong

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229 William Timmons recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 27th 2009.
thing from the beginning, and “fired who was responsible”. This view inadvertently makes the case that Nixon maintained no culpability in the Watergate Affair, and got involved in a cover-up to protect his staff and presidency. An example of this outlook can be seen in the views of Dole, who claimed Nixon should have “let the Justice Department determine whether the law had been violated”, and believed the “American people” would have forgiven Nixon for the transgressions of his staff, because “they respect their president” and “the presidency”. Dole added that it is easy to charge someone with an offence or misconduct, but how “do people get their reputation back” afterwards? For Dole, Nixon “was a resigned president”, he was “not guilty” of any crimes, and as such, he believed it was important to assist Nixon through his rehabilitation process.

Colson, Chapin, and Klein supported Dole’s views. Colson stated he advised Nixon to “get rid of the people who did this, [and] hire a special investigator. Technically I left the conspiracy when I did that”, Colson stated. “I realised that if he had taken my advice he might still be president...”. On the other hand, Chapin argued that a political veteran like Bryce Harlow “could have helped engineer [the Nixon administration] around the problem, which was really as simple as firing three or four people...probably Mitchell...[and] I think Magruder, Dean, and the CREEP group”. If Nixon had separated himself from the problem, Chapin argued, then he “would have survived”. Klein also contended that certain staffers should have been fired after the news of the Watergate break-in surfaced, as a “symbol of the fact that [the administration] was cleaning up whatever problems there were in the White House”.

Some Nixon as Victim sympathisers find Nixon to be a scapegoat who was used to take the fall for the country’s ills, and thus, undeserving of his fate. In other words, Nixon is seen as having been wronged and undervalued in his presidential legacy at the expense of the besmirching nature of Watergate; not someone who had attacked the American Constitution. For example, Ed Nixon made the point that he and his family saw his brother as leading the nation of the United States in an honourable way during a time when the “country” was

230 Ibid.
232 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
“sick”.238 For Ed, Richard did not “resign in disgrace”, rather, he saw this “political adjective [that] has been used by his detractors, ‘inveterate haters’, that didn’t like him and never will”.239 Giving colour to his argument, Ed explained that Nixon’s successor, Gerald Ford:

The presidential physician, saw the sickness in the country and knew that in order to carry on the mandate of 1972, he had to relieve himself of the burden that would be imposed by the haters intruding on his office time. So, the pardon came.240

Ed Nixon maintained that in particular the media was more willing to focus on petty issues, rather than meaningful things his brother was doing with the leadership. Nixon did his best to cure the nation of the illness it was experiencing, Ed argued, but his enemies found it impossible to see his efforts this way. From Ed’s perspective, the way Nixon has been negatively portrayed thus far is just a manifestation of his detractor’s bias, and their inability to see the good he did for the country.241

Shepard took a different tack in his evaluation of the reason behind the Nixon presidency’s downfall. He argued that the Nixon administration failed because it was “revolutionary”. For Shepard, it had “the most creative domestic policy” and “foreign affairs victories [that] stand on their own”, but he believed “the public was not ready for it”.242 Shepard contended that a presidency’s success and ability to cause change is dictated by when they come into office “at the beginning, middle, or the end of a regime”.243 Presidents Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Roosevelt and Reagan served at the beginning, which led the change they effected to be seen as “brilliant”. If a president is elected in the middle of a regime and is seen to be “too perfect” the presidency will fail and that moment in history will be evaluated negatively by the people. An example of this was President Johnson. Likewise, if a president serves at the end of a regime, it is likely to be a failure, namely the administrations of Hoover and Carter.244 Shepard contended that the presidents that are seen as an “aberration” and “not really part of the regime”, like Clinton and Nixon, “get impeached”.245 Shepard argued that Nixon was an

239 Ibid.
240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
242 Geoffrey Shepard I recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, May 26th 2009.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
245 Ibid.
especially talented and forward thinking political leader, with the rest of the country unable to see how valuable he really was.\textsuperscript{246}

