

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE:
A STUDY OF THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS
OF MAYORAL PRESS SECRETARIES

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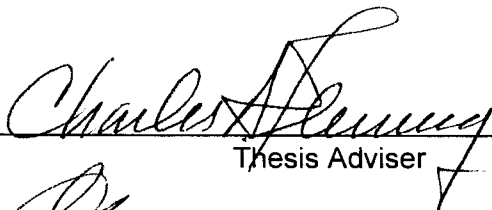
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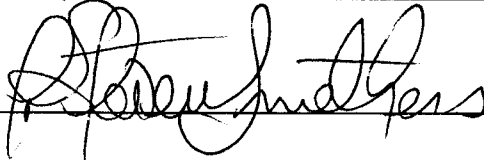
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PREFACE

This is a study about press secretaries written by a press secretary. Hence, one might have an impression that the role and functions which press secretaries play in the process of political communication will be favored at the expense of the mass media. I would like to dispel this notion from the very beginning. Statistics, which were so instrumental to this study, are a very meticulous discipline of science. So even if I had intended to favor my "brothers in arms," statistical analysis would not have allowed it.

Normally, press secretaries do not write studies like this because they are simply too busy with their routine daily activities. Also, the nature of the job of press secretary is reactive and oriented mostly to achieving short term goals. I was a lucky press secretary. Over the past two years, I met many fine people and experienced a fortunate course of events that finally helped produce this work. There is no chance I can possibly list them all on a single page.

First of all, I owe a great debt of gratitude to my adviser, Dr. Charles A. Fleming. Hardly anybody has ever spent so much time and showed such dedication to a thesis as Dr. Fleming did with *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. He went through all the drafts, provided many valuable ideas for improvements and shared all my anxieties that I felt as I was working through the study, not to mention editing my imperfect English. I would like to express my deep appreciation to him.

Throughout my study, I have also benefited from the generous support and

patient assistance by the graduate faculty of the School of Journalism & Broadcasting, namely Dr. Maureen J. Nemecek, Dr. Marlan D. Nelson, and Dr. J. Steven Smethers.

A very special thanks goes to all the fine folks -- mayoral press secretaries in more than 70 cities across the United States -- who took valuable time from their busy schedules and helped me by providing a lot of inspiring information.

I was fortunate to work for Mayor of Bratislava, Mr. Peter Kresanek. His consideration -- and his signature under my request for an unpaid leave of absence -- made this work possible. I also express my gratitude and friendship to the Chief of Staff in the Office of the Mayor in Bratislava, Mr. Broni Michalcak, and my former (and future) colleagues there. Their regular early morning phone calls provided great moral support and let me know that I always had a place to return.

Special thanks go to Beth, Rosemary, and Pelayo. Their support and friendship got me through some tough times that everybody encounters in a foreign country.

Ten years ago, I could have only dreamed about once studying in the United States. Therefore, my work on this study had symbolically begun on November 17, 1989. It is not pathetic to acknowledge here all my brave countrymen who brought democracy, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press back to my country. This date had also reinvented the job of press secretary in Czechoslovakia, and later in Slovakia.

Research for this study was supported in part by a grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board, with funds provided by the United States Information Agency. These organizations are not responsible for the views expressed herein.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents. Without their love and sacrifices it would never have been written.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General

Over the past twenty years, press secretaries and public information officers have become one of the most important staff members employed by elected officials. Their relationship with reporters has always been marked by natural antagonism present at any government/media relationship - the right of the people to know about their government through the press reporting and keeping an eye on the government and, at the same time, the government's interest to control the flow of information. Besides this main tension, the mutual interactions of government information officers with reporters are influenced by a wide variety of other factors, such as personal characteristics of the individuals and institutions involved, their professional knowledge, traits and abilities, and also commonly shared perceptions of how media operate and what is their factual importance in people's lives.

This study examined the public information professionals in the most important local government administrations in the United States with the ultimate goal to identify the personal requirements of the press secretaries and public information officers, their tasks, and their perceptions of many diverse elements of government's relations with the media and reporters.

Background

General

Since public relations emerged as a discipline, public relations practitioners and journalists have functioned in a mutually dependent relationship.¹ Sometimes they have been more like adversaries, other times as colleagues cooperating in mutual self-interest. This relationship alternates from side to side and varies from situation to situation. But the truth is that any of these two parties cannot effectively function without the other, although it might be desired by one or both parties.² When talking about press secretaries or public information officers, many reporters are inclined to say that a press secretary in an elected official's office exists only because the elected public official simply does not have enough time to answer numerous media inquiries. He or she must have someone whose duties mainly include answering the phone and acting as a liaison between reporters and the public official. It is only one half of the truth. Without the assistance of the government information officer, the news media would hardly function and could not do the full reporting job on the government. And so, while the traditional adversary relationship of the press and government persists, the press is not really able to cover government adequately and has increasingly grown to depend upon the public relations function of government.³

It is clear that the relationship between government information officers and the public now has a much more important public significance. This century witnessed the development of all the elements and channels of communication between the government and the citizens into the public information system. In this study, however, the focus was only on one aspect of the many interrelationships of the public information

system: the relationship of the news media and the governments' public information apparatus at the local level.

Since the Publicity Bureau in Boston in 1900 was founded to publicize Harvard University, railroads and other clients, the practice of public relations has grown into a major force in the United States.⁴ There are some 75,000 to 90,000 public relations practitioners employed in government, schools, colleges, corporations, voluntary agencies and in churches. They have come to constitute an influential component of the nation's public information system.

Press secretaries or public relations practitioners working in the government have never been very much in the spotlight of the public's interests and awareness. In the United States government, they even go under more camouflaged titles of "information officer," "public affairs officer," or even "education officer."

It is apparent that these professionals can be very instrumental. If the government office works as it should, they are among the first who have the knowledge of the information and they decide what, when, to whom and how is going to be communicated. In the process of making and managing the news, the press secretaries and public relations practitioners make the reporters more and more dependent upon the news sources for their information and for their "angle."⁵ But the primary function of informing the people about the government is still left to the free press. It is often said that the genius of the American system stems in part from the healthy tensions between a free press and the men responsible for conducting the people's business.⁶

The press secretary or the public information officer is a very new position in historic terms. The full-pledged press secretaries are creatures not only of the twentieth century but of about the last fifty years.⁷ And it was only in the past twenty or so years

that the press secretary has become a probable function among the closest staff of an elected public official in other than presidential level of the government. Now every member of the United States Senate and of the United States House of Representatives employs a professional, though not necessarily called "press secretary."⁸ These individuals perform a wide variety of duties including answering media inquiries, writing and distributing press releases, giving quotes on behalf of the representative, writing speeches, answering constituency correspondence, and, above all, trying to be constantly accessible for reporters to convey the information from the public official's office. The situation is not much different in the state, county and city levels. Both governors and mayors are likely to have such a person among their most important staff members.

The logical question that arises from all this is a simple one: Who they are? And what they do? Who are the people with various different titles of their position whose primary task lingers: to facilitate the relations of the government office they work in with the media. These are the two fundamental issues this study intends to shed more light on. The third basic question examines the perceptions, beliefs, and opinions inside the heads of the press secretaries. The study was to find out how the press secretaries and public information officers perceive their relationship with reporters, what the main reasons are for some tension that persists in their interrelationship, what kind of factors influence their performance and behavior in relations with the press, what their opinions are on how the present media work and how immense its importance is in people's lives, and what the press secretaries and public information officers do to manage satisfactory press relations, both for their political bosses as well as for their fellow newsmen. In this position, the press secretary's role was understood as a liaison between the elected

official he or she serves and the press. The conflict from serving two masters, the press and the elected public official, seemed to be inevitable. The press secretary very often finds himself "between a rock and a hard place."

The role of communication between government and the people, and their interrelationship has been of principal importance since the earliest days. It is even more important to explore and understand it now when both government and communication became bigger, more complex, and more technologically advanced. Efforts of several scholars of political communication to systematize and quantify this process provide assistance in the form of several models and theories of the political communication between government and its publics.

Theoretical Framework

This study looked at the political communication as a circular process arranged in component parts.⁹ It is a continuous process where the response affects the sender as much as the sender affects the response.¹⁰ It was assumed that the press secretaries and public information officers were involved in dialogue as depicted, e.g., by Harold Lasswell and did not understand communication as a one-shot action, or a one-way flow of information. The findings of the study were to indicate whether the governments in practice were involved in two-way communication with their publics or they failed to interpret their communication role according to this model and merely sent the messages to the publics.

Today, public relations is an integral part of American government and politics, even though it may be covered up by different names. Like communication, public relations is also a process.¹¹ This process usually consists of five parts: researching the

publics, stating the goals, shaping the ideas, organizing and communicating the effort, and evaluating the results of the communication. This process is circular, too. According to this model, the press secretaries and public information officers shall be able to research their publics, to answer the questions, such as "Who are the publics?" "What do they think?" "What will they accept?" Ray Hiebert of the University of Maryland submitted one such model of organizing and communicating the effort in the public information systems.¹² This model includes four different strategies: withholding, releasing, staging, persuading. A variety of different communication techniques are used, such as off-the-record sessions, press releases, press briefings, controlled media (e.g., a newsletter), staged events, speeches, advertising, public service announcements, or direct mail.

William McGuire offered another model of a two-way communication system for the theoretical framework of this study. His directive theory of an input/output model of persuasive communication explains how the various aspects of communication are channeled into the successive steps culminating in attitude and action change.¹³ McGuire analyzes the process into an input/output matrix in which the input consists of the various components out of which one can construct communication to change attitudes and actions. The output consists of the successive information processing steps which the target person must take in responding to the communication if it is to have its intended persuasive impact.¹⁴ According to this model, communication can be divided into five classes of variables, including source, message, channel, receiver, and destination, each of these with several factors.

In order to improve the practice of public relations it is important to understand how and why the organizations and the individuals practice public relations the way they

do. Professors James E. Grunig of the University of Maryland and Todd Hunt of Rutgers have constructed four models of public relations as a theoretical conceptualization of the public relations practice.¹⁵ All four models are practiced today at all different levels of the government although the government agencies are most likely to practice the so-called public information model. The "ideal" model, the two-way symmetric, has been increasingly used lately, too.¹⁶ Extensive research by the Grunigs shows that different types of organizations typically practice different models.¹⁷

Grunig's models fall into two basic dimensions: one-way vs. two-way communication, and asymmetrical (manipulative) vs. symmetrical (informative) communication. The press agency/publicity model describes public relations programs whose purpose is getting favorable publicity for an organization in any way possible. The communication is viewed as telling, not listening. The main fields of practice are sports, theater, and product promotion. The public information model sees public relations only as the dissemination of information. The information is usually more truthful than that produced by press agents. This model appears to be the most common in practice. Its primary fields by about fifty percent of public relations are government, non-profit associations, and business.¹⁸

Both of these models are one-way communication. Neither uses research and planning. Their purpose is asymmetrical -- to change the behavior of publics but not of the organization.

The two-way asymmetrical model uses research to develop messages that are likely to persuade strategic publics to behave as the organization wants. The model causes some feedback to the source. The fourth and, according to Grunig, most effective model, is the two-way symmetrical model which features public relations based

on research that uses communications to manage conflict with strategic publics.

Although the data collected in this study were to suggest which of the four models best described mayoral press secretaries and public information officers, the degree to which they practice one model or another was not meant to be examined.

Statement of the Problem

The aim of the study was to examine the individuals facilitating communication between the local government administration and its publics. More specifically, this study aimed at providing a picture of a typical press secretary or a public information officer if there is a "typical" press secretary working with city government in the United States.

Moreover, the study aspired to look for an answer to the questions how the mayoral press secretaries and public information officers perceive their mutual relationship with reporters, what they think about how media work, and how they perceive the importance the media might have on the attitudes and actions of the citizens in the present world.

Purpose

This study researched an important staff position at the local government level -- that of press secretary or public information officer - by analyzing responses to a questionnaire administered to a sample of more than one hundred mayoral press secretaries. The purpose was to describe these public information professionals by their personal characteristics, day-to-day duties and other routine activities, skills and

accounts of their credibility that they enjoy among the journalists. The study was also interested in finding out if a press secretary had the power to control the public image of the mayor, whether the press secretary was responsible for the tone of messages that came out from the city hall, the degree of accessibility, willingness to respond, knowledgeability and overall image of press secretaries, what kind of respect -- if any -- they enjoy among the reporters, and how they perceive communications with the media from the point of view of some of the communications theories such as agenda-setting, persuasion, gatekeeping, interpersonal communication, powerful effects models, etc.

Methodology

General

The data for the study were collected primarily by a mail survey of 102 press secretaries for the city governments in 102 cities of the United States. It shall be noted right at the beginning that, for the purpose of this study, the term "press secretary" has been chosen to cover all possible titles of the position within the city government administration in which principal task is to manage relations of the city government with the local and national media and convey the information from the city government to the public. Hence, under the term "press secretary," one can find a "spokesman to the mayor," "public information officer," "director of public affairs," "communications director," "press officer," "media manager," and many other titles that might not even include familiar words as "press," "public information," or "communication." Accordingly, the city governments of larger cities have a press secretary directly assigned to the mayor and a dozen public information officers who work for various professional

departments of the city administration. In other cities, the workload of a press secretary expects him or her to work for the mayor, as well as for the deputy mayor(s), city manager, director of public works, and other public officials. This study is focused on the press secretaries who work for the mayors as the head representatives of their cities.

Other research methods including structured personal interviews and group techniques were used as secondary methods for collecting the data for the study. The primary method of the study was the mail survey of 102 mayoral press secretaries all across the United States. A four-page questionnaire was developed as a survey instrument. Some of the questions were previously used in the corresponding studies (Cook, 1989; Hess, 1991). New queries explored mostly perceptions of the press secretaries of the media operations and importance of the media.

The sample size of 102 press secretaries to the mayors of the largest United States cities was comparable with those used by Cook (1989; 124 subjects), Hess (1991; 97 subjects) and Bruce, Downes (1994; 136 subjects) in the previous related studies. The criteria for the selection of the sample -- the size of the city and the existence of the local news media -- are discussed in Chapter III.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

As mentioned above, the study attempted to answer some general research questions regarding the demographic characteristics of the press secretaries working in the city government level, both their personal depiction as well as description of their routine day-to-day duties and responsibilities. The second general group of research questions was focused on how the press secretaries perceive their mutual relationship with the media, what they think about how media work and what is their evaluation of

the importance of media for the public and for their city's constituency. Finally, the third area of questions converged on the credibility of press secretaries and how much control they assume they have over the communication with the media.

The ultimate goal of the study was to provide a general report about the mayoral press secretaries including their beliefs, motivations, and perceptions of their relationship with the mass media and their role in political communication and news making process. The working hypotheses designed for this purpose included:

(H1) Press secretaries have previous media experience and/or journalism higher education;

(H2) Press secretaries are among the closest members of the mayor's staff;

(H3) The range of press secretaries duties and activities vary depending on the characteristics of a city and/or region and the local media market;

(H4) Press secretaries strongly believe that the media are agenda-builders;

(H5) Press secretaries perceive that the media generally hold them in disregard;

(H6) Press secretaries think and work with the assumption that the media present partisan unbalanced viewpoints of the news events.

Research Objectives

The study aimed at obtaining a general picture of the current mayoral press secretaries in the most significant cities in the United States. The three basic research questions of the study can be summarized as who these individuals are, what they do and how they think about media and relations with them.

