



# Media Framing of the U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan

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## Background

- U.S. - Taliban sign peace deal (Feb 29, 2020)
- U.S. announces plan to withdraw troops (Nov 17, 2020)
- Biden extends initial deadline from May 1 to September 11 (April 14, 2021)
- Afghan government falls to the Taliban (August 15, 2021)
- ISIS terrorist attack at Kabul airport killing close to 200 (August 26, 2021)
- U.S. completes withdrawal, evacuating 120,000 people (August 30, 2021)



**Research Question:** Was there a change in the media's framing of the U.S. withdrawal in Afghanistan from when it was agreed upon by ex-President Trump and when it was executed by President Biden?

**Hypothesis:** The change in administration would result in a shift in how the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan was framed in the media.

**Independent Variable:** Administration (Biden/Trump)

**Moderating Variable:** Publication Source (New York Times/Wall Street Journal)

**Dependent Variables:**

1. Sources: U.S. military-intelligence-security officials, U.S. veterans, Afghan eyewitnesses, and ground reporting
2. Taliban framed as a threat to U.S. national security
3. Frequency of mention of women/girls in articles

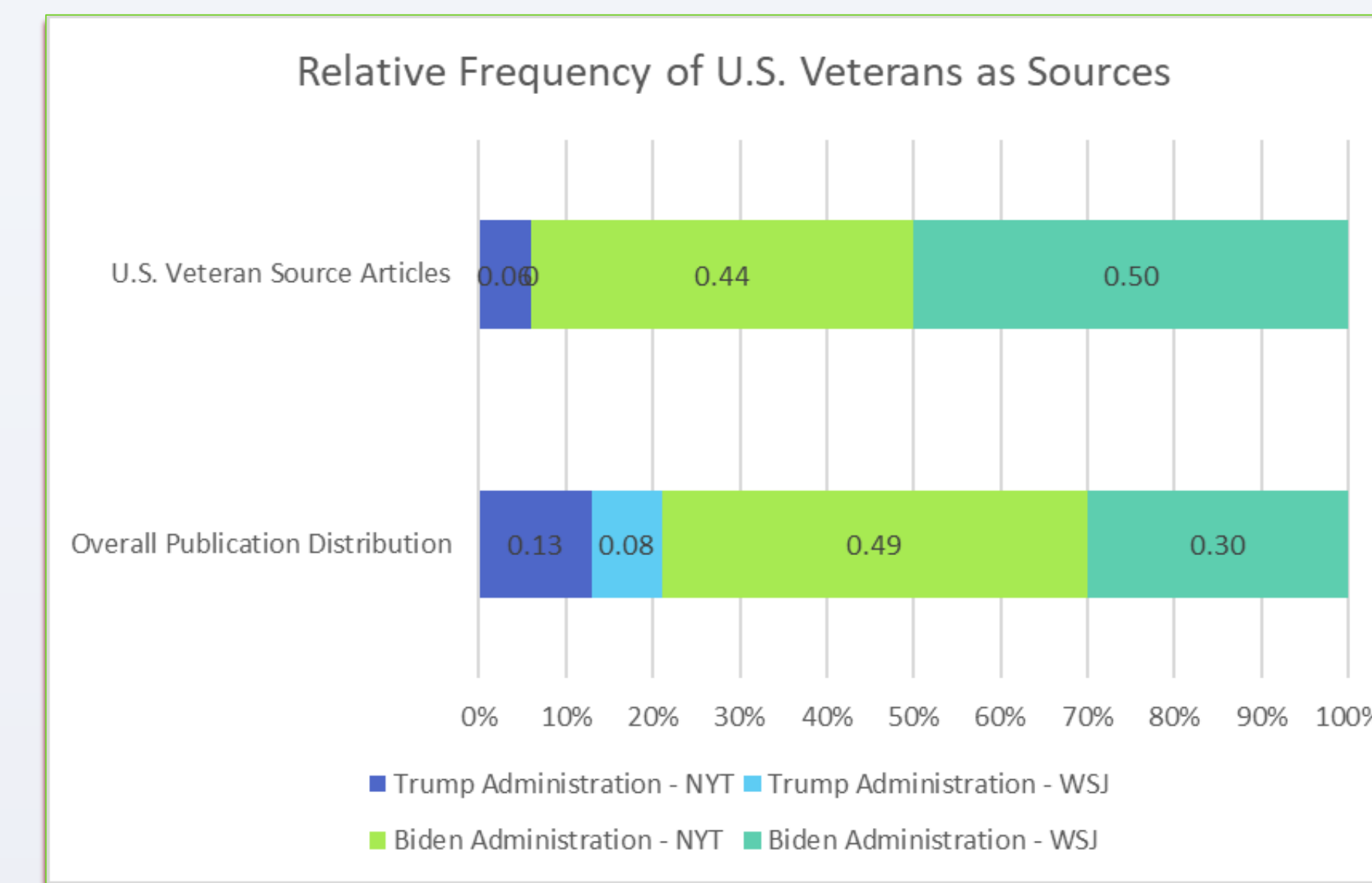
## Acknowledgments

Thank you to Professor Rolfe and Maddi Hertz for constant and frequent guidance and advice on how to continue to evolve our ideas. Thank you to Professor Blinder for your consult and guidance on future development of the research project.