In weighing up what the legacy of the Nixon Administration should be, some like Martinez alluded to a portrayal of Watergate being an instance where forces outside of the Nixon Administration were pulling Nixon’s puppet strings to bring down the presidency—with Nixon depicted as a pawn. In other words, Nixon is seen as the one who was ruined rather than the one who ruined the Constitution or the United States system of government.\textsuperscript{247} An example of this point may be seen in Martinez’s depictions of the Watergate break-in and how he perceived it to be a "set up"—joining the dots between issues the plumbers experienced on the day of the burglary and their suspicious nature.\textsuperscript{248} By arguing that Watergate must have served another purpose that may not yet be known to the general public, Martinez was inadvertently providing an illustration of Watergate that presupposes there were others in the background with their own agendas for wanting the break-in to take place, and come to surface.\textsuperscript{249}

Ed Nixon sympathised with Martinez’s view, highlighting his belief that Nixon was being attacked from all corners. Ed claimed his brother was “pestered, beaten down and hit from every direction”, which made it likely that someone in this situation would “react at some point”.\textsuperscript{250} When Nixon exclaimed that the press “would no longer have Nixon to kick around anymore” after his ‘62 gubernatorial election loss, Ed explained, it was because Richard “had tried his best” to keep his composure, but the constant attacks had resulted in him losing his temper that day. Ed contended that this was the only time he saw his brother “lose it”.\textsuperscript{251} In relation to Nixon’s “I’m not a crook” comment, Ed maintained that this response resulted from a reporter probing Nixon about being a criminal, so he would respond the way he did and the papers would get a “headline”.\textsuperscript{252} “Ah, yes, mean motives sell papers”, Ed remarked. Ed concluded that if Richard ever reacted badly whilst president it was warranted, due to the continual attacks he had to endure, particularly from the press.\textsuperscript{253}

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{247} Eugenio Rolando Martinez recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 25th 2008.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{250} Ed Nixon recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, January 9th 2007.
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid.
Discussing the changing nature of Nixon’s legacy, Dole claimed history had already started to judge Nixon well, considering “80% of the people at the time thought that the pardon was a mistake, and when President Ford died, 80% thought he did the right thing.”\textsuperscript{254} Ultimately Dole argued that Watergate would eventually be seen as a footnote within the history of the Nixon presidency:

\textit{Even though it’s been quite a while since [Nixon] resigned from office, another 10, 15 years people take a look, I think he’s going to [be seen in] a very favourable [light], except for that [Watergate] footnote. It will be like when they write about Bill Clinton, the first thing you will read about in the footnote is Monica Lewinsky, but that doesn’t wipe out his whole presidency.}\textsuperscript{255}

In sum, Nixon as Victim advocates argue that Nixon was well suited to his presidential role and was therefore not an aberration of the system. Ultimately, they see Nixon as betrayed by the country and the people around him, whilst claiming that Nixon’s detractors have a distorted view of him and the entire Watergate Affair. Nixon as Victim proponents contend the American nation left behind a legacy of hatred, and exemplified that a successful president may be taken down by his enemies, and that a presidential legacy may be tarnished by those that would prefer to scapegoat a president rather than address other factors which may have influenced the emergence of a negative event.

\textsuperscript{254} Robert J. Dole recorded interview by Timothy Naftali, March 4th 2008.
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid.
Conclusion

I have used this thesis to investigate the various ways participants of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library Oral History Project—including significant Watergate actors and prominent observers of the drama—perceived and assigned meaning to the Watergate Affair and the Nixon presidency. As a data source, the Nixon Library’s oral history collection contained the most current and widespread compilation of views about Nixon, his presidency and Watergate, open to the public at the commencement of this research. Since many of the participants involved in the project passed away shortly after being interviewed, the examination of these materials allowed for the assessment of the last words they publicly stated on the topic of the affair, and reflected on how their views of Watergate have evolved over time. As these oral histories had not been studied in depth before, their analysis has provided an opportunity to obtain invaluable insight into the lasting legacy of the Watergate Affair, permitting me to outline fresh and original perspectives of the event decades after it occurred.