It was a goal to define the role of mayoral press secretaries in the political communication process in the local government/local media level. The study would

want to look at the press secretaries as public relations professionals, equally important to the political communication process as journalists.

Significance of the Study

The traditional nature of the press secretaries' work is rather reactive than proactive. Press secretaries mostly respond to something that has already happened. The amount of regular day-to-day duties does not allow them to stop, take a deep breath and think about their jobs. There are no professional organizations that unites press secretaries. The mayoral press secretaries have no information about how their colleagues in other cities perform in the same position, what they do differently and, possibly, better, how they deal with the exactly same situation that might occur another time in another place. They do not even know the name of the press secretary in a neighboring city.

This study may provide at least basic information for the mayors' press secretaries by a direct analysis of their representative group. The answers to the research questions put together in one place can provide a small handy manual for other professionals dealing with media relations at the local government level as many of the tasks do not differ from city to city and even regularly repeat in the same administration. If the study fills the gaps that exist among press secretaries in all different regions around the country, the main objective will be served.

Finally, as was mentioned, the literature about media relations at the local government level is not particularly rich. This study may provoke further research in other possible areas of local governmental relations and their public information officers, such as the differences in their credibility, what they do and where they go after they

finish as press secretaries, etc., that were not the subject of this study.

Limitations and Scope of the Study

The sample of the study was a purposive (judgmental) sample because it took into account almost all the cities in the United States that had the position of a press secretary in their local government. Thus, the results can be considered fairly reliable, ready to generalize and with relatively high external validity because the sample did not differ much with the overall population. However, there are several serious limitations to this study that shall be noted here.

- The results obtained by the mail survey shall not be overvalued. The mail survey can reach a big number of respondents but it is a very artificial research method and some of the questions are traditionally vulnerable as far as a truthful response to them is concerned. The internal validity of the study certainly suffered from this.
- The survey was done between October and December, 1995. Mass communication is a very dynamic field of study. Thus, the results fairly reflect the state of mind of the respondents in this period but are subject to change over time.
- The study did not aspire to explore all possible problems of a spokesperson's profession, e.g., the problem of a press secretary's credibility, of a continuation of their careers after leaving the press secretary's job, or of their roles in less visible tasks, such as community liaison, issue management, special events organization, etc. These are possible research areas for other studies. Also, the study did not make difference in various kinds of media, especially between the

press and the electronic media. Very probably, the answers to several questions concerning the media performance and importance would be different, particularly for television and print media.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized in five basic chapters, including the introductory Chapter I. Chapter II gives a brief account of existing studies of the press secretaries for the government organizations that were found relative and corresponding to this study. In many cases, they served as a necessary historical background for the research of the mayoral press secretaries. Chapter III describes with more details the research methodology that has been used for the study, with more emphasis on the research design with its variables and hypotheses, sampling procedure, data collection plan and drafting the questionnaire, as well as statistical tests that have been used for the analysis of the data. The findings are presented in the following Chapter IV with the evaluation and interpretation of the data according to six principal research problems: personal characteristics of press secretaries, duties and responsibilities, description of administration they work for, credibility of press secretaries and their perceptions of media importance and how media work. Chapter V offers a brief summary of the findings and restatements of the research hypotheses with respect to their possible generalization. Also, recommendations for further research in the area are proposed.

Endnotes

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18. Wilcox, 57.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The government/media relations, and the role of information officers were not neglected subjects of inquiry, at least in the last fifteen or twenty years. One bibliographic essay on trends in political communication includes more than 600 works published during the 1980s on the interactions between government officials and journalists.¹ An important contribution to this body of knowledge was done as a part of the Washington, D.C. based Brookings Institution's Governmental Studies program. These works surveyed the personnel and organization of the press corps and press offices in the executive government agencies and in the Congress.

Press secretaries were mentioned in the works that fell into three different categories important for the theoretical framework of this study: (a) systematization of the process of political communication; (b) public affairs and public relations handbooks and guides for effective communication; and (c) the effects, process, and influences of communication theories.

Some of the works that have been collected for the purpose of this study deal with the way in which governments - local, state, and federal - communicate with the people, either directly or through the mass media. Other sources discuss the way in which the people obtain information from government. Finally, some of the most relevant studies deal with the problems that arise at the intersection of society at which government and people "meet" through the media.

The review of the literature that was found relevant to the topic of this study is organized in general-to-specific order. It begins with the works that deal with the theories of political communication, and some of the most significant efforts for the systematization and quantification of political communication. The adversary relationship between government information officers and journalists is discussed next. The emergence of professional individuals who handle the relations of a government agency with the press is explored at different levels -- from presidency to local government. Finally, closely related research on the personnel and organization of governmental press offices is discussed at the end of this chapter along with arguments on where and how this study contributes to the overall knowledge of government/media relations.

Review of the Literature

Political Communication as Two-way Process

The growth of public information has been a part of the growth of government and the profession of public relations. While the press and government have continued their traditional adversary relationship, the press is not really able to cover government adequately and has increasingly grown to depend upon the public relations function of government. If a newspaper were to quit relying on government press releases but continued covering the news it now covers, it would need at least two or three times as many reporters.² Thirty years ago, Ray E. Hiebert (1968) wrote that "so vast and complicated is the operation of the government today that the press would find it virtually impossible to perform even this basic function without the assistance of the growing army of government information officers."³ Since then the activities of the governments

increased manyfold. Now both press and government have a new responsibility toward each other and toward the public to do the very best possible job in communicating what the people need to know in order to govern themselves.⁴

A lot of theoretical literature in the field of political communication was dedicated to exploring the question of what constitutes effective communication between government and the citizens, and how government can cause it. Most of the literature used in this study viewed the communication between government and its publics as a circular process arranged in component parts. It is a continuous process where the response affects the sender as much as the sender affects the response.⁵ Communication is not a one-shot action, nor is it one-way. It should be a dialogue.

Yet, in practice governments in the United States and other countries often fail to interpret their communication role according to this model. The government officials and their aides responsible for relations with the publics merely send messages to the masses.⁶

If public information officers are to help with stating goals and policies, they must be able to research the publics, know who they are, what they think, and what they will accept. The creative role of public information officers involves deciding which medium, or media, should best carry the message, for the medium itself shapes the message.⁷

The process of political communication and the public relations function of government has rapidly become systematized. Practitioners now can quantify and measure the different results of different solutions to public relations problems.

One of the first attempts to systematize the process of political communication was that of Norbert Wiener and Karl W. Deutsch (1963). Wiener called his communication theory model by the term "cybernetics" and offered notions,

propositions and models derived from the philosophy of science and specifically from the theory of communication. Deutsch looked at the government less as a problem of power and more as a problem of steering.⁸ According to Deutsch, steering is decisively a matter of communication. The viewpoint of cybernetical relationship suggests that all organizations are alike in certain fundamental characteristics and that every organization is held together by communication. It is communication, that is, the ability to transmit messages and to react to them that makes organizations.⁹

Another significant concept of communication elaborated since the 1940s is feedback. Feedback means a communication network that produces action in response to an input of information, and includes the results of its own action in the new information by which it modifies its subsequent behavior.¹⁰ All governments depend upon such processing of information.¹¹ Such a relationship between government and its publics is often referred to as "dynamic." This happens when the people are involved in feeding information, judgments, frustrations, attitudes back to their government. The public information officer who permits these dynamics is the one who facilitates democratic interaction between the government and its constituency.¹² This is the true concept of two-way communication that has emerged as fundamental for solving problems between governments and the public.

Among other attempts to organize communications between government and citizens, there is a model submitted by University of Maryland professor Ray E. Hiebert (1981). Hiebert's model consists of four different strategies: withholding, releasing, staging, persuading. The model takes advantage of a variety of communication techniques, such as off-the record sessions, news media, press releases, press briefings, controlled media, staged events, press conferences, speeches, advertising,

public service announcements, direct mail. They all are used by government press secretaries, public information officers and public relations practitioners.

Today, public relations is an integral part of American government and politics even though it may not always be called that. Like communication, public relations is also a process.¹³ This process can be modeled to include five parts: researching the public, stating the goals, shaping the ideas, organizing and communicating the effort, and evaluating the results. Professors Grunig and Hunt (1984) developed a theoretical conceptualization of public relations practice at the organizational level. Their models of public relations have two dimensions: one-way vs. two-way communication; and asymmetrical (manipulative) vs. symmetrical (informative) communication. The scheme places public relations practice into four models: press agentry/publicity (one-way asymmetrical model), public information (one-way symmetrical model), two-way asymmetrical model, and two-way symmetrical model.¹⁴ Although some studies found only limited support for Grunig's models¹⁵, organizations seem to practice all four different types of public relations models. Extensive research by Grunig shows that government organizations are most likely to practice the public information (one-way symmetric) model, while corporations practice the two-way asymmetrical model. According to Grunig, the two-way symmetrical model is the one most likely to make an organization effective.¹⁶

Public Relations Experts and Journalists - Dependent Adversaries

Public relations or public information officers and journalists have functioned in a mutually dependent relationship since public relations emerged. Sometimes they act as adversaries, sometimes as colleagues in mutual self-interest. The advantages and

antagonisms in this relationship alternate from side to side, and vary from situation to situation.¹⁷ But the real truth is that one party cannot effectively function without the other although it might be desired by one or both parties.¹⁸

The relationship between government public relations professionals and journalists has an important public significance. Reporters traditionally view themselves as the guardians of the public interest and the seekers of the news that will be of maximum value in building an audience which advertisers will pay to reach. The emphasis is on aberrational, destructive, newsworthy personalities.¹⁹ Public relations practitioners are employed to advance the interest of their employer by spotlighting favorable news and softening or suppressing what would be unfavorable to the employer if it became known.

The conflict between the public relations practitioner and the news media is particularly acute in the reporting of government activities at the federal, state, and local levels. But there are opinions which suggest that the ideal relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners should be that of adversaries (e.g., Rivers, 1970). In the age of monopoly newspapers, county and municipal governments are covered by only one or two people. Almost nowhere can the public count on radio or TV reporters to probe and investigate city governments. Rivers argued that reporters did not nurture challenging reportage nor were they assigned to the grinding beat work. Unless the local government's reporter's skepticism is deep-grained and his skin quite thick, he will take the easy course of accepting what he is handed.²⁰

Other authors, e.g., Cater (1959), describe the mutual relationship between the public relations experts and journalists as mostly adversarial although "much of this tension between the two institutions of press and government is part of the healthy

unrest of democracy."²¹ But at the same time, both parties are becoming more and more dependent upon each other. In the process of making news, the public relations official makes the reporter more and more dependent upon the news sources for their information and for their "angle."²² But the power of the media to ignore "news" is equally influential in setting the public agenda. Both the newsman and the public relations practitioner are deeply involved in determination of public opinion and public decisions. The ways in which the government machinery may be misused were laid out in a book by David Wise (1973).²³ On the other hand, those who govern depend primarily on the news media -- print and electronic -- to convey their ideas and criticisms. The press has become the only institution in a large society equipped to disseminate public information quickly and universally.²⁴ The machinery of the news media provide the common carriers for the two-way flow of information and ideas that are essential to democratic government. In particular, the television networks, which attempt to cover the world in 4,000 words and 22 minutes each night, have become, for ill or good, the most popular and credible source of news -- despite the distortion imposed by its format.²⁵ But as Hess (1986) argues the genuine significance of the television coverage for the government officials needs to be explored more.²⁶

Public Information and Public Affairs

In government, public relations practitioners often go under the titles of "public information officer," "public affairs director," "special assistant," or even "education officer." Because the term "public relations" has taken on a negative connotation in some sectors, many government agencies have folded media relations into the subsections of their public affairs departments that deal with the community,

government or investor relations.²⁷ Besides, it is against the law to use appropriated money for the employment of publicity experts. The Gillette Amendment, Section 3107 of Title V of the U.S. Code from 1913 reads: "Appropriated funds may not be used to pay a publicity expert unless specifically appropriated for that purpose."²⁸ This law was even reinforced in 1919. Therefore, the terms "public relations" and "publicity" are seldom used by a government agency and the public relations practitioners are hidden behind various euphemisms.

Perhaps the most frequently used term, "public affairs," is meant to describe a specialty area of public relations that deals with community relations and government affairs. Public affairs is not a science. It is not even a discrete discipline. It is a blend of public relations skills, knowledge of governmental process, and understanding of business principles originated from many sources: law, politics, economics, communications, or other fields.²⁹

James H. Dowling, president of Burson-Marsteller includes in public affairs "government relations, constituency relations, crisis preparedness and crisis management, issue management, risk communications, which interact in a creative and innovative manner with other counseling and communications capabilities for maximum possible effect."³⁰

In a much broader context, the term "public affairs" is used by state legislatures, Congress and various government agencies for the public relations activities of government to inform citizens about programs and policies.

The Emergence of Information Officers

Without a government's public relations practitioner or information officer, the news media could not function as effectively and as economically as they do. The role of the public information officer is steadily expanding although some authors, such as Hiebert (1981) point out that the function of the public information officer is still regarded as a stepchild of bureaucracy.³¹ It is clear that the news media cannot do the full reporting job without public relations assistance. On the other hand, sources who make information quickly and inexpensively available to journalists increase the likelihood that the information will be consumed.³² Some scholars (Gandy, 1982) call these sources "information subsidies"³³ but they can be understood as press secretaries, public information officers or public relations practitioners who supply information to the media.

Every government understands the importance of informing the people about the government's activities and, preferably, in a favorable light. There has always been a need for government communications, if for no other reason than to inform citizens of the services available and the manner in which they may be used.³⁴ Many early administrations employed members of the press or newsmen to write for them or to handle relations with the press (Lincoln, Jackson, F.D. Roosevelt). But the idea of a government agency employing a newspaperman to handle its press and public relations apparently did not occur to anyone in Washington until around 1910 when the Census Bureau employed Whitman Osgood as its "expert special agent."³⁵ Thus, the press secretary is a new position in historic terms. The full-pledged press secretaries are creatures not only of the twentieth century but of about the last fifty years. The job originated with Franklin D. Roosevelt because the President for the first time in history

became close to people. But relations between the President and the press go back to the beginning of the United States, back to George Washington, and these relations started out on an adversarial basis. There was a desire to put a buffer between the President and the press so some of the fiercer blows coming from the press could be absorbed by the press secretary.³⁶

Other landmarks in the evolution of government public information included the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President of the United States in 1932 and the creation of the Office of War Information when the United States entered World War II in 1941. By the end of the Truman administration, there were 3,632 employees of the government classified as "information specialists" plus numerous public affairs officers working as special assistants to Cabinet officials.³⁷ During Eisenhower's first term, information specialists nearly doubled, and in 1967, an Associated Press survey reported the existence of 6,858 information specialists. Fifty-four of sixty major government agencies had information programs.³⁸ The press began to operate as a quasi official fourth branch of government.³⁹ It was only natural that every major government agency must have had highly skilled professionals to handle its relations with the fourth estate.

At present, the United States government is one of the world's greatest collectors and disseminators of information. An estimated 10,000 to 12,000 federal employees are engaged in what can be called "public relations" work.⁴⁰ Traditionally, the largest number is in the Department of Defense. Many people can argue that government should use their tax money for better things than persuading the public about the government's programs and points of view. But, as Wilcox wrote (1992) it could be argued as well that if billions of dollars are spent on government programs, it

makes sense to spend money on publicizing those programs among the citizens so that they can take advantage of them.⁴¹

Leaks, Gatekeeping, Spins and Other "Sins"

Without public relations practitioners or public information officers, the news media could not fulfill their primary function of reporting on government, and the public would not receive the information that is vital for making right decisions in democratic society. On the other hand, the public relations experts and public information officers often face charges that they control the information and manipulate public opinion.