## Results

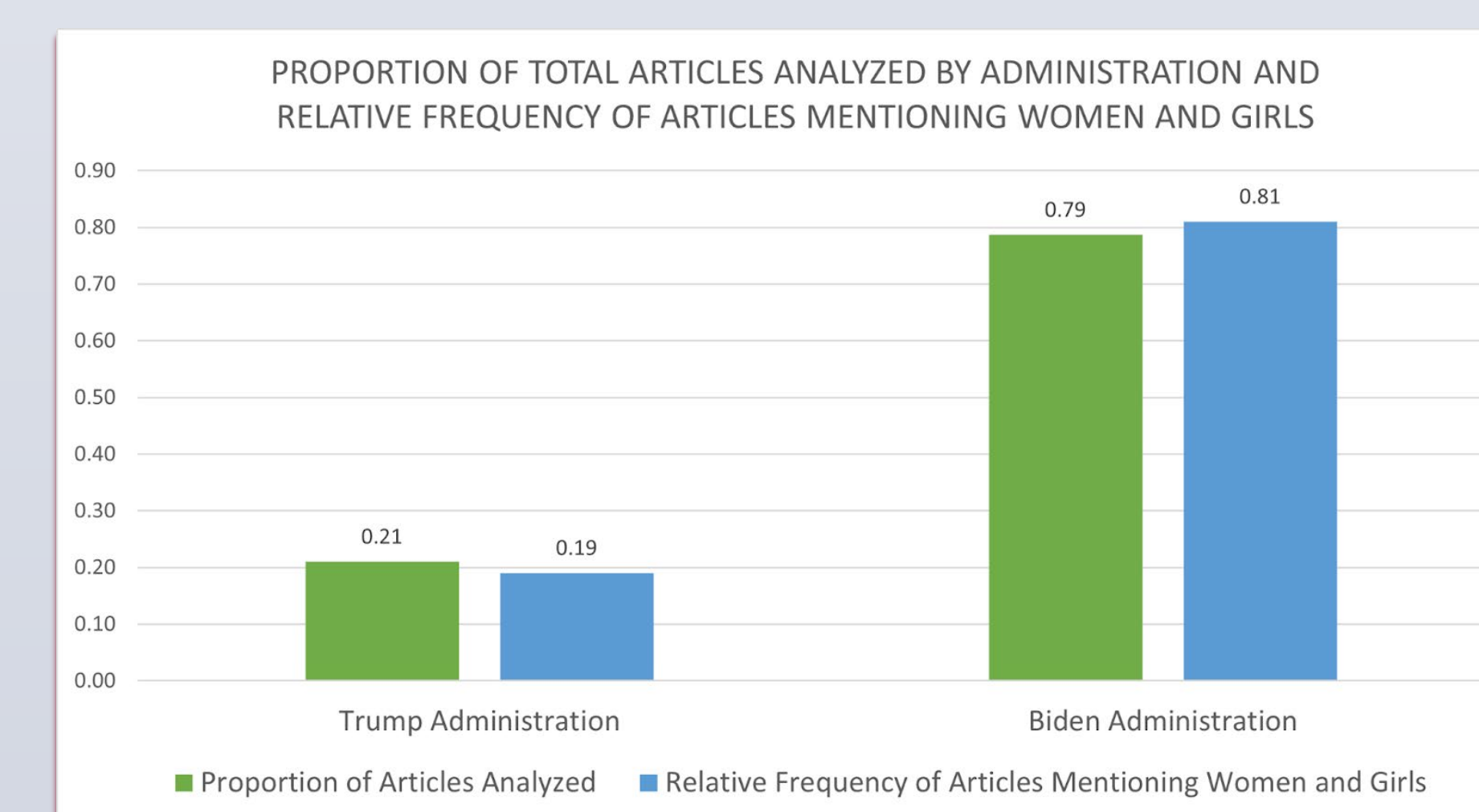