Through the synthesis and organisation of the various themes within Watergate’s historiography, this research has outlined the development of a new theoretical framework to examine the meanings behind the Watergate Affair—a lens categorising differing views into four schools of thought. These schools are distinguished by their perception of the causes of the Watergate scandal and Nixon’s role in the affair, and have been characterised as: Nixon at Centre, Power and Personality, Precedent and Context, and Nixon as Victim. This framework was used as an analytical tool to examine the Nixon Library’s oral histories, and resulted in the development of four competing Watergate narratives that can be summarised as follows:

Nixon at Centre

Those who see Nixon as the central Watergate agent propose that the downfall of the Nixon presidency can be traced back to flaws in Nixon’s character. They argue that Nixon possessed negative personality traits that stimulated his desire for political intelligence, and resulted in him setting a tone for his administration that encouraged misconduct, and constituted a consistent pattern of malfeasance that was present throughout his entire presidency. Amongst others, Nixon White House speech-writer, Lee Huebner, saw the
analysis of Nixon’s upbringing and personal history as key to understanding his disposition as president. Nixon at Centre proponents have been shown to focus on what is known about Watergate, whilst emphasising the negative outcomes of Nixon’s presidential policies and the unpleasant aspects of his personality evidenced through the White House tapes. Sympathisers with the Nixon at Centre view, like Bob Woodward of The Washington Post, tend to see Nixon as an aberration of the American presidential system, which was otherwise operating well, and regard Watergate as an exceptional event in American history.

To explain the cause of the Watergate scandal, Nixon at Centre advocates point to the ‘Dead Mouse Theory’, a premise considered in detail for the first time in this research. This notion, highlighted by Watergate Special Prosecutor, Richard Ben Veniste, contends that Nixon’s negative personality traits had an effect on the way he chose to manage his presidency. Christopher DeMuth, who served as Staff Assistant to Daniel P. Moynihan, Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, explained that Nixon’s lack of trust, affinity for control, and negative views of the bureaucracy, led the Nixon administration to choose expediency over process, and employ loyal inexperienced youth to carry out tasks. Lamar Alexander, Staff Assistant to Nixon’s Senior Political Advisor, Bryce Harlow, noted that this effort caused the Nixon administration’s old political hands to be eased out of the White House. This left those that remained to vie for Nixon’s attention and generate more power for themselves in the Nixon administration by giving Nixon exactly what he wanted.

Subscribers to the Nixon at Centre mentality, such as Woodward’s colleague, Carl Bernstein, argued that the Watergate break-in stemmed from the Nixon administration wanting to choose who to run against in the presidential election. This was facilitated by Nixon leading his staff to believe they were “immunised from responsibility” in regards to the Watergate abuses. Deputy Director of White House Communications, Jeb Stuart Magruder, who later went on to serve as Deputy Chairman for CREEP, also pointed to Nixon’s encouragement of illegal behaviour among his staff, as the trigger for the Watergate Affair. Those who may be said to promote the Nixon at Centre perspective, see Nixon’s impeachment process as a bipartisan venture which has stood the test of time, but claim that Nixon left behind a legacy of distrust.

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Power and Personality

The themes raised by the Power and Personality commentators in this study are largely not innovative, since this school's views have been a dominant part of the way Watergate has been perceived for decades. Those who see Watergate as an abuse of power contend that Watergate must be seen as a constitutional crisis. In this vein, former Vice-President Richard Cheney, who also served as a Staff Assistant to Donald Rumsfeld, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity during the Nixon administration, has argued that context and presidential character go hand in hand when explaining the evolution of the Watergate Affair. Such an examination allows for the explanation of how and where Nixon obtained his presidential power, rather than focusing on why he may have chosen to misuse it. Subscribers to the power and personality way of thinking see the issue of presidential power aggrandisement during wartime as a causal factor for Watergate. They assert that the political context in the United States was ripe for a tragedy such as Watergate to occur, asserting that Nixon’s Watergate policies were an extension of the Cold War environment in an overstretched national security state.\(^2\) Republican member of the Senate Watergate Committee, Lowell Weicker, argued that Nixon was at ease with the power of the presidency being misused, believing that his administration’s actions were justified by the context in which they were being executed. Power and personality sympathisers insist that the Watergate abuses were made possible by Nixon’s weakness of character. For this reason the issue of presidential integrity is of the utmost importance to subscribers of this school.