Among some of the most negative connotations that were given to public information officers and press secretaries lately, the term "spin doctor" is the most common. The pejorative describes a person who shapes public opinion by using the media as his agents. It is more precisely to be used to identify the image makers who interpret the results of elections or polls for journalists offering them "a spin" favorable to their bosses.⁴² To some, spin doctor is a new communication role.⁴³

The spin control model and the public relations model differ on a number of dimensions, including goals, media used, typical clients, common tools, communication techniques, orientations to the public, breadth of appeal, and concern with self-image. Spin doctors stress personal contacts with the media attempting to intervene earlier in the news making process by using new technology to greater advantage. It is yet unclear whether public relations practitioners want to distance themselves from the spin doctor phenomenon, or claim them as part of their field, or select what is effective from the spin doctor repertoire and incorporate it into the traditional public relations models while ignoring the rest.⁴⁴

Another technique that is often charged against the press secretaries and public information officers is the "leak." After information comes through the formal channels - press releases, speech text, public document, news conference, briefing, interview, or an observation of the event, reporters gather additional information through informal means that have come to be lumped together as "leaks." A "leak" is a premature unauthorized partial disclosure. But the leak is rarely a tool of press officers whose domain is formal channels of communication. The former White House press secretary George Reedy once said that since manipulation of the press involves favoritism to some newsmen it inevitably creates antagonism among others, something that a press secretary is not interested in at all.⁴⁵

Some believe that the press secretary decides what information shall go to the public and what information shall not, a technique that is known in theory of communications literature as "gatekeeping." But press secretaries refuse this charge saying that it is not their job. Said George Reedy, former press secretary for President Lyndon B. Johnson: "He [the press secretary] is there for one purpose only, that is to speak for the President. He cannot speak any other way because of the nature of our government: press secretary only had one vote for his job, the man for whom he is speaking had tens of millions of votes."⁴⁶ The role of the press secretary is to speak on behalf of an elected public official. He or she is not there to make decisions on what the press shall print or shall not print.

One question is central to many studies that deal with the government/media relations: who controls the stream of information about government that reaches the public? Authors attempt to balance concern about the government's abilities to manipulate the press, with complaints by officials that the press prevents the

government from effectively pursuing a policy agenda.

It is perhaps not by chance that the orientation in most of the studies favors the media. Also, there is a lot of evidence that press coverage influences the success of official policy proposals and that the press affects the reputation and, hence, the power of public officials.⁴⁷ Morgan, a British author, provided a particularly gloomy view of the course of American politics in his book published in 1986. He argued on the agenda-setting concept that the mass media may tell citizens what to think about and how to do so, but government may do the same for the mass media.⁴⁸ Martin Linsky (1986) focused exclusively on the relationship of the press with the executive side of the policy process. He went back to Kennedy's presidency and surveyed two hundred officials of the period.⁴⁹ He found a mixture of activist and reactivist press officers. An important, and often successful, way that officials influence the flow of information through the media is by anticipating press reactions. Only the assistance of government in the shape of the press office can ensure that reporters get the basic information they need in the time allotted to them by the organizations. And although they look down on press officers, they rely on them for information on what is going on. After all this, it appears that the news media control the dams and locks in the flow of information but the river belongs to the government.⁵⁰

The White House and Relations with Media

The press secretary is often thought of as a middle-aged confidant of his boss -- somebody like President Eisenhower's Jim Hagerty or President Bush's Marlin Fitzwater.⁵¹ It is no wonder as presidential press secretaries became celebrities over the years. Much has been written about the government/media connection, but by far the

most frequent topic has been White House press operations.

William Spragens' book (1980) on the office of the White House press secretary and presidential media operations provides a historical survey of this institution over the presidency of eight U.S. presidents since the end of World War II.⁵² But White House press relations began earlier, on an evening in late September 1901, shortly after dusk, when President Theodore Roosevelt beckoned to two friends waiting outside his office on the second floor of the White House and asked them to join him for a walk through the darkened streets of Washington.⁵³ For the first time in American history, reporters became part of the White House operation. This episode described in Juergens' book (1981) began a progressive era of White House press relations -- an era when some of the most critical phases of the stormy relationship between President and the press took place.⁵⁴ Roosevelt and Wilson were the first presidents who recognized that power meant generating the right kind of publicity for themselves.

It would be a mistake to view the relationship between the White House and the news organizations as basically antagonistic. The adversary elements of the relationship tend to be its most highly visible aspects. But cooperation and continuity are at its core, argued Grossman and Kumar (1981). Each uses the other's prestige to add to its own.⁵⁵

Grossman and Kumar identified three major publicity activities of the President: (1) direct press operations; (2) planning and coordinating communication operations; and (3) promotional operations. The Press Office and, within it, the office of press secretary is responsible for daily press relations with the media covering the President. The office of press secretary gets help from Media Liaison Operation that maintains contacts between the White House and media influentials, White House News Summary that provides feedback on the success of the operations, and Photo Office. The second

principal office -- the Office of Communications -- has overall responsibility for coordinating communications activities. The other offices indirectly involved in press operations are Office of Public Liaison, Office of the Appointments Secretary to the President that does scheduling and travel arrangements.⁵⁶ Eighty-five percent of those working in the White House, including those in policy-making and service roles are involved directly in public relations activities.⁵⁷

The White House Office of Communications is best described in the book by Maltese (1992).⁵⁸ The office's primary goal is to set the public agenda and to aggressively promote that agenda through a form of mass marketing.⁵⁹ The ultimate goal is to influence, to the maximum extent possible, what news will appear in the media about the administration and its policies. This tactic was perfected during the Nixon 1968 presidential campaign and was called "the selling of the president." The White House Office of Communications was created by Nixon and most successfully used by the administration of Ronald Reagan. But it is important to note that its functions are very different from those of the White House Press Office. The Press Office primarily provides information for the Washington-based reporters who cover the President on a regular basis. Its goals are short-term and concerned with responding to reporters' queries. Thus, whereas the Press Office is reactive, the Office of Communications is proactive.

The Miller Center fought to illuminate certain major issues concerning the presidency and the media that have been of widespread public concern in the recent past. These studies have resulted in publications funded by the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation about the history of a presidential press conference, the presidents and the press, news management and co-option, all by Kenneth W. Thompson.

Local Governments and Press Relations

In contrast to national media and their relations with the White House and federal government, relatively little has been written about the local news media and the important role they play in the life of their cities and regions. Local news plays a crucial role in the policy decisions of local officials to implement new initiatives or to eliminate and modify existing programs.⁶⁰

Twenty years ago, authors, such as Stephenson (1971), found it surprising that the overt practice of public relations by local governments was not more widespread and more highly developed than it was in business and industry. In all the definitions of public relations, three themes dominate. These are the ideas of the community, communication, and the common good.⁶¹ The city or county is the community. Government is based on communication, and the purpose of local government has been to serve the common good. At present, larger cities do conduct information or public relations programs openly although the information officers are disguised, just like at the federal and state levels, behind a title such as "special assistant to the mayor." The terms "public information" or "public affairs" seem generally to be preferred to "public relations" at the local government level, too. But many authors make distinctions between a press aide and public information officer.⁶²

News about local government traditionally flows from four sources: events, people, programs and institutions. The role of supplying information from these sources is the key point of relationships between reporters and public officials.⁶³ But twenty or so years ago, there was not a single mention of somebody like a press aide in the literature about local government/press relations.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, in an era of explosive technology and automation, local governments in thousands of cities and counties in the United States find that communication is a great deal more than letters and phone calls. The elected officials, appointed executives and employees of these local governments are engaged in communication in ways that were hardly possible to predict. One way to look at communications at the local government level is to look at the relations between the local governments of cities and counties and their publics.⁶⁴ Local governments exist for many purposes but their principal purpose is to provide public services. People ask government for something that rightfully belongs to them. They want more services but, also, they do not want snow on the streets, potholes, burglaries, or delayed trash pickup. They want more services but do not want to pay more. During the 1970s the American public was increasingly turned off by government and politics by faulty communication, to include withholding information. People still have faith in government and can still forgive mistakes if they have enough information. It could be argued that good communications and public relations are more important in local government than anywhere else. Given the presence of day-to-day closeness to the public it exists to serve, local government needs to maintain an acute awareness of the identity it is projecting and the image the public is perceiving.⁶⁵

In order to study relations with the press at the local government level, it is important to understand how economic interests of media owners, professional values of local journalists and the media strategists of local officials come together to influence what becomes local news. Although being overshadowed by the national media, local news has always played an important role in the way a city and region understands its problems, its opportunities and its sense of local identity. The primary concerns of local

news are often quite different from those which dominate national news and tend to reflect issues that are closer to people's lives.⁶⁶

The book by Phyllis Kaniss (1991) represents one of the first comprehensive examinations of the local news making process and the influence of local news in urban policy and regional development. The study was based on a seven-year research effort that included analysis of data on local newspaper markets throughout the country as well as an examination of local news coverage of urban and regional development issues. It was also based on over 100 interviews with journalists and local officials in Philadelphia, Houston, Detroit, and Seattle. Kaniss developed a theory of local officials as sources and symbols. Creation of local "knowns" is particularly important to the metropolitan media because they come to serve as symbols of unified regional identity. In most metropolitan areas, it is the big city mayor who becomes the most important "known" for the local news media, the so-called "larger-than-life figure."⁶⁷

Mayors and local news media engage in a strange symbiosis. A mayor needs media to communicate with his city-based constituency while media need the mayor as one of the prime local personalities who can engage the interest of their suburban audience.⁶⁸ In this symbiosis, sources do the leading. The argument exaggerates the ability of local level public officials to control the kind of media they receive. Kaniss also offered the successful media strategy of the local official in which three basic elements were involved in becoming an effective source: (1) establishing an initial media image or refurbishing a tarnished image; (2) providing reporters with information, (3) neutralizing criticisms, scandals, and disasters.⁶⁹

Press Secretaries: Who They Are and What They Do

Although theoretical literature about the government/media relations is in abundance, only a surprisingly small number of studies have described press secretaries and public information officers themselves. The studies often commented on the large increase in personal staffs but have less frequently analyzed the effects of their work.

Before the 1970s, few government offices named an individual to be responsible for relations with the press. In the Congressional Staff directory for 1970, e.g., only 58 members listed a staffer designated solely as press secretary, press assistant, or communications director. By contrast, the study by Timothy E. Cook revealed that in 1984, 252 members did so.⁷⁰ The position of press secretary or an explicitly designated post has evolved from a luxury in the early 1970s to a commonplace component of most (House) members staffs.⁷¹ The number has increased rapidly. Virtually every office has someone responsible for press relations. According to the same study, eighty-four percent of offices listed no person with press responsibilities in 1970, only 24 percent did so in 1986. Press secretaries tended to be young men, unmarried and highly educated. Sixty-four percent were male. They had been on the job a little more than two years. Most also had previous journalistic experience: 48 percent with newspapers or magazines, 27 percent were employed in broadcasting, 32 percent worked in public relations or advertising. Only 26 percent had not worked in any of these fields. Forty-one percent majored in journalism in college.

The situation was almost identical in the United States Senate, as described in the study by Stephen Hess (1991). In 1960, 31 senators employed press secretaries.

Ninety-eight did so by the time the research for Hess' book has begun in 1984.⁷² The press secretary was thought to be of as a middle-aged confidant of his boss. He would be 37 years old, with a strong tie to his senator's state and some journalism experience (58 of 97 press secretaries had journalism experience of at least three years, usually with newspapers, and 34 had never worked as journalists). Senators pick their press secretaries more on the basis of availability, friendship, political knowledge and perceived contacts than on a careful consideration of what skills would be the most useful in the job. The very model of a press secretary grows up in the senator's state, goes to the university where he majors in journalism or political science, gets a job on a newspaper in the state, covers the senator's campaign or joins the campaign staff as press secretary, and goes to Washington when the senator is elected. He stays there for four years.⁷³ As far as money is concerned, the typical press secretary would rank third in the pecking order, after the administrative assistant (also "chief of staff") and the legislative director.⁷⁴

In his research published in 1989⁷⁵, Cook examined and characterized media strategies -- strategic choices of the press operations of House members. Television exposure, while considered desirable and effective, is not always as available as press secretaries would ideally prefer, so print becomes the medium of preference. Increased press staffs have allowed House members to indulge themselves in an endless search for publicity.⁷⁶

Cook studied the staff position of press secretary by analyzing responses to a questionnaire administered to a sample of 124 press secretaries to Democratic House members in December 1984.⁷⁷ His findings suggested that press secretaries are largely oriented toward local media and toward print media. Publicity in the media is not sought

for its own sake or merely to advance the career of the House member to higher office. Publicity is primarily sought to accomplish policy goals. The number one priority among the long-term goals was getting name recognition of the member.

Cook's book offered a typical press secretary's job description. The "beat" of the job was described by the words of one subject in the study as "care and feeding of the media."⁷⁸ Cook perceived the position of press secretary as a boundary role between politicians and reporters. Press secretaries' consequent dual loyalties serve to tie government and the media more closely together.

Those interviewed by Cook were not fully comfortable with their new roles and anxious not to be portrayed as "flacks." They had to please everybody, maintain credibility with the press and with the political boss. Cook called it a "dual loyalty."⁷⁹ Press secretaries stressed the importance of being an authoritative source to achieve credibility and newsworthiness among the press. Few press secretaries saw their relationship with reporters as fundamentally adversarial. They emphasized cooperation more than opportunism. This symbiosis was not a deliberate agreement, it grew out of the continuing need for both journalist and source to practice news.⁸⁰

Among the most fruitful authors in this field is Stephen Hess, a senior fellow in Governmental Studies of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. and former aide to Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon. His 1984 book is primarily based on his observations inside the press offices of five federal agencies in Washington, D.C., namely the Food and Drug Administration, Pentagon, Department of Transportation, State Department and the White House.⁸¹ He spent from one to three months at each of the five agencies and was "following press officers as they went about their business."⁸²

The book describes press secretaries' general characteristics, the organization

of press offices, routine activities, such as briefings, handouts, clippings, and most interestingly some of the government media strategies. His portrayal of a press secretary describes him as "semibureaucrat/semireporter" individually more competent than the reputation of their occupation. Among the most useful qualities for the job, press secretaries mentioned stamina, curiosity, a helpful nature, a good memory, civility, and coolness under pressure. But Hess found that these were attributes that distinguished the good press secretaries from the pack. The press offices looked and sounded busy: "When the rest of a building is silent and the bureaucrats have gone home, someone is usually still in the press office."