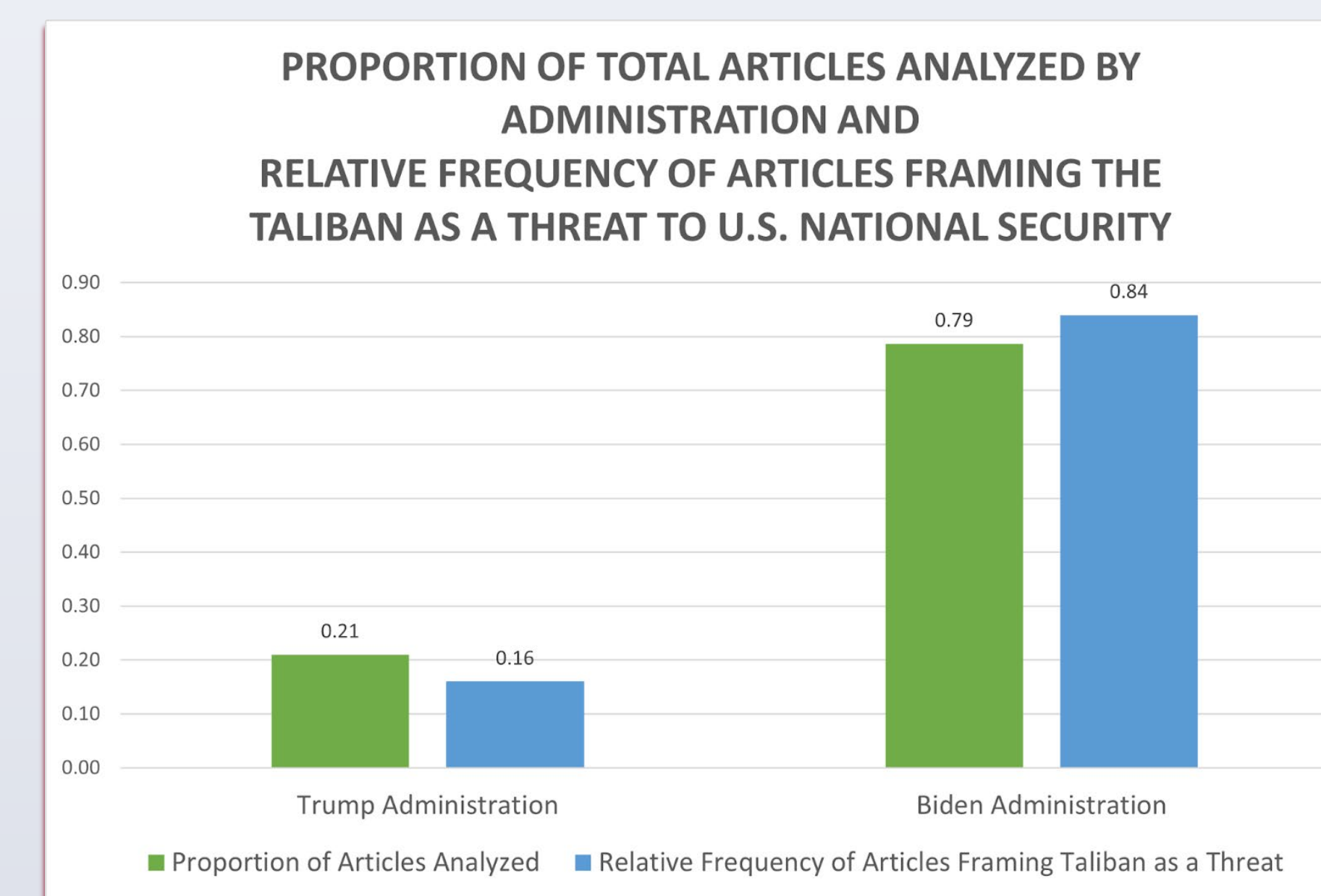
### Variable 1:

The relative frequency of the articles that use specific sources vary in significant levels between administrations and publications. The most significant variance is that of the use of U.S. military veterans as sources ( $n=79$ ,  $z=3.15$ ,  $p=0.0015$ )



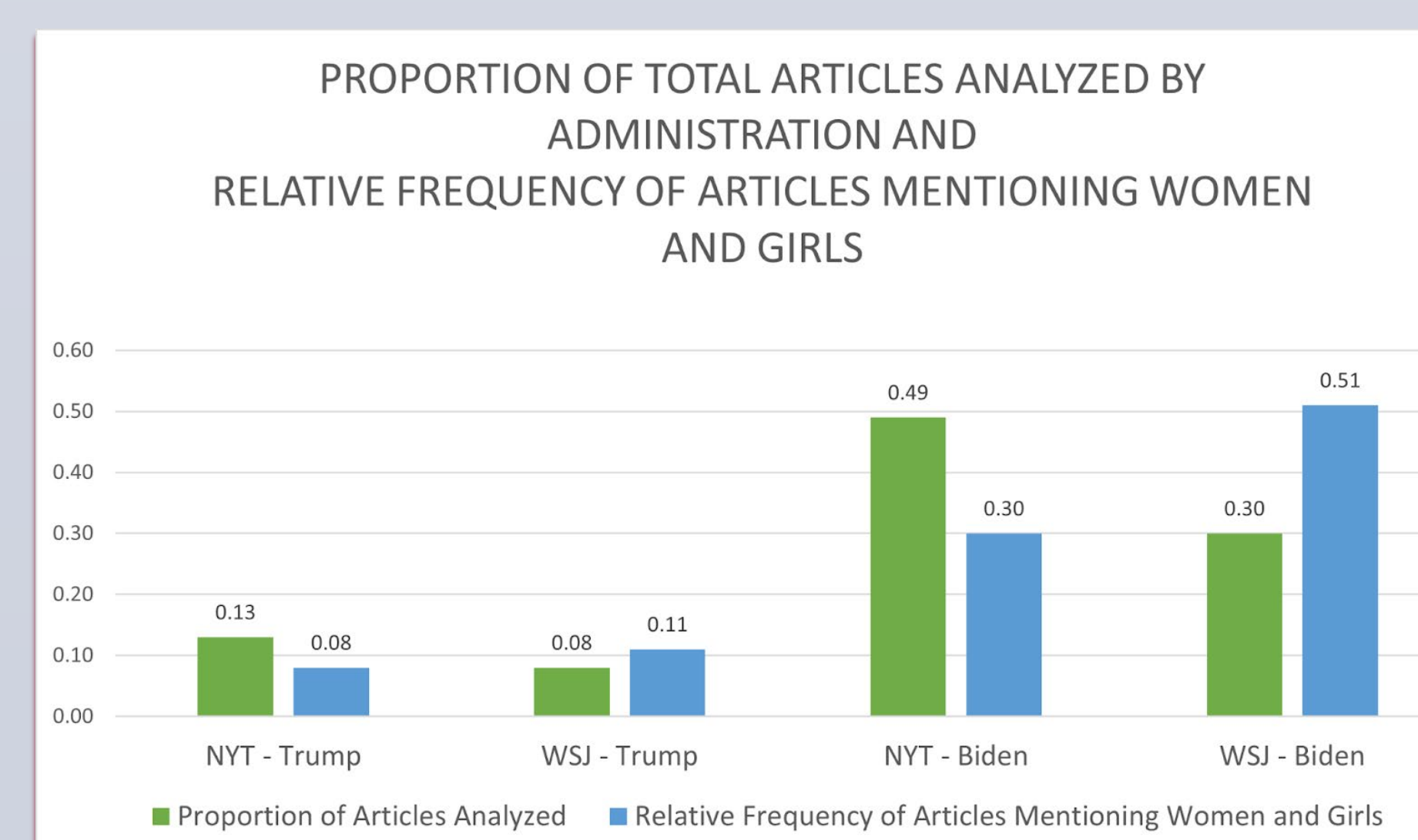
### Variable 2:

The relative frequency of articles that frame the Taliban as a threat to U.S. national security does not vary in a meaningful way from the proportion of articles reviewed from each administration.



### Variable 3a:

The relative frequency of the search terms 'women' and 'girls' does not vary in a meaningful way from the proportion of articles reviewed from each administration.



### Variable 3b:

The relative frequency of the search terms 'women' and 'girls' does have a meaningful variance when looking at the moderating factor of publication source, but only for reporting during the Biden administration ( $z=2.35$ ,  $p=0.0032$ ), not the Trump administration.

## Methods

**Data:** Keyword search "Afghanistan Withdrawal" in both media sources resulted in 625 articles. We took a random, stratified sample of 300 articles with a proportional amount from each administration and each source.

**Intercoder Reliability:** 10% of the articles were randomly sampled and coded by each member of the team to determine intercoder reliability. Once the Kappa scores met the 0.80 threshold, the team moved on the with full study analysis. After 3 revisions, our intercoder reliability was 83.92.

**Primary Coding Method:** To construct the data set, the 300 articles were divided among the team and coding was performed using NVivo 12.

**Secondary Coding Method:** To add to the data set, we used NVivo 12 text queries to determine simple word frequency among the sample articles for certain terms of interest. In addition, the articles were imported into NVivo using Zotero, which captured publication source and dates published.

## Limitations and Next Steps

Our research was limited by our capacity for hand-coding as well as a need for more nuanced automated search methods.

In further research, we would develop machine learning vectors to assist with text coding methods that can detect nuanced patterns on a broader article set. We would utilize the enhanced search methods to explore source framing more specifically as a component of information suppression within administrations.

After coding each article, we coded the article for the emotion felt by the coder as a result of reading it. This showed patterns that reflected changes in feel that coincided with major turning points in the timeline of events. We would like to explore more within those patterns, specifically between articles invoking the emotion of fear and potentially relevant article framing.

## References

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- Shearer, E., & Mitchell, A. (2021, May 19). *Broad agreement in U.S. – even among partisans – on which news outlets are part of the 'mainstream media'*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved November 2, 2021, from <https://pewrsc.ch/2Q42UrK>