Watergate is seen by advocates of the power and personality view as a significant event which outweighs all other instances of presidential wrongdoing. Nixon is seen to have steered the presidency in a direction where it had impeded on the civil liberties of its citizens and had overstepped its bounds with the other branches of government. Nixon is considered an anomaly within the presidential system by proponents of the school. Despite Watergate’s depiction as an attempt by Nixon to subvert the Constitution and the American system of government, it has also been portrayed as an inevitable and necessary test of political power,

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to assess the resilience of the system, whilst establishing what the people will tolerate, and what the role of the presidency should be in relation to other branches of government. Those holding such a view on Nixon’s personality and obsession with power also use the White House tapes as evidence for their claims, citing them as confirmation of Nixon’s abuses.

Significant to this school of thought is the ‘System Works Theory’, whereby Watergate’s true legacy is characterised as a separation of branches battle. The image presented by Power and Personality thinkers like Presidential Counsel for the Nixon administration, Richard Hauser, is of President Nixon in a clash with the other branches of government, a crusade through which the Press, the Senate, the Congress, and the Courts fought back to restore balance to the nation. This view emphasises the triumph of the American constitutional system of government created by their framers. The ousting of Nixon from the presidency is seen as vital to the health of the country, and an example of the political system doing what it was meant to do. Power and Personality sympathisers like Impeachment Inquiry staffers, Robin Johansen and Dorothy Landsberg, and House Judiciary Committee Members, Elizabeth Holtzman and Charles Rangel, contended that the Watergate Affair left behind a legacy of hope and reinforced their view that their system of government is strong, and the American people can prevail over adversity.

**Precedent and Context**

Those who use Precedent and Context as markers for assessing Nixon’s presidential legacy maintain that the actions of Nixon and his administration were not pioneering in terms of their venality and gravity. They highlight that the ousting of Nixon from the presidency did not prevent future instances of governmental wrongdoing, and thus reject the portrayal of Nixon as an aberration within the American presidential system. The views of this school are becoming more popular as the animosity towards Nixon and his presidency has begun to fade. As a group, their Watergate narrative has not been noted in depth prior to this study. Precedent and Context commentators, like Republican Senator for the State of Wyoming, Alan Simpson, asserted that the study of Nixon and Watergate should integrate a broader and more balanced perspective in their depictions and arguments. Consequently this school of thought states that one may not judge Nixon or Watergate without looking at the precedent that was laid down for him by his predecessors, or providing context for Watergate within the Nixon presidency.
Precedent and Context thinkers like Bobbie Kilberg, who served on the Nixon administration Domestic Council policy staff, and Barbara Franklin, whose role was to employ an increased number of women into the Nixon White House, asked students of the Nixon presidency and Watergate to question what they know, and request that such observers take a wider-ranging view rather than focusing on more narrow explanations. In seeking a refined assessment of Nixon, his presidency and Watergate, Precedent and Context proponents reject generalisations, highlighting how past characterisations have been exaggerated or distorted, and strive to provide a more realistic view of human nature and the presidency. An example of this aim may be seen in the views of Nixon’s speech-writer, William Safire, who portrays Nixon as a complex individual, a human that is admirable, but flawed. Precedent and Context advocates like Nixon White House Appointment’s Secretary, Dwight Chapin, aim to debunk myths, stating that the Nixon administration has been misconceived and distorted, to the point that there is now a sinister underpinning attached to their depictions.

Within this mentality, Watergate is seen as an organic problem emerging from the lack of understanding that existed within the Nixon White House and the nation about the type of person Nixon was, the way he operated as president, and the administration he created. The ‘Devil’s Advocate Theory’ is cited by Nixon speech-writer, Raymond Price, as a causal factor for Watergate, and is an original contribution of this research to the field of Watergate inquiry. This notion highlights Nixon attempt to illicit competing responses from his staff to generate debate and weigh up all of the available options before making a decision. It is said that the failure of some to see both sides of Nixon’s personality, the good and the bad, led to inappropriate operations within the Nixon administration, as his staff carried out his orders when they thought the president had made a decision about a problem, when in fact those that knew him recognised that he was just tossing around ideas.