Hess found little evidence about one of the most common and most serious charges against the government press secretaries and public information officers -- that they manipulate, manage, and control information and public opinion. The press secretaries seemed not to be in positions to manipulate more than the most routine information, even if they would want to, for an almost perverse reason: they are simply not skillful enough or powerful enough to manipulate the news.⁸³ Most of their energy seems to be devoted to trying to find out what the rest of the agency is doing, gathering material that has been requested by reporters rather than promoting carefully prepared positions, and distributing information that is neither controversial nor especially self-serving. The press secretaries spend as much time responding to reporters' inquiries as they do on all other activities combined.⁸⁴

Many reporters come to government from reporting jobs with news organizations or from public relations jobs in political campaigns. With regard to their qualities, Hess wrote that "it seems as if the qualities necessary to be a good manager and those necessary to be a good spokesman are antithetical; at least they are seldom found in

the same person."⁸⁵

The most important and the least understood role of the press secretary is to serve as the connecting link between reporters and bureaucracy. Jody Powell, the former presidential press secretary during the Carter administration, described this role of the press secretary by saying it fell somewhere "in the connection between the responsibility of the press to transmit the quality of information that is needed for self-government and a responsibility of the President to lead us."⁸⁶

Hess' later study (1991) expanded his interest to the U.S. House of Representatives.⁸⁷ The study presents a picture of how U.S. legislators try to use the media and conduct their press relations, and how the media report on legislators. Chapter III of this tiny book describes a typical press secretary based on the 97 Senate press secretaries interviewed. Hess reported on the organizational sociology of the Congressional press gallery, on the longevity of press secretaries, on the differential press budgets of various U.S. Senate offices (e.g., 16 percent of Phil Gramm's total funds, but only 6 percent of Arlen Specter's, the former presidential candidates in the 1996 GOP primaries). The book also provides data on the activities of congressional press secretaries, including the details about the types of stories they like to write and the types of publicity preferred. His data support his conclusion that coverage is sparse and therefore not very important. He himself said that "this has been a book about the unimportance of the press."⁸⁸

Recently, two doctoral students from Syracuse University did a study examining the press secretaries serving the 435 members of the House of Representatives.⁸⁹ Using multiple methods -- a focus group, semi-structured interviews and a survey -- they examined descriptions of personal characteristics, day-to-day activities and press

secretaries' presumptions about the media. The findings suggest that Congressional press secretaries help formulate the content of messages emanating from Congressional offices and are largely responsible for their tone. They act as gatekeepers restricting the flow of information. The press secretaries adhere to a "bullet theory" of media effects and believe in the partisan model of news organizations. They see the media as important, pervasive and influential, but sometimes dangerous. Despite a strong inclination for cooperation, press secretaries do recognize an adversarial component in their relationship with journalists characterized by a sense of caution and distrust. There is a recognition of interdependence between journalist and press secretary. The authors coined the term "news wave" to mean that the news agenda is not so much created by press secretaries as identified by them.

Evaluation

The review of the literature documents that the journalist and the public relations practitioner -- two of the several components of the nation's public information system -- require a further critical introspective look. The credibility of both institutions continues to erode and they often fail to provide citizens with the information required by today's complex, technological society.

Although the government/media connection has been a favorite topic of many studies in the field of political communication, public relations, and process and effects of communication, the fingers of two hands would be enough to count all the studies that examined the characteristics of press secretaries and analyzed the effects of their work. And while these studies focused on what the press secretaries are like and what they do, it would be interesting to turn to what do the press secretaries and public information

officers think of themselves and their mutual working relationships with reporters. None of the previous studies explored the press and public information officers at the local government level although the closeness of the local government to its publics, its service and community-oriented nature, and a crucial role of communication and information for implementing new local policies and initiatives among the citizens makes the function of mayoral press secretary or public information/public affairs officer one of the most significant.

This study adds to the knowledge of the public relations function of government by providing a basic depiction of the local government press personnel, information on the activities the mayoral press secretaries pursue, perceptions of their media operations and the importance of the media for the communication of local government with the citizens of its city.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The aim of the research was to collect data on the characteristics of the press secretaries working for city governments. The data were collected using a mail survey design from one-hundred and two press secretaries between October and December, 1995. The sample of the press secretaries was not randomly chosen. It was a nonprobability purposive sample. A four-page questionnaire with forty-seven separate questions in eight sections was mailed to the press secretaries who were solicited to participate in the survey by an enclosed cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and the main goals. Confidentiality was guaranteed to every respondent. The clarity and comprehension of the questionnaire was tested by pretesting. The inclusion of the questions into the questionnaire, their phrasing and general necessity were conferred with a dozen press secretaries using personal structured interviews and group techniques.

Research Methods

The primary research method of the study design was a mail survey. The mail survey was chosen to be the principal research method due to its advantages of reaching a relatively high number of respondents, as well as its reasonable costs and time. The study dealt with very busy persons working in a highly tense environment and often on deadlines. Therefore, every effort was made to have the press secretaries

participating and, at the same time, to keep the time necessary for completing the questionnaire as short as possible. The questionnaire took approximately ten minutes to complete. This was achieved by including most of the questions coded on the Likert scale, as well as dichotomous questions.

The disadvantages of the mail survey, such as impossibility of two-way communication when needed to explain the meaning of a question, or having an interviewee answer more sensitive questions, were overcome in part by testing the questions that had been to be included in the questionnaire in a half dozen personal structured interviews with the current and former press secretaries to the mayors in cities of Cleveland and Baltimore during June and July, 1995. In Cleveland, three press secretaries with fifteen years of combined working experience as spokesmen to the mayor covering administrations of three different mayors and five electorate periods were exposed to the same questions to give their comments. Most of the questions were later used in the questionnaire. Also, the clarity and comprehension of the questionnaire was pretested by sending it to twelve press secretaries in the cities from the sample population which were not included in the final sample frame. Of twelve questionnaires, four were returned completed with or without comments that were taken into consideration before the final version of the questionnaire was mailed to the sample.

Hence, the research design took advantage of three common research methods of collecting data: mail survey, structured personal interviews, and group techniques.

Sampling Procedure

The sample of the subjects for the study consisted of 102 press secretaries to the mayors in 102 different cities around the United States. The subjects were not randomly chosen. The nature of the study did not require a probability sample where each subject would have had an equal chance to participate. Instead, the study dealt with a purposive (judgmental) sample. The sample frame included press secretaries to the mayors of virtually every important U.S. city with a population above 170,000.

However, a couple of alterations had to be made. First of all, every effort was made to have at least one participating city from all fifty states of the United States. Cities with at least 170,000 in population were primarily taken into consideration. Then, some of the smaller cities were addressed in order to fulfil the abovementioned criterion (e.g., Fargo, ND, Billings, MT, Boise, ID, or Columbia, SC).

Secondly, the existence of the local news media, including a medium-sized daily newspaper, radio stations and television stations, was an important criterion so that there could be relationship between press or public information office of the city hall and reporters.

Last but not the least, the size of the sample was kept manageable as far as the time required for statistical analysis and the costs of the survey were concerned.

The contact addresses for the press secretaries in the cities and their offices were acquired from the "Municipal Yellow Book," "Directory of the Governmental Agencies and Organizations," and from the National Conference of U.S. Mayors.

The selection criteria slightly affected the size of the sample. In some of the more urban states (e.g., Texas, California, New York), several cities were not included

even though they might have fulfilled both requirements but the state had already been represented by six or seven other bigger cities. In other states (e.g., Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Maine), even cities that did not fulfil the requirement of the size of population (170,000) were included to represent their states. In total, 46 mainland states, plus Hawaii, Alaska, and District of Columbia were included. The only two states that did not have their cities in the sample were Delaware and Vermont, although Wilmington, DE, was among the twelve cities chosen for pretesting. The final sample of the cities which press secretaries participated in the research represents the list of the most important cities in the United States with the local governments that recognize the function of a press secretary, with the abovementioned corrections and limitations.

The purposive sample in this study did not cause any threat to the validity of the research results as the study was interested in the description and perceptions of the mayoral press secretaries. As a matter of fact, the sample comprises most of the U.S. cities that have a press secretary to the mayor and, therefore, the results are not too far from being complete as far as characteristics of the mayoral press secretaries is concerned.

Variables

The selection of variables for the research reflected the research questions, hypotheses and the main purpose of the study. In total, there were 54 different variables taken into consideration. For the clarity of the study as well as for serving the purpose of the study, the variables were further divided into seven separate sections, each dealing with the answers of the survey participants on a different topic.

The first set of variables dealt with the responsibilities of the press secretaries.

There were nine principal responsibilities identified that a press secretary to the mayor is likely to hold: answering media inquiries, writing press releases, monitoring media coverage of the mayor and city government, writing speeches for the mayor and other elected officials, giving quotes on behalf of the mayor or the administration, conducting TV/radio actualities, writing for the mayor's or city hall's newsletter, answering constituent correspondence, and acting as a legislative aide. In addition, respondents were given space to state any other responsibilities that were not covered among the first nine.

Subsequently, the press secretaries were asked to provide information on the extent of some of their duties. The number of media inquiries a press secretary answers on an average day, the number of press releases forwarded from the mayor's press office by mail, fax, telephone, or E-mail to the media in an average week, and the number of speeches the press secretary is required to write for the mayor and other executive staff members in an average month was studied. For respondents, categories of the volume of duties were provided in intervals to make the question easier to answer because it might have been difficult to remember a precise number and the amount logically varies from day to day, week to week. The press secretaries were also asked to name the most and the least useful of their duties for media. Both questions were open-ended.

Another complete set of questions introduced nine variables related to the credibility and professionalism of press secretaries as perceived by themselves. For all nine questions, a five-point Likert scale was used. The respondents were to mark their level of agreement with the statements. They were asked about their accessibility to reporters, their knowledgeability to respond to media inquiries, their knowledge about

how particular media work (formats, deadlines, style, etc.), their opinions on whether a press secretary is one of the closest staff members to the mayor, press secretary's ability to shape the tone of messages coming out from the city hall, their power to control the flow of information and act as a gatekeeper, and their control over the public image of the mayor. The answers were recorded on a five-point Likert scale. The five-point scale was used to code the answers on the questions how often a mayoral press secretary was quoted by the local media, and what was the overall image press secretaries have of themselves. The scale was anchored by "constantly" on one side and "never" on the other, and "excellent" or "poor", respectively. All variables from this section had score level of measurement.

Relations with the media was another section of the questionnaire with eight different variables. The variables were: the number of days per week the press secretary contacts a reporter, the principal means of contact between the two, the typical words reporters would use to describe a press secretary, the feelings of press secretaries about whether they are looked down on by reporters, press secretaries' dependency on media, media's dependency on press secretaries, rating of the general quality of the mutual relationship, and the main reason for tensions in relations between press secretaries and reporters. Four questions were to be answered using a five-point Likert scale while the rest were open-ended. The answers for the open-ended questions were to be categorized into some main groups and coded in order to be suitable for the statistical analysis.

The variables belonging to the two following sections had score data as the level of measurement. The same Likert scale was used to record the answers that were the best representations of the respondents' level of agreement with the statements. The

variables included: the respondents' level of agreement with the statement that media play a prominent role in shaping individuals' beliefs and opinions, media as the news agenda-setters, the perceived effect of media on mayors' political future, media as the principal source of information, and word-of-mouth as the primary source of information. In the section "How Media Work," the respondents were evaluating accuracy and fairness of the local news media and the reporters individually.

Two final sections provided personal information and characteristics of the press secretaries, the mayor they worked for, and the city itself. The variables in these sections were: age of press secretaries, gender, title of the position, length of time in current position, previous work experience, highest education completed, degree in journalism/mass communications, number of employees in the mayor's press or public information office, political affiliation of the mayor, length of time the mayor has been in office, size of the city, character of the city's region, and the extent of the local media coverage of the mayor and the city government. Most of the variables here had nominal level of measurement, although some were expressed in a Likert scale or by providing a dichotomous response format. The purpose of these variables was (1) to describe the subjects of the study; and (2) to use the variables as independent factors in a difference/relationship nature of statistical tests. It was hypothesized that some of the subjects' characteristics accounted for the differences in press secretaries perceptions of their relationship with media, the media importance and their opinions on how media work.

Hypotheses

Based on the previous corresponding research and, partly, on the author's own experience from working as a press secretary, six working hypotheses were proposed.

The practice of having a press secretary with previous media experience and/or journalism or mass communications college education is not very old. According to some of the past studies (Hess, 1991; Bruce, Downes, 1994), the profession of a journalism has supplied professionals for the position of press secretary only in the past two decades.¹ Particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, elected officials began to look for someone who was professional and experienced in relations with media and who had practical knowledge about how the media operate and what are their specific needs to be met in order to keep a mutually cooperative and beneficial relationship. These communication professionals were found among the journalists themselves, and soon, an exodus of journalists to the spokesperson's profession followed. Hence, the first hypothesis assumes a high number of former journalists and public relations professionals among the press secretaries:

H₁ Press secretaries have previous media experience and/or journalism higher education.

To be a spokesperson of an elected official, the press secretary must know him or her personally, almost intimately. It also helps if the press secretary is among the closest staff members to the mayor and if he belongs to the innermost circle of the mayor's aides and advisors who are present when important decisions are made and, in fact, who participate in their creation. It is assumed that if a press secretary does not enjoy the absolute confidence of his or her boss in their work, the work itself suffers. A

good press secretary is more than just one of the mayor's colleagues. He or she is a close friend. Very often, the press secretary is among the first staffers who join the new-elected mayor in office after the mayor wins the elections. Press secretaries are likely to be recruited from among the mayor's friends, previous work's colleagues, or mayor's friends' friends. Even though the reporters do not have to know and see the personal ties between the mayor and press secretary, they are often there.

H₂ Press secretaries are among the closest members of the mayor's staff.

Press secretaries in general perform a number of tasks that are either similar or the same as those of their colleagues in other city administrations. Every press secretary writes and distributes press releases, answers the phone or personal media inquiries, conveys the information from an elected official to the reporters, mediates interviews with the mayor or other executive representatives for the members of the local press corps, and monitors the coverage of the mayor and the city government in the local news media. Press secretaries often do other activities, such as answering the constituents' correspondence on behalf of the mayor, writing speeches for the mayor's public appearances, or writing and editing the city hall newsletter or other periodical publication of the city government for its citizens. It is hypothesized that, although the range of the typical press secretarial duties and activities would not vary much among different local governments, the number and extent of the duties depends on the size of the city, character of the region and the local news media market. The press secretaries for larger cities (300,000 and more inhabitants) located in heavily urban areas with a strong concentration of local news media and extensive city government coverage are likely to be much busier than their colleagues in smaller cities in more rural areas with one daily newspaper and one or two local television and radio stations.

H₃ The range of press secretaries duties and activities as well as their extent vary depending on the size and the characteristics of the city and/or region, and the local media market.

Although the theories of mass communications support the assumption that the media are not always the most principal source of information for all members of the public and may not always be successful in telling people what to think, press secretaries tend to believe in almost an unsurmountable power and importance of the media in conveying the information from a public official to their electors. They think that the media set the agenda for a public political debate more than the citizens themselves or the public administration. At the same time, previous studies indicated that the press secretaries spend a considerable amount of time figuring out how to communicate with the public without using the media.² They prefer different forms of direct communication over the media activities such as press conferences, actualities, or broadcasts. This is because many press secretaries have strong opinions on how the media operate. They find them very important, influential, and even dangerous. At the same time, the press secretaries, even though many come from the journalistic background, have negative feelings about how journalism is done in practice. Press secretaries often describe reporters as inaccurate, sensational, and not serious. They believe the media promote their own viewpoints instead of being balanced. Objectivity and impartiality are not exactly the characteristics that the press secretaries would automatically associate with the media. Finally, the press secretaries do not have a truly high self-esteem.³ It is partly because they feel that they do not enjoy particularly high credibility among the reporters. Jokes about the press secretary, such as "I don't have anything about that but let me get back to you...",⁴ the labels of press secretaries as "spin doctors," "hacks," "flacks," or

"mouthpieces" from the reporters do not contribute to the press secretaries' self-esteem. It is assumed that press secretaries with a journalistic past feel that their former colleagues regard them as traitors to the pure profession, to the "higher calling" as journalists often like to speak about their profession. They think that setting up on a press secretarial career after working as a journalist might be a step forward in the career but is certainly a step back as far as the journalistic ethics and independence are concerned.

H₄ Press secretaries perceive that the media generally hold them in disregard.

H₅ Press secretaries strongly believe that the media are agenda-builders.

H₆ Press secretaries think and work with the assumption that the media present partisan unbalanced viewpoints of the news events.

Data Collection

The data were collected by a mail survey of 102 mayoral press secretaries in 102 U.S. cities of 48 states and the District of Columbia. The four-page 47-question questionnaire was to be sent to the address of mayor's offices in two mailings. In order to keep track of returning questionnaires during the first mailing, they were numbered in the right upper corner of the first page. The numbers were removed upon receipt of the questionnaire so that absolute confidentiality was guaranteed.

To record, code, and tabulate the data from the completed questionnaires, the statistical program called SYSTAT for Windows, version 5.0, 1992 was intended to use. For the purposes of coding, a codebook was developed, mostly using numerical codes to record the responses. Of 47 different questions, 24 were in the form of a five-point

Likert scale, 8 were open-ended questions, 2 were dichotomous questions, and for 13 questions the possible answers were provided in categories to be filled out.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical tests used in the study served two basic purposes:

(1) the first set of tests described the population. Tests of mean, median, standard error of the mean and standard error of the proportion were used for the description of the personal characteristics of the press secretaries, of their duties, and of the mayors and administrations they worked for.

(2) The second set of tests looked for differences and relationships among two or more sets of data. Independent t-tests were executed to look for statistically significant differences between two sets of scores (e.g., male and female press secretaries). Complex and simple chi-square tests were used for looking at the differences among the press secretaries and the duties they performed. The tests of the ANOVA group were used where the level of measurement for the collected data was score (Likert scale questions), mainly for analyzing the answers to the questions related to the credibility of press secretaries, their relations with the media, and their perceptions of importance of the media and how the media operate as reflected on a five-point scale. If the difference was found to be significant, single and multiple Pearson tests for examining relationship between one or more independent variables and dependent variable were executed. These tests were used to examine various relationships between the different factors that describe the press secretary's characteristics and the press secretary's perceptions, beliefs and opinions on how media work and their importance as sources of information.

Methodological Assumptions

The study according to this research design was made possible with several methodological assumptions in mind. It was assumed that:

(1) the questionnaires were completed by the press secretaries or media professionals who were in charge of media relations for the mayor;

(2) the subjects of the study answered all the questions in an unbiased and truthful manner;

(3) the structured personal interviews and pretesting eliminated to a great extent any questions or phrases of the questionnaire that might have lacked clarity and might have been easily misunderstood by the subjects;

(4) the questionnaire content itself was substantial enough to complete the study in accordance with its purpose and objectives.

Weaknesses and Limitations of the Research Design

The research design had its advantages as well as drawbacks. First of all, the nonprobability sample of the respondents did not prove to be a significant disadvantage. On the contrary, the data were collected from the subjects that were of major interest of the study. Seventy-seven press secretaries participating in the survey are the representative sample of the press secretaries working in the city governments even though they were not selected in a probability sampling procedure. With a few exceptions, they are precisely the subjects who are "out there" and at whom the study was aimed.

The selection of the mail survey as the principal research method had some

limitations. The mail survey made it possible to reach over 100 subjects. On the other hand, there was no possibility of interaction between a respondent and an interviewer in case that some of the questions might have been unclear or misunderstood. Thus, the mail survey results should not be overestimated. Unfortunately, it was impossible to more effectively engage some other data collection methods, e.g., phone survey, personal interviews, focus group, because the subjects of the study were spread out all over the country and their gathering would be either impossible or too costly.

Perceptions, beliefs, opinions, and motivations of the press secretaries that enter into their relations with media and reporters are of a dynamic nature, i.e., they are valid only for the period they were assembled. It is more than possible that a similar survey in another time period would show different attitudes and opinions of the same subjects because of events that were happening between a press secretary and a reporter which were shaping them.

Summary

To examine the research questions and hypotheses stated in Chapter I, a mail survey combined with structured personal interviews and a group technique of collecting data directly from the subjects was administered between October and December, 1995. The press secretaries to the mayors, or staff members in the mayor's offices responsible for the media relations, in 102 cities were mailed the four-page questionnaire with 47 questions. Two mailings were anticipated to be necessary to achieve a sufficient response rate. The questionnaire consisted of four different types of questions, with the majority of Likert scale and categories questions. The answers were recorded, tabulated and coded in a computer matrix using the statistical software

SYSTAT for Windows, version 5.0, 1992. The data were further inspected by the quantitative statistical analysis using descriptive statistics, chi-square, Pearson and ANOVA tests. In spite of some disadvantages of a mail survey, such as the lack of control, and artificiality of the research situation, the data that would be collected according to this research design were believed to represent the opinions, beliefs, and perceptions of the most significant group of subjects who were the theme of the study -- the press secretaries to the mayors in most of the United States city governments that employ a person responsible for the communication with the media.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

General

A mail survey combined with structured personal interviews and a group technique of collecting data directly from the study's subjects was administered to gather the information about the press secretaries working in the city governments. The survey followed the interviews with a dozen former and present press secretaries in two cities of population more than 500,000, one in the Midwest and the other in the Mid-Atlantic region. Before mailing a four page questionnaire to the subjects of the study, the same questionnaire was mailed to twelve press secretaries in the cities that were not included in the sample to pretest on the clarity and comprehension of all the questions in the survey instrument. The first mailing was executed between October 20, and November 13, 1995 (54 responses; 52.9 percent response rate). The second mailing was distributed between November 17, and December 8, 1995 (with the last two responses arriving after Christmas) adding 23 more responses. Overall, of 102 questionnaires sent to the subjects of the study, 77 were returned and 74 were completed. The city of Sioux Falls, SD, did not wish to participate, the cities of Fargo, ND, and Portland, ME, do not have full time press secretaries. For the list of the cities that were included in the sample, please see Appendix D. The total response rate was 75.5 percent, and the total rate of completed questionnaires was 72.5 percent. The collected data appear to represent the opinions, beliefs and perceptions of a significantly large group of the press secretaries to the mayors in most of the cities in the United

States in which a city government employs a staff person responsible for the communication with the media.

The data were further inspected by the quantitative statistical analysis using descriptive statistics, chi-square, Pearson test, and Anova randomized and factorial design examinations. The following in this chapter is a detailed report of research findings. In narrative as well as tables it presents the results of the data collection as well as its quantitative evaluation.

The presentation of the results is in the order of the questions on the questionnaire where similar topics were grouped together in eight sections. One exception was made and the data on personal characteristics of the press secretaries were rearranged at the beginning in order to first describe the subjects of the study by their personal attributes.

Findings

Personal Characteristics of Press Secretaries

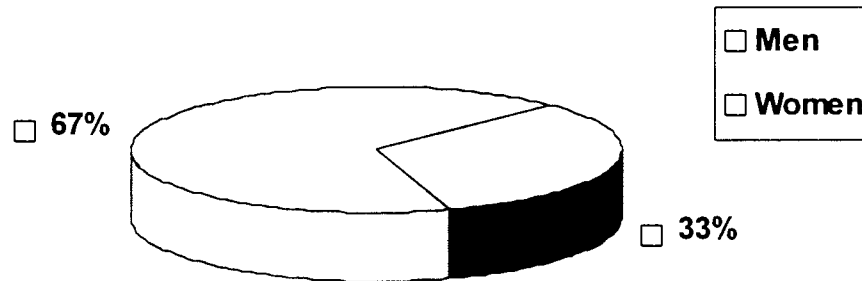
Section "F" of the questionnaire asked for personal information about the press secretaries working in city government. The personal characteristics of the press secretaries include their age, gender, length of time they spend in the position, previous work experience, information about their degree in journalism and/or mass communication, highest completed education, the number of people working in the mayor's press or public information office, the exact title of press secretaries' positions, political affiliation of the mayor the press secretary works for, and the size of the city.

Age of Press Secretaries. The average age of the press secretaries to the mayors is 40 years. Press secretaries at the city government level appear to be older than, e.g., the spokespersons working for the Congress' House of Representatives (Hess, 1991). The middle score for the age of press secretaries was almost identical with the average score - 39 years. Hence, it is probable that a typical spokesperson for the mayor of a U.S. city is in his or her late thirties or early forties. At the 95 percent level of confidence, the average age of the press secretaries is between 37.8 and 42 years. Some evident exceptions were found: the youngest press secretary was 22 years old, while the oldest (both were women) was 65 years old.

Gender of Press Secretaries. Another query in the personal information section of the survey instrument asked the respondents to state their gender. Although it was not anticipated that there would be a difference in the number of the press secretaries of different gender, the results show otherwise.

Women outnumbered men as press secretaries to the mayor in a 2:1 ratio as shown on Figure 1. There are currently twice as many women working as press secretaries in the local government as men. Of 74 respondents who actually completed and returned the questionnaires, 73 answered the questions regarding their gender, 67 percent of them were women (49) and 32.9 percent were men (24). Later, the factor of gender was taken into consideration in other statistical analyses as it was one of the most evident personal characteristics that made a difference among the press secretaries.

FIGURE 1
GENDER OF PRESS SECRETARIES



Length of Time in Position. Another factor that was expected to play a significant role was the length of time that the press secretaries have been in their positions.

Although the time that the press secretaries to the mayor spend in their position ranges from 3 months to 12 years, the average length is the same as the length of a typical mayoral tenure - four-year incumbency. The middle score for the time in position was only 6 months shorter - 3.5 years. At the 95 percent level of confidence, the mayoral press secretaries serve between 40.8 to 55.6 months, i.e., roughly between three and a half and four and a half years. As it is to be seen later in this chapter, the length of time in the position clearly corresponds with the time the mayors themselves usually spend in office.

The length of time in position was also examined by defining it in three different categories: (1) under 18 months; (2) 18-48 months; and (3) more than 48 months. The results are in Table I.

TABLE I
LENGTH OF TIME IN POSITION, BY CATEGORIES
N=72

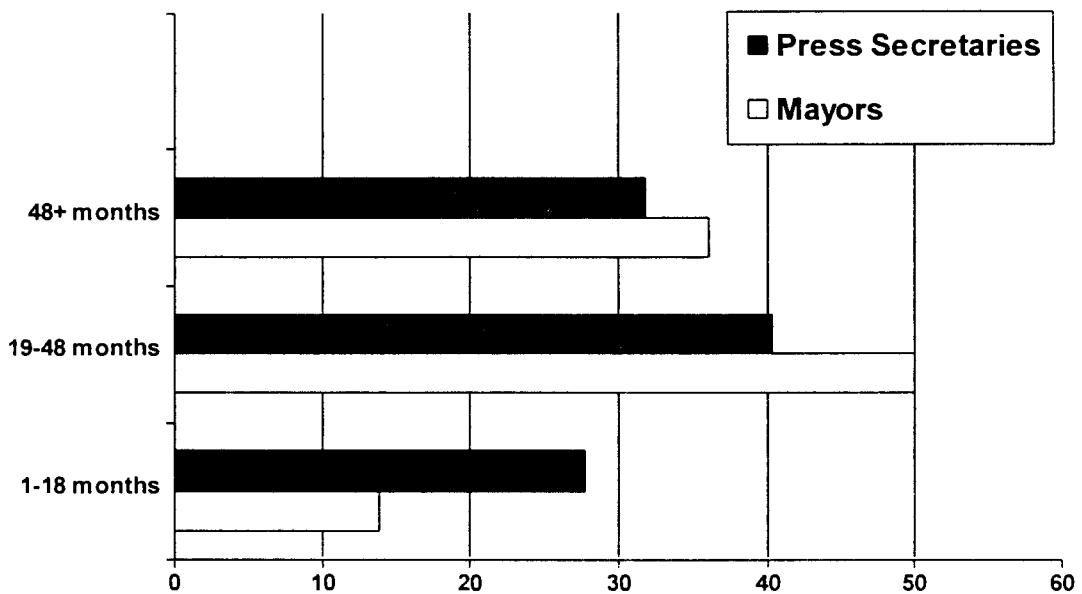
Category	Number	Percentage
1-18 months	20	27.8 %
18-48 months	29	40.3
48 months and more	23	31.9
TOTAL	72	100.0 %

The results indicate that the number of press secretaries is relatively equally distributed among all three different length of time categories. Almost one third of all press secretaries are "rookies" serving less than a year and a half in the position, and about one third are veterans who are serving in the second electorate period. Most of the press secretaries are serving in their first four years.

It was hypothesized that there would be relationship between the length of time the press secretaries stay in their positions and the political affiliation of their bosses. A complex chi-square examination of this relationship was significant at the 99 percent level of confidence ($\chi^2=13.65$; $df=4$; $p<0.01$). The contingency coefficient $c=0.406$ and the coefficient of determination 0.17. A weak relationship was found between the political affiliation of the mayors and the length of time their press secretaries stay in the position. Simple chi-square examinations showed that the press secretaries working for Democratic mayors usually stay in their positions for

four years and only rarely more than one electorate period, while there are no significant differences in press secretaries' length of time in the position among Republican and Independent administrations.

FIGURE 2
LENGTH OF TIME IN POSITION, BY CATEGORIES



Working Experience. One of the research hypotheses of the study proposed that press secretaries came from a journalistic background as far as work experience and university degree are concerned. The journalistic work experience was interpreted as working in the print media, radio or television broadcasts for at

least one year. The work experience was defined in categories as (1) journalism; (2) public relations; and (3) other. The results are presented in Table II.

TABLE II
WORK EXPERIENCE
N=69

Category	Number	Percentage
Journalism	34	49.3 %
Public Relations	21	30.4
Other	14	20.3
TOTAL	69	100.0 %

The results support the hypothesis that the press secretaries to the mayors have previous work experience in journalism or in public relations. Every other press secretary worked as a journalist before he or she became a spokesperson. Among the press secretaries with journalistic working experience, 18 (more than 50 %) worked in the print media, 13 worked in television, and 7 in radio broadcasting. Four of five press secretaries have some practical experience in media relations, either as journalists or public relations practitioners. However, there was a former librarian, lawyer or a business manager among the mayoral press secretaries.

Of 45 women, 20 worked in journalism, 15 in public relations and 10 had other work experience. Of 21 men, 12 worked in journalism, five in public relations and four had other than previous media experience.

No relationships were found between the previous work experience and gender, length of time the press secretary stays in the position, the size of the city, the political affiliation of the elected official, or the combination of all above.

Degree in Journalism. With respect to holding a university degree in journalism and/or mass communication, the ratio of those who have journalism degrees and those who do not is 1:1. Thirty-eight press secretaries (52.8 percent) do not hold a degree in journalism and/or mass communication compared to 34 press secretaries (47.2 percent) who do have a university degree in journalism. Previous work experience in journalism or public relations appears to be a more determining factor for holding a press secretarial position rather than a degree in journalism. The research hypothesis that the press secretaries are likely to have previous media experience was supported.

Highest Completed Education. Another factor that was used to describe a typical mayoral press secretary was education. The subjects were asked about their highest completed education. The four categories were: (1) high school; (2) bachelor's degree; (3) master's degree; and (4) doctoral degree. The results are shown in Table III.

TABLE III
HIGHEST COMPLETED EDUCATION OF PRESS SECRETARIES
N=72

Category	Number	Percentage
High School	3	4.2 %
Bachelors	51	70.8
Masters	16	22.2
Doctorate	2	2.8
TOTAL	72	100.0 %

The overwhelming majority of press secretaries have completed a college education (95.8 %). A typical press secretary is likely to have a bachelor's degree although not necessarily with a major in journalism and/or mass communication.