Subscribers to the Precedent and Context view believe Nixon was a misunderstood character, whose critics have overlooked his talent and the sacrifices and challenges he had to overcome to be president. Nixon White House Domestic Council staffer, Frank Zarb, argued that Nixon is wrongly remembered more for Watergate than for the progressive policies he executed as president. Precedent and Context sympathisers maintain that the lesson of Watergate should centre on that fact that Nixon resigned, was pardoned, and the presidency still ran smoothly throughout his term of office.
Nixon as Victim

Those who do not see Nixon as playing the dominant role in Watergate, like long-time family friend Hubert Perry, point out that external elements need to be addressed in the portrayal of the scandal. They do so by looking at the actions of actors other than Nixon and groups outside the Nixon administration who played a role in bringing about the affair. They contend that Nixon’s downfall resulted from a coup d’état initiated by Nixon’s detractors in the Senate Watergate and House Judiciary Committees, the Press, and the Watergate Special Prosecution Force, who had aimed to reverse the presidential election decision of the people in 1972.\(^3\) In this way, Nixon is seen as a pawn in a game out of his control.

As District Attorney for the Watergate Grand Jury, Earl Silbert noted, Watergate has not yet fully been explained. This has led many conspiracy theorists to contend that factors involved in the scandal have been swept under the Watergate rug.\(^4\) In light of this, these commentators attempt to provide depictions of Nixon, his presidency and Watergate that go against commonly held perceptions. Those who see Nixon as history’s victim, such as Republican Senator Robert J. Dole, focus on Nixon’s positive characteristics and the advantageous impact of the Nixon presidency and its policies, and fail to acknowledge Nixon’s negative personality traits or actions on the Presidency and United States foreign policy, in their view of Watergate. Such sympathisers see Nixon as perfect for his presidential role, like Domestic Council Staffer, Geoffrey Shepard, who argued that the Nixon administration was revolutionary and the best of its kind.

Those in the Nixon Library Oral History Project who steer away from Nixon’s role in the Watergate scandal, draw on the ‘Berlin Wall’ concept to highlight the cause of Watergate. This theory is outlined in a novel way within this thesis, highlighting the view that Nixon did not have ultimate control or authority over his administration, and that rogue decision making existed in the Nixon White House, which led to Nixon’s downfall. Nixon as Victim thinkers like Frederic V. Malek, who served as Deputy Under-Secretary of the Department of Health

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\(^3\) This is the rationale given for the cause of Watergate in the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum’s previous Watergate exhibit, when it was run by the Nixon Foundation, a private enterprise of Nixon’s family and friends. For slides of the former exhibit see: The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. “The Old Watergate Exhibit”, Accessed November 28, 2012. Available at: http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/themuseum/exhibits/oldwatergatetour.php

Education and Welfare, White House Special Assistant for Personnel, and Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget, claimed that Watergate can best be explained by examining the motivations of Nixon’s presidential aides. Nixon as Victim sympathisers express the view that renegade staffers broke into the Watergate Complex without any presidential authority. In doing so, subscribers to this school move the scandal as far away from Nixon as possible, depicting the affair in a way that does not stem from Nixon’s attitudes, or the culture or structure he created for his White House and administration.

Promoters of the Nixon as Victim interpretation see the 37th President as wronged and undervalued in his presidential legacy, at the expense of the besmirching nature of Watergate. Nixon is viewed as being ousted from the presidency by his enemies and tarnished by those that would prefer to scapegoat a president for the country’s ills, rather than address other factors which may have influenced the emergence of the Watergate events. Supporters of this stance, like Nixon’s brother Ed, believe Nixon led the country at a time when it was sick, and argue that history will judge Nixon well, once the animosity towards the president fades and his achievements can be seen in their full glory. Nixon’s resignation is depicted by Director of Congressional Relations for the Nixon White House, William Timmons, as detrimental to the country, claiming his potential was frustrated. Those who advocate the Nixon as Victim perspective contend that President Nixon was betrayed by the country and the people around him, having paid a high price for Watergate, a price he may not have deserved.

In addition to mirroring the insights already outlined in Watergate’s historiography, this study has succeeded in deepening our understanding of the Affair by unearthing new themes and insights. The rival views brought together in this thesis, through the application of the Four Schools framework to the Nixon Library oral histories, demonstrate that the history and meaning of Watergate continue to be contested today, four decades after Nixon’s resignation.
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