Number of People on Press Staffs. The press secretaries in U.S. cities more often do not work alone while performing their duties. Administratively, they are usually structured in the mayor's office and are subordinated to mayor's chief of staff. In many cities, they might work within a smaller unit that - for the purpose of this study - was vaguely called "a press office."

Based on the responses of 71 press secretaries, a typical press unit in the city government level consists of three people. The maximum number of employees found in the "press office" was 16. A classical example of a mayor's press office could be the one in Baltimore: there is a press secretary, an assistant press secretary, and a secretary who answers the phone and works with all kinds of correspondence related to the mayor's media relations.

However, "the press office" is not always included in the mayor's office. There are council/city manager types of local governments that have a department of public information administratively included in the office of the city manager. There are also city governments, especially in large cities, where there is a mayor's press office and a separate department of public information. With respect to this, the information about the size of the press staffs should be taken with caution. Nonetheless, an administrative unit in which press secretaries perform their tasks is likely to be found within a mayor's office and the office may have one, two or three employees including the press secretary himself.

A relationship was found between the number of people working in mayoral press staffs and the city size. A complex chi-square examination was significant at the 95 percent level of confidence ($\chi^2=10.42$; $df=4$; $p<0.05$). This relationship is weak (the contingency coefficient $c=0.36$, the coefficient of determination was 0.13). Only 13 percent of variation in the size of the press staffs is accounted for by variation in the city size. Small cities (under 300,000) tend to have between one and three people employed in a mayoral press staff ($\chi^2=8.32$; $df=2$; $p<0.05$), medium-sized cities (population 300,000-500,000) usually have three or four employees in the press staffs ($\chi^2=7.91$; $df=2$; $p<0.05$), while there are no differences among different categories of the size of mayoral press staff in large cities with populations over 0.5 million.

Title of Position. As explained in Chapter I, the term "press secretary" used throughout the study also refers to other titles of the same position in the city governments which is responsible for managing the relations of the mayor and other elected officials with the media. Across the country, the city governments use different titles of the position of a spokesperson. Table IV presents the titles of a press secretary's position as provided directly by the respondents.

TABLE IV
TITLES OF POSITION
N=72

Words in Title	Number	Percentage
Press Secretary	21	29.2 %
Public Affairs/Public Information	15	20.8
Communications	13	18.1
Assistant	18	25.0
Other	5	6.9
TOTAL	72	100.0 %

In total, 21 different titles for the same position were found among 72 press secretaries to the mayors. As expected, the most common name was "press secretary" followed in frequency by a name consisting of the word "assistant." From among 18 assistants, 6 are "executive assistants", five are "assistants to the mayor", three are "special assistants", two are "legislative assistants", and one is "press assistant" or "administrative assistant." There are 16 "directors" among the press secretaries: of communications, public affairs, public information, and media/marketing director. There are also 7 "public information officers", three "managers", two "aides" and two "coordinators." Finally, there is one "public relations consultant", and one "chief of staff" who also serves as mayor's spokesman.

For the purpose of further examination, the titles were divided into five general categories as seen in Table IV. A relationship was found between the size of the city and the title of press secretary's position ($\chi^2=33.68$; $df=6$; $p<0.01$). The relationship is moderate, with the contingency coefficient $c=0.567$, and the

coefficient of determination 0.32. It means that 32 percent of variation in the title of position is accounted for by variation in the size of the city.

A simple chi-square examination revealed that the title "press secretary" is most often used in the cities with population more than 0.5 million people ($\chi^2=11.44$; $df=2$; $p<0.01$). These cities do not use the title with the word "assistant" ($\chi^2=6.92$; $df=2$; $p<0.05$).

The title "director of public information/public affairs" is more likely to be used in the cities with population under 300,000 ($\chi^2=25.4$; $df=2$; $p<0.01$).

There was no significant difference in using the titles with the word "communications" in cities of different size.

To sum up, the cities with more than 0.5 million people usually use the title "press secretary" ($\chi^2=24.99$; $df=2$; $p<0.01$), while the cities under 300,000 population have a tendency to use the title "director of public information/public affairs" ($\chi^2=8.25$; $df=2$; $p<0.05$). The medium-sized cities (300,000 to 500,000) do not seem to follow any pattern in using different titles of position for their press secretaries.

Political Affiliation of Mayor. In Section "G" of the questionnaire, the respondents provided some information on the character of the administration and the city in which they worked. The first question asked about the political affiliation of the mayor for whom the press secretary facilitated the relations with the media and the public.

TABLE V
POLITICAL AFFILIATION OF MAYOR
N=72

Affiliation	Number	Percentage
Democrat	42	58.3 %
Republican	16	22.2
Independent/Non-Partisan	14	19.5
TOTAL	72	100.0 %

Even though there seems to be a majority of Democrat-led city governments, it shall be noted that in many cities the municipal elections are ran as non-partisan and the political affiliation of the mayor is not the most crucial attribute of a mayoral candidate. The factor of political affiliation of an elected official was further used in difference/relationship statistical analysis and proved to be an important variable.

Mayor's Length of Time in Office. Just as the press secretaries were asked about the length of time they spent in their positions, the same information was obtained about the mayors' time in office. The two sets of data were then examined in regards to the relationship. The average length of time the mayors spend in office is presented in Tables VI and VII.

TABLE VI
MAYOR'S LENGTH OF TIME IN OFFICE
N=72

Category	Number
Average Length of Time	48.264 months (=4 years)
Median Length of Time	42 months (=3.5 years)
Minimum Length of Time	3 months
Maximum Length of Time	144 months (=12 years)

(SD=31.968; SEM=3.767)

TABLE VII
MAYOR'S LENGTH OF TIME IN OFFICE, BY CATEGORIES
N=72

Category	Number	Percentage
1-18 months	10	13.9 %
19-48 months	36	50.0
more than 48 months	26	36.1
TOTAL	72	100.0 %

A complex chi-square examination of the relationship between the press secretary's and the mayor's length of time in office was significant at the 99 percent level of confidence ($\chi^2=24.52$; $df=4$; $p<0.01$). The contingency coefficient $c=0.507$ and the coefficient of determination was 0.26 which means that 26 percent of variation in the press secretary's length of time in office is accounted for by variation of the mayor's length of time in office. The strength of the relationship is moderate.

Forty-three of 71 subjects spend exactly the same time in position (60.6 %), 8 of 71 are longer in the position than their mayors (11.2%), and 20 of 71 press secretaries are survived in the position by their mayors (28.2 %).

Responsibilities of Press Secretaries

Basic Tasks and Duties. Press secretaries have some basic responsibilities that can be found in every city administration. The first question asked the respondents to identify the duties they perform in office.

TABLE VIII
DUTIES OF PRESS SECRETARIES
N=74

Duty	Number	Percentage
Media Inquiries	73	98.65 %
Press Releases	73	98.65
Monitoring Media Coverage	71	95.95
Giving Quotes	70	94.60
Speeches	57	77.00
TV/Radio Actualities	50	67.60
Correspondence	45	60.80
Newsletter	44	59.50
Legislative Aide	26	35.10
Other	28	37.80 %

At the top of the list of press secretaries' duties are answering media inquiries, writing press releases, monitoring media coverage, and giving quotes on behalf of the

mayor and/or other elected officials. These are the “big four” duties of press secretaries that everyone seems to perform. They all are the press-related duties which indicates the priorities in the job description of the press secretary.

“Other” duties mentioned included organizing and managing special projects and events (5 of 28), serving as mayor’s external liaison to the community, government, social, cultural and private organizations (5 of 28), serving as a political or internal aide (3 of 28), or helping with the issue management (2 of 28). Still other tasks were producing TV shows, op-eds, online monitoring of press coverage, pitching ideas to the reporters, scheduling and arranging interviews and press conferences, coordinating city permits for film or TV productions, or doing “anything else.” However, the major tasks of the press secretary are oriented toward the media.

It was hypothesized that the existence and extent of various tasks and duties of press secretaries would depend on the size of the city. A simple chi-square examination was executed to question this hypothesis.

No relationship was found between city size and a likelihood of the press secretary to act as a mayor’s speech writer or to conduct radio and/or TV actualities. The press secretaries either write or do not write speeches for the mayor and/or other elected officials regardless of the size of the city they work in. The city size also does not have any effect whether press secretaries do or do not conduct radio and/or TV actualities for the local news media.

However, a relationship was found between the city size and a likelihood of press secretary to contribute to a city hall’s newsletter ($\chi^2=9.05$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$), and to deal with the constituents’ correspondence ($\chi^2=14.94$, $df=2$, $p<0.01$). The press secretaries in smaller cities with the population less than 300,000 are more likely to write

for the newsletters than their colleagues in larger cities. Similarly, the press secretaries in the cities with the population less than 300,000 work more with the constituents' correspondence and citizens' complaints than the press secretaries in larger cities.

Finally, a simple chi-square examination of the relationship between city size and a likelihood of press secretary to act as a legislative aide to the mayor proved that the role of press secretary as a legislative aide does not depend on the size of the city.

A simple chi-square examination was also done to explore the relationship between likelihood of various press secretaries' tasks and gender of the press secretary. No relationship was found between the likelihood of the press secretary to act as a legislative aide and gender. However, other tasks -- writing the speeches, conducting radio/TV actualities, contributing to the city hall's newsletter, and working with constituents' correspondence -- appear to be related to gender of the press secretary. Female press secretaries are more likely to perform the abovementioned duties than male press secretaries. A simple chi-square examination of the relationship at the 95 percent level of confidence was significant in all four cases ($\chi^2=3.94$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$, for writing speeches; $\chi^2=5.12$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$, for radio/TV actualities; $\chi^2=5.82$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$ for contributing to a newsletter; and $\chi^2=4.45$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$, for dealing with citizens' correspondence).

Another factor explored in relationship with a likelihood of the press secretary to perform certain tasks was the length of time the press secretary remains in the position. The length of time was defined in three categories: (1) less than 18 months (one and a half year); (2) 19-48 months (1.5-4 years); and (3) more than 48 months (more than 4 years). No relationship was found here. It seems that whether press secretaries write speeches, conduct actualities, write for the newsletter, deal with correspondence, and

act as legislative aides, or not does not depend on how long have they been in their positions.

Statistically reliable differences were found in the examination of the relationship between a likelihood of the press secretary's tasks and their previous working experience. While a simple chi-square examination was not significant at the 95 percent level of confidence for correspondence and acting as a legislative aide, it did find significant differences for the press-related tasks, namely for writing speeches ($x^2=6.5$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$), for conducting radio/TV actualities ($x^2=11.32$, $df=2$, $p<0.01$), and writing for the newsletter ($x^2=13$, $df=2$, $p<0.01$). The press secretaries with journalistic or public relations professional background are more likely to perform the press-related tasks and duties than the press secretaries with the work experience in other fields.

Extent of Press Secretaries' Tasks. In the next section, the extent of performing the three most principal tasks of the press secretary was examined: answering media inquiries, writing and distributing press releases, and writing speeches.

The extent of media inquiries was defined as the number of inquiries from the media answered by the press secretary during a typical working day, in three categories: (1) 0-5 inquiries; (2) 6-10 inquiries; and (3) more than 10 inquiries per day. The results are shown in Table IX.

TABLE IX
EXTENT OF MEDIA INQUIRIES PER DAY
N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
0-5 inquiries per day	32	43.3 %
6-10 inquiries per day	28	37.8
10+ inquiries per day	14	18.9
TOTAL	74	100.0 %

The press secretaries to the mayors seem to answer no more than 10 inquiries by the media during a regular working day. Only one of five press secretaries claimed that he or she answered more than 10 inquiries per day.

The extent of press releases produced was defined as the number of news or press releases written by the press secretary and distributed to the media personally, by telephone, by fax, or by electronic mail, during a typical working week. The extent was represented in five different categories: (1) 0 or 1 press release; (2) 2 or 3 releases; (3) 4 or 5 releases; (4) 6 or 7 releases; and (5) 8 or more press releases per week. The results are shown in Table X.

TABLE X
EXTENT OF PRESS RELEASES PER WEEK
N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
0 or 1 press release	11	14.9 %
2 or 3 press releases	20	27.0
4 or 5 press releases	23	31.1

Category	Number	Percentage
6 or 7 press releases	9	12.1
8+ press releases	11	14.9
TOTAL	74	100.0 %

The most frequent number of press releases was 4 or 5 per week, i.e., the press secretaries usually have at least one piece of information in the form of a press release every day.

The extent of speeches written was defined as the number of speeches the press secretary writes or edits for the mayor or other elected officials of the city government in one month. The extent of speeches was represented in four categories: (1) 0-3 speeches; (2) 4-7 speeches; (3) 8-12 speeches; and (4) 13 or more speeches per month. The results are shown in Table XI.

TABLE XI
NUMBER OF SPEECHES WRITTEN PER MONTH
N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
0-3 speeches	41	55.4 %
4-7 speeches	14	18.9
8-12 speeches	9	12.2
13 or more speeches	10	13.5
TOTAL	74	100.0 %

In the first category, there were 17 press secretaries who did not write speeches at all as the mayors had their own speech writers. Therefore, only 77 percent of press secretaries also serve as speech writers for the mayor. The most frequent number of speeches was between one and three per month. Only one of four press secretaries writes more than 7 speeches in an average month.

It was hypothesized that just like a likelihood of certain responsibilities varied in relationship with some personal factors and characteristics of the press secretary so did the extent of the duties. The study examined the relationship between the extent of media inquiries, press releases, and speeches, on one hand, and the size of the city, gender of press secretaries, and political affiliation of the mayor they worked for, on the other.

Neither gender of the press secretaries nor political affiliation of the mayors seemed not to play an important role in the relationship with the extent of the duties. A complex chi-square examination was not significant at the 95 percent level of confidence for any of the duties.

As hypothesized, the size of the city affected the extent of some of the tasks. The city size was not important in relationship with the extent of speeches but proved to be significant in relationship with the extent of media inquiries as well as press releases. A complex chi-square examination of the relationship between the city size and the extent of media inquiries was significant at the 95 percent level of confidence ($\chi^2=11.88$; $df=4$; $p<0.05$). A simple chi-square examination revealed that in the cities with population more than 0.5 million people, there were much fewer inquiries in the category 0-5 than in smaller cities. The larger the city the more media inquiries a press secretary

answers in an average day. This relationship was rather weak (the contingency coefficient $c=0.374$, and the coefficient of determination 0.14).

A relationship was found between the city size and the extent of press releases ($\chi^2=21.51$, $df=8$, $p<0.01$). A following simple chi-square examination found significant differences among different categories of the extent of press releases in larger cities (population more than 0.5 million). The larger the city the more press releases is distributed to the media in an average week. This relationship was moderate, with 23 percent of variation in the extent of press releases being accounted for by variation in the city size. The hypothesis about the variation of the extent of duties among the cities of different size was supported.

Relations With Media

Mayoral press secretaries come into contact with reporters on a daily basis. The average number of days in a week when press secretaries contact reporters or vice versa was 5.149, the median number of days was 5. Among 74 press secretaries, 30 communicate with reporters from Monday to Friday, and another 30 said they contacted or were contacted by reporters also on Saturdays and/or Sundays. It means that 60 of 74 respondents (81.1 percent) collaborate with reporters at least five days a week.

By far the principal way of contacting the reporters is by telephone (61 of 74; 82.4 percent). Seven press secretaries (9.5 percent) do not have a preferred way of contact and marked all possibilities (telephone, fax, in person). For four press secretaries the most principal means is fax and for two, personal visits.

The Most and Least Helpful Duties. The press secretaries are responsible for a lot of tasks and duties but not all of them have to deal with the members of the media. Table XII indicates which of the tasks press secretaries think are the most helpful for reporters and which of the duties the mayoral press secretaries believe reporters do not find helpful for their job of reporting on local government.

TABLE XII
THE MOST AND LEAST HELPFUL DUTIES
N=74

Most Helpful Duties		Least Helpful Duties	
answering media inquiries	25	correspondence	6
providing background info	15	speech writing	6
arranging interviews w/mayor	12	monitoring media coverage	5
being accessible & available	8	writing for the newsletter	5
news releases & quotes	8	releases, follow-ups, pitching "fluff stories"	7
finding people to talk to	6		

When asked about the most helpful duties to reporters, press secretaries valued above all being accessible and ready to answer individual media inquiries and arranging interviews with the mayor and other elected officials the media want to talk to. Four of the five least useful duties though are the tasks that are performed by most of the press secretaries. The press secretaries appear to know about it and even though some say that "if it is not useful, I don't do it," the press secretary's tasks include as many of those

that do not deal with the media as those that do. Apparently, mayoral press secretaries have many other responsibilities than just being available to the press.

With regards to the press secretary's dependency upon media, and the media's dependency upon press secretaries, the subjects rated their level of agreement on a five-point scale, where 1=totally independent, and 5=totally dependent. The results are presented in Table XIII.

TABLE XIII
MUTUAL DEPENDENCY OF PRESS SECRETARIES AND MEDIA
N=74

	Press Secretaries on Media		Media on Press Secretaries	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Totally Dependent	3	4.1 %	5	6.8 %
Somewhat Dependent	48	64.9	56	75.7
Neutral	18	24.3	6	8.1
Somewhat Independent	3	4.1	6	8.1
Totally Independent	2	2.6	1	1.3
TOTAL	74	100.0 %	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	3.635	0.087	3.784	0.087

A randomized design Anova examination of the relationship between the dependency of press secretaries on media and vice versa, and several independent variables was not significant at the 95 percent level of confidence.

No relationship was found between mutual dependencies of press secretaries and media upon each other and characteristics of the press secretaries or the

administration they work in.

Local Media Coverage. On a five-point scale, where 1=sparse, and 5=extensive, the press secretaries rated the local news media coverage of their mayor and the city government. The results are presented in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV
RATING OF LOCAL NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE
N=72

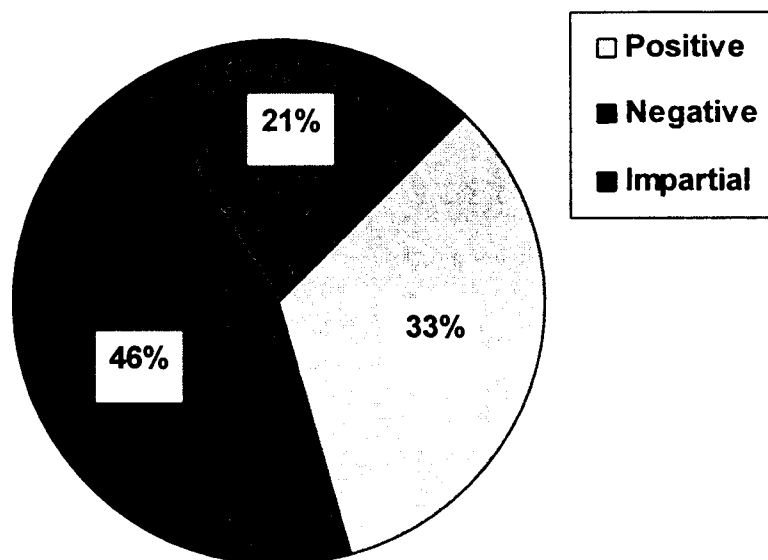
Categories	Number	Percentage
Sparse	0	0 %
Modest	11	15.3
Adequate	20	27.8
Broad	19	26.4
Extensive	22	30.5
TOTAL	72	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	3.704	0.126

In general, the press secretaries rated the extent of the local news media coverage of the mayor and city administration as broad with the average score 3.7 and median score 4 (=broad). The rating of the coverage does not appear to be related either to the city size or the political affiliation of the mayor although some clear tendencies were found. The most extensive coverage was rated in cities under 100,000 (mean=4.33) and then the rating descended depending on the city size, with the lowest rating in the largest cities (mean=3.579). Also, press secretaries for independent mayors

rated the local coverage of the city hall as broad (4.0) while their colleagues in the Democratic administrations rated it only as adequate (3.585). None of these differences is statistically significant.

Typical Words. The press secretaries were asked what would be the most typical words a reporter would use to describe a typical press secretary. During the coding process, the descriptions' connotations were divided into three categories as (1) positive; (2) negative; and (3) impartial. Of 56 subjects who responded to this question, there were 18.5 positive responses (33 %), 25.5 negative responses (45.6 %) (several responses were both positive and negative), and 12 impartial responses (21.4 %), as shown on Figure 3. Among the positive descriptions, the most frequent words were "helpful" (13), "knowledgeable," "resourceful" (7), and "accessible " (5). The most common negative description was "flack" or "hack" (13), "barrier," "roadblock" or "hurdle" (4), "mouthpiece" (3), and "obstructionist" (3). The most frequent impartial expressions were "spin doctor" (7), "protective" and "cautious" (4). The typical words to describe a press secretary as if by reporters are shown on Figure 4.

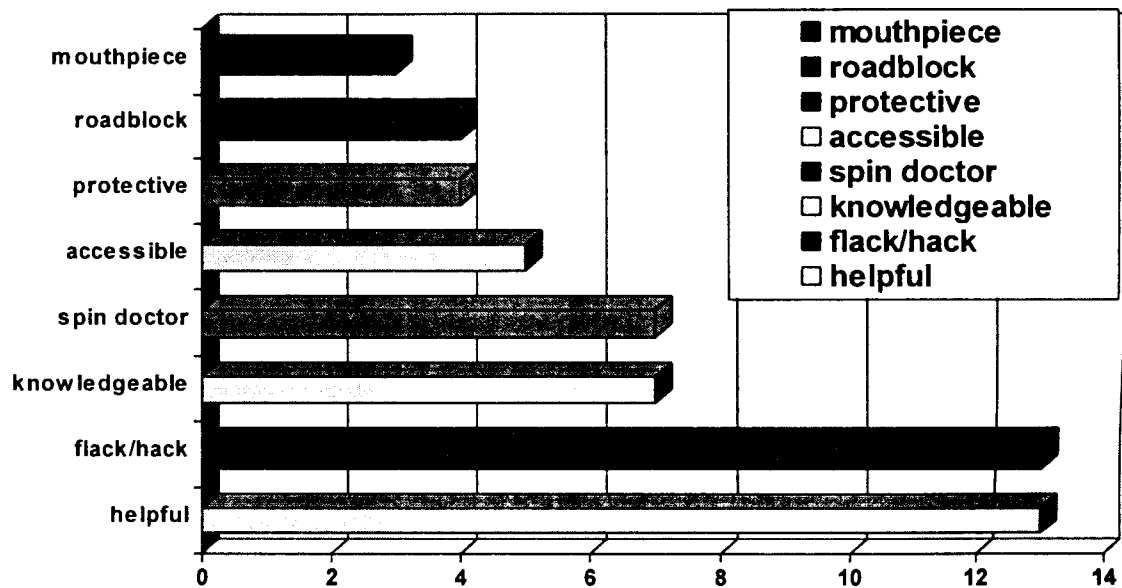
FIGURE 3
THE TYPICAL WORDS USED BY REPORTERS
TO DESCRIBE A PRESS SECRETARY



The implication of the most typical words that the press secretaries used to describe themselves as perceived by reporters had no relationships either with the previous work experience, gender, or with the length of time although those who have been in office more than four years had tendency to describe themselves more positively. However, a moderate relationship was found between the implication of the

typical words for describing a press secretary and the political affiliation at the 95 percent level of confidence. While there was no significant difference among Democrats and Independent mayors, the press secretaries working for Republican mayors tended to be more negative in describing themselves as if by reporters' words ($\chi^2=12.2$; $df=2$; $p<0.01$).

FIGURE 4
 DESCRIPTIONS OF PRESS SECRETARIES AS IF BY REPORTERS



Feelings of Being Looked Down on. The first of the series of questions about how the press secretaries perceive different particulars of their relationship with reporters asked the subjects to mark their level of agreement with the following statement: "For some reason, reporters tend to look down on press secretaries." The answers were examined in combination with gender of press secretaries, political affiliation of the mayor they worked for, the previous working experience, and the combination of all the abovementioned factors together.

The respondents were asked to mark the blank that best represented their level of agreement with the statement on a five-point scale, where 5=strongly agree, and 1=strongly disagree. The results are shown in Table XV.

TABLE XV
 "FOR SOME REASONS, REPORTERS TEND TO LOOK DOWN ON PRESS
 SECRETARIES"
 N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
strongly agree	2	2.7 %
agree	20	27.0
no opinion	18	24.3
disagree	30	40.6
strongly disagree	4	5.4
TOTAL	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	2.81	0.015

As it can be seen in Table XV, about 30 percent of press secretaries agreed with the statement, 46 percent disagreed and 24 percent had no opinion. A randomized design Anova and a factorial design Anova, 2 and 3 factors, examination of the relationships between press secretaries' feelings of being looked down on and several personal characteristics as independent variables was not significant at the 95 percent level of confidence although some tendencies were observed. Former journalists were more likely to agree with the statement than the others, as well as men rather than women and press secretaries for Democratic mayors rather than press secretaries in Republican or independent administrations.

General Quality of Relationship. The respondents were given six characteristics to rate the general quality of their relationship with reporters. The scale comprised five attributes anchored on both ends with two extremes (5=beneficial, 1=antagonistic), and the sixth attribute was "all of these." The results of rating the general quality of the relationship are presented in Table XVI.

TABLE XVI
GENERAL QUALITY OF MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP
N=74

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
beneficial	22	29.7 %
cooperative	28	51.3
adversarial	3	4.1
controversial	0	0
antagonistic	0	0
all of these	11	14.9

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
TOTAL	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	4.554	0.093

In total, 81 percent of press secretaries rated the general quality of their relationship with reporters as either cooperative or even beneficial. Fifteen percent believe that this relationship has all of the above attributes depending on each individual reporter, the type of the media and the nature of the news item. Only less than five percent of respondents have an adversarial relationship with reporters.

A randomized design Anova and factorial Anova, 2 and 3 factors, examination showed no significant differences in rating the quality of mutual relationship depending on working experience, political affiliation, city size, gender, length of time in position, age, or combinations of these factors. The best ratings of the relationship were given by the press secretaries with previous work experience in journalism (mean=4.625), in Republican administrations (mean=4.698) and in the age between 18 and 29 years. On the other hand, less positive were press secretaries in the small cities under 100,000 population and those working less than 18 months as a press secretary. However, none of the differences was significant at the 95 percent level of confidence or higher.

Main Reasons for Tension. The political communication literature acknowledges that there is a natural conflict between the government and media. This tension arises due to two different jobs with their goals and perspectives. If a reporter is looking for a controversy and a source of possible problems in his or her reporting while a press secretary is trying to promote only positive stories, the clashes between the two are

inevitable. Outside of general institutional tension that is appropriate between every reporter and his or her source of information, and the tension due to two different jobs with their goals and perspectives, the respondents of the survey were asked to provide their comments on what are the main reasons for some tensions in relationship between reporters and press secretaries. The answers were first coded according to which of the two sides the respondents found guilty for misunderstandings and tensions in the mutual relationship.

In their responses, three press secretaries answered that there was no tension between the local media and the city government, four believed that the tension arised because of the administration's fault, 14 responses blamed both sides, 17 press secretaries were self-critical and pointed out at the lacks in their own performance, and 27 press secretaries accused reporters from conflicts and misunderstandings.

No tension appears to be where the government is open and honest and where press secretaries wholly understand the media needs. The city governments add up the heat into the relations with media by making the elected officials not available to the media and by not informing their spokespersons about serious or newsworthy facts and information. The most common answer from among those that blamed both sides was the mutual lack of trust and understanding for each other's jobs. The press secretaries who were self-critical of their performance cited mostly a press secretary's evasiveness in dealing with the information on controversial issues, not meeting reporters' deadlines, being not available and responsive, and deliberately providing inaccurate or incomplete information as part of their gatekeeping. Finally, 41.5 percent of the respondents found the main reason for some tensions in reporters themselves. They were critical of reporters' laziness and lack of basic knowledge about the city government resulting in a

lot of inaccuracies in their stories. According to this group of respondents, reporters slant their stories about the government, being bound to sensationalism, negative reporting, and anti-government sentiment. Many reporters allegedly develop preconceived notions about a story and publish only that information obtained from a press secretary that supports their thesis about the issue.

Credibility of Press Secretaries

Accessibility and Knowledgeability. The first group of questions regarding the professionalism and perceived credibility of the press secretaries dealt with the issues of accessibility, knowledgeability about the responses to media, and about how media operate. Again, the respondents marked their level of agreement with the statements on a five-point scale, where 5=strongly agree, and 1=strongly disagree. Table XVII shows the results for the three different questions.

TABLE XVII
ACCESSIBILITY AND KNOWLEDGEABILITY OF PRESS SECRETARIES
N=74

Category	Accessibility		Knowledgeability		Knowing Media	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
strongly agree	61	82.4 %	41	55.4 %	55	74.3 %
agree	13	17.6	28	37.8	19	25.7
undecided	0	0	5	6.8	0	0
disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	74	100.0 %	74	100.0 %	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	4.824	0.045	4.486	0.073	4.743	0.051

The press secretaries here show a great self-confidence in rating their availability and professional knowledge. Almost 100 percent agree that they are available to reporters and knowledgeable about the media needs most of the time.

Giving Quotes. As far as quoting is concerned, the mayoral press secretaries seem to be less quoted by the media than their colleagues in the higher level of the government. The extent of being quoted by the media was expressed on a Likert scale anchored on both ends with two extremes, where 5=constantly, and 1=never. How often the press secretaries are quoted by the media is shown in Table XVIII.

TABLE XVIII
HOW OFTEN PRESS SECRETARIES ARE QUOTED
N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
Constantly	14	18.9 %
Often	15	20.3
Occasionally	25	33.8
Exceptionally	13	17.6
Never	7	9.4
TOTAL	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	3.216	0.142

A randomized design Anova and a factorial design Anova, 2 factors, examination of the relationship between being quoted and age, gender and combination of both personal factors of press secretaries was not significant at the 95 percent level of

confidence. In the city government level, there is no relationship between gender and/or age of press secretary and the extent of being quoted by the media on behalf of the mayor or other elected officials.

Overall Image of Press Secretaries. The overall image of a press secretary as perceived by press secretaries themselves was interpreted on a five-point scale, where 5=excellent, and 1=poor. The results are in Table XIX.

TABLE XIX
OVERAL IMAGE OF PRESS SECRETARIES AS PERCEIVED BY THEMSELVES
N=74

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Excellent	8	10.8 %
Good	47	63.5
Neutral	19	25.7
Lesser	0	0
Poor	0	0
TOTAL	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	3.851	0.069

Three respondents out of four think that the press secretaries in general have a good or excellent perception of their own image. The rest think that press secretaries have a neutral image while nobody believes that press secretaries perceive themselves as people with a poor image. Those with the best image of themselves are men with work experience in public relations (mean=4.6). On the other hand, press secretaries

with the worst image of themselves are women with journalistic previous work experience. None of the randomized design Anova examinations was significant at the 95 percent level of confidence.

Control Over Communication. The next four statements examined the extent of power and control a press secretary might have over communicating messages from the city administration to the media as perceived by the press secretaries themselves. The results are in Tables XX-XXIII.

TABLE XX
 "THE PRESS SECRETARY IS ONE OF THE CLOSEST
 STAFF MEMBERS TO THE MAYOR"
 N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
strongly agree	40	54.0 %
agree	22	29.7
no opinion	9	12.2
disagree	3	4.1
strongly disagree	0	0
TOTAL	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	4.338	0.099

TABLE XXI
 "THE PRESS SECRETARY IS MOSTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR
 THE TONE OF MESSAGES COMING OUT FROM THE CITY HALL"
 N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
strongly agree	20	27 %
agree	38	51.3
no opinion	6	8.1
disagree	9	12.2
strongly disagree	1	1.4
TOTAL	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	3.905	0.114

TABLE XXII
 "THE PRESS SECRETARY HAS THE POWER TO CONTROL
 THE FLOW OF THE INFORMATION AND VERY OFTEN ACT AS A GATEKEEPER"
 N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
strongly agree	19	25.6 %
agree	33	44.6
no opinion	6	8.1
disagree	13	17.6
strongly disagree	3	4.1
TOTAL	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	3.703	0.134

TABLE XXIII
 "THE PRESS SECRETARY CONTROLS THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE MAYOR"
 N=74

Category	Number	Percentage
strongly agree	11	14.8 %
agree	27	36.5
no opinion	9	12.2
disagree	26	35.1
strongly disagree	1	1.4
TOTAL	74	100.0 %
Mean/SEM	3.284	0.133

The press secretaries appear to have strong self-confidence in their power and potential to control communication between the administration and a newsroom. More than 78 percent believe that they are responsible for the tone of messages coming out of the city hall. More than 70 percent admit that they sometimes act as gatekeepers and withhold information deciding what, when and how it is going to be released for publication in the media. More than 50 percent think that they have the power to control or influence the public image of the mayor, although there also are 36 percent of those who disagree. The press secretaries support the hypothesis that they belong among the closest staff members to the mayor. More than 80 percent showed agreement with this statement while only four percent disagreed.

Each of the previous four statements was examined in relation with several personal characteristics from Sections "F" and "G" of the questionnaire. The following

Table XXIV presents the results of randomized design Anova and factorial design Anova examinations of the relationships.

TABLE XXIV
CONTROL OVER COMMUNICATION
N=74

	Closest Member	Tone of Messages	Gatekeeper	Control Over Public Image
Age	f=1.663, p>0.05	f=0.853, p>0.05	f=0.281, p>0.756	f=0.365, p>0.05
Gender	f=0.018, p>0.05	f=0.000, p>0.05	f=4.08, p<0.05	f=1.605, p>0.05
Length of Time	f=3.045, p<0.05	f=0.273, p>0.05	f=0.566, p>0.57	f=0.310, p>0.05
Work Experience	f=1.002, p>0.05	f=1.13, p>0.05	f=0.249, p>0.05	f=1.08, p>0.05
Affiliation	f=0.484, p>0.05	f=0.102, p>0.904	f=1.254, p>0.05	f=0.286, p>0.05
City Size	f=0.392, p>0.759	f=1.934, p>0.152	f=0.734, p>0.05	f=0.401, p>0.05
J/MC Degree	f=0.274, p>0.602	f=1.964, p>0.05	f=0.013, p>0.05	f=1.102, p>0.05
Gender * Work Exp.				f=4.868, p<0.01

There is a relationship between the length of time a press secretary spends in office and his or her perception of proximity to the mayor. The longer press secretaries stay in the position the closer they belong to the mayor's inner circle of aides.

A relationship was also found between gender of press secretaries and acting as a gatekeeper. Female press secretaries have tendency to withhold information and decide what and when is going to be communicated more often than male press secretaries. Both relationships are at the 95 percent level of confidence.

The relationship at the 99 percent level of confidence was found between the combination of press secretaries' gender and work experience and their perception of having a power to control and influence mayor's public image. Men with public relations background as well as women with journalistic experience tend to believe that they have the power to control public image of mayor compared to women with public relations background who disagree with this statement.

Media Importance

It was assumed that the press secretaries to the mayors subscribed to those opinions which regard the media as a very powerful, influential, and prominent source of information for most of the people in these days. The five statements that were part of Section "D" of the questionnaire titled "The Importance of Media" examined these assumptions.

The respondents answered five simple statements and marked their level of agreement on a five-point scale anchored on both ends with two extremes, where 1=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly agree. There was a neutral option provided for those not decided about their answers (3=no opinion). The statements were about the media playing a prominent role in shaping people's beliefs and opinions, about the media as agenda setters, about media's ability to influence political future of an elected official, about the media as a primary source of information for the citizens, and, as an alternative opinion, about the interpersonal communication as the most principal source of information for the public. Table XXV presents the results based on the respondents' answers to these statements.

TABLE XXV

(1) "THE MEDIA PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE
IN FORMING INDIVIDUALS' OPINIONS AND BELIEFS"

(2) "THE MEDIA SET THE NEWS AGENDA, IN OTHER WORDS,
THEY ARE ABLE TO TELL THE PEOPLE WHAT TO THINK ABOUT"

(3) "THE MEDIA ARE VITAL TO THE POLITICAL FUTURE
OF THE MAYOR AND CAN AFFECT HIS OR HER RE-ELECTION"

(4) "THE MOST PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF INFORMATION
FOR AN AVERAGE CITIZEN OF THE CITY IS THE MEDIA"

(5) "WORD-OF-MOUTH OR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, NOT THE MEDIA,
IS THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR CITIZENS OF THE CITY"

N=74

Category	Media Role		Agenda Setters		Political Future		Media As Source		Word-of -Mouth	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
strongly agree	41	55.4 %	22	29.7 %	26	35.1 %	28	37.8 %	0	0
agree	30	40.5	34	45.9	38	51.4	40	54.0	8	10.8
no opinion	1	1.35	8	10.8	4	5.4	3	4.1	5	6.8
disagree	1	1.35	9	12.2	6	8.1	3	4.1	53	71.6
strongly disagree	1	1.35	1	1.4	0	0	0	0	8	10.8
TOTAL	74	100.0 %	74	100.0 %	74	100.0 %	74	100.0 %	74	100.0 %
mean/SEM	4.473 0.084		3.905 0.117		4.135 0.099		4.257 0.084		2.176 0.089	

The results supported the hypothesis that the press secretaries believed in an overwhelming power of the media. More than 95 percent of the respondents agreed with

the statement that "media play a prominent role in shaping people's beliefs and opinions." Almost 92 percent considered the media a primary source of information for the citizens compared to 10.8 percent of those for whom the primary source of information is interpersonal communication among the family members or fellow workers in the communities and neighborhoods - the so-called "word-of-mouth." The press secretaries believe that the media have the power to influence political future of their bosses by the way they report on the person's accomplishments and behavior in office. In total, 86.5 percent agreed with this statement, compared to 8.1 percent who disagreed and 5.4 percent of the subjects had no opinion on the statement. The lowest level of agreement was shown with the statement that media are the agenda setters and are able to tell the people what to think about. According to the results, three of four mayoral press secretaries would agree with the statement while approximately 25 percent would disagree or have no definite opinion.

Based on the answers to the five chosen statements epitomizing the importance of media in the peoples' lives, the press secretaries appear to have a strong faith in media's role, power, and influence.

How Media Work

Right after they answered the questions regarding the importance of media, the subjects of the survey were asked to express their opinions on how the media operate. The four statements that were part of Section "E" of the questionnaire primarily touched the issues of reporters' accuracy, fairness, and objectivity in reporting. The reporters and the media institutions asked about in Section "E" were meant to be the local news media operating in a respondent's city and/or region. Alike in the previous sections, the

respondents marked their level of agreement with the statement on the same five-point likert scale. The results are presented in Table XXVI.

TABLE XXVI

(1) "REPORTERS FROM MY CITY'S MEDIA REPORT ACCURATELY AND FAIRLY ON LOCAL NEWS EVENTS"

(2) "THE MEDIA PRESENT A BALANCED PICTURE OF ALL DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS AND DO NOT PROMOTE THEIR OWN VIEWPOINT"

(3) "REPORTERS TEND TO EDITORIALIZE THE PRESS RELEASES OR THE REPORTS SENT TO THE BY THE PRESS SECRETARY"

(4) "REPORTERS ARE MOSTLY INTERESTED IN SCANDALS AND TRY TO FIND SENSATIONAL FACTS EVEN BEHIND A SERIOUS NEWS STORY"

N=74

CATEGORY	Reporters report accurately		Media present balanced view of events		Reporters editorialize releases		Reporters are interested in scandals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
strongly agree	2	2.7	1	1.4	2	2.7	12	16.2
agree	38	51.3	20	27.0	27	36.5	30	40.5
no opinion	10	13.5	8	10.8	17	23.0	12	16.2
disagree	23	31.1	42	56.7	27	36.5	19	25.7
strongly disagree	1	1.4	3	4.1	1	1.3	1	1.4
TOTAL	74	100 %	74	100 %	74	100 %	74	100 %
Mean/SEM	3.23	0.113	2.649	0.113	3.027	0.110	3.446	0.126

The results based on the respondents' answers in this section were not as radical as in the previous section. The respondents only rarely used the two most extreme answer options. More than 50 percent of the respondents agreed that reporters in their cities were usually accurate and fair in their reporting, compared to 32.5 percent of those who disagreed. As far as the media institutions are concerned, the results were less positive. Only about 30 percent of the press secretaries concluded that the media presented a balanced picture of all viewpoints instead of promoting their own. More than 60 percent of the respondents did not agree with the statement. There is a tie in responses to the statement that reporters tend to editorialize press secretaries' releases. Also, a relatively high number of the respondents had no opinion (23 percent), possibly because the press secretaries may not know what is happening with their press releases in a newsroom. When speaking about reporters in general, the press secretaries showed a higher distrust in their fairness and seriousness. The press secretaries who believe that reporters are mostly interested in scandals and try to find sensational facts even behind a serious news story outnumbered those who disagree with the statement in a ratio 2:1 (56.7 percent - 27.1 percent).

In order to examine possible relationships and differences in the subjects' responses to the statements about how media work, randomized and factorial design Anova tests were run with the personal factors from Section "F" used as the independent variables. The relationship between age, gender, length of time in the position, working experience, and education of the press secretaries, as well as political affiliation of their mayors and the size of their cities, and their evaluation of how media work was examined.

Three statistically significant differences were found. There is a weak relationship between political affiliation and the opinion of press secretaries that reporters tend to editorialize press releases ($f=3.643$; $p<0.05$; Pearson $r=0.309$; and $\eta=0.096$). The tukey test indicated that the press secretaries in Democrat-led administrations appear to think that reporters commonly editorialize their press releases more than press secretaries with a Republican mayor.

A relationship was found between length of time a press secretary stays in his/her position and the level of agreement with the statement that reporters are mostly interested in scandals ($f=4.335$; $p<0.05$; Pearson $r=0.334$; and $\eta=0.11$). This relationship is considered a weak to moderate. The difference was found by a tukey test between those who are in office less than 18 months and seniors with more than a four year work experience as a press secretary. The more the press secretary stays in the position the less he or she believes that reporters only hunt for scandals and sensational stories.

A factorial design Anova, 2 factors, examination of the relationship between political affiliation, working experience and the level of agreement with the statement that reporters are mostly interested in scandals was significant at the 95 percent level of confidence ($f=3.718$; $p<0.05$; multiple Pearson $R=0.517$; and the coefficient of determination 0.267). The relationship was moderate. The significant difference was found between the press secretaries with other than journalistic or public relations work experience and the press secretaries with public relations background, both working for the Republican mayors.

No other significant differences were found although a couple of tendencies are worth to be mentioned.

The older the press secretary is and the more s/he stays in the position the more they are willing to agree that reporters and media are accurate and objective in reporting on different viewpoints. The press secretaries working for independent mayors have more favorable opinions about the reporters than those working for Republicans and Democrats, in that order. The press secretaries who do not have a degree in journalism appear to be more favorable of reporters' and media's performance than the journalism and/or mass communications majors. The press secretaries in the administrations with an independent mayor are more favorable of reporters and media than Republican and Democratic administrations, in that order. The previous working experience of the press secretaries did not play a major role in their evaluating of media performance as well as press secretaries' gender and the size of the city.

Summary

In this chapter, 176 different tests were run to examine 6 basic research hypotheses stated in the methodology chapter and to follow the purpose and the objectives of the study. The tests were focused on providing a general description of a mayoral press secretary and his or her duties, credibility of the press secretary as perceived by themselves, press secretaries' beliefs, opinions and perceptions of the importance of media and how media operate, and some of the aspects of mutual relationship with reporters.

The findings of the statistical analysis based on the tests results indicate that a typical mayoral press secretary is likely to be a woman in her late thirties, with a journalistic or public relations background, being a part of a small press staff of two or three people who enters and leaves the position with her boss - an elected official. The

press secretary appear to have a strong faith in the importance of media in today's world, media's role, power and influence in the society although, at the same time, they do not show a high esteem of media's performance. The press secretaries -- as one of the mayors' closest staff members -- also believe that they execute a substantial control over the communication of information coming out from their offices. In spite of an adequate institutional tension between press secretaries and reporters and the presence of distrust and wariness, their mutual dependency and quality of relationship is seen as highly cooperative and beneficial.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study of mayoral press secretaries and public information officers. The research plan and the findings along with hypotheses tested in the study are summed up in separate sections. Some trends found and their meanings are discussed in a perspective of the models and theories of communication introduced in Chapter I. The findings resulted in several recommendations for involved groups -- press secretaries, reporters, and elected officials, as well as for other areas of research that appear to be relevant to further enhance understanding of the role of press secretaries and public information officers in the process of political communication.

Summary

Methodology

A mail survey of 102 press secretaries and public information officers was conducted in the fall of 1995 to collect data on personal characteristics, extent of duties and beliefs, perceptions and opinions of the mayoral press secretaries on their relationship with reporters. Different administrations, size of the cities, and different regions were represented in the purposive sample. The subjects of the study were asked to answer 47 questions in the mail questionnaire that were previously pretested during a dozen personal, semi-structured interviews and a pretest mailing of the

questionnaire to a group of mayoral press secretaries not included in the final sample. The answers on the 74 returned and completed questionnaires (response rate 72.5 percent) were coded, tabulated, and analyzed applying statistical tests commonly used in mass communications research. The findings present a picture of mayoral press secretaries in the most significant local government administrations in the United States answering the questions of who they are, what they do, what they think about their relationship with media, control over communication, media importance and media performance.

Findings

Typical Press Secretary. The data show that the typical press secretary or public information officer to a mayor is a woman in her late thirties or early forties who has worked on the job for three and a half to four years. This individual finished college with a bachelor's degree, not necessarily in journalism. Prior to joining the local government administration, she or he worked in the media as a journalist or public relations practitioner. In their work as press secretaries, they have one or two assistants with whom they comprise a small section usually within the mayor's office and are responsible for the mayor's or city manager's relations with the media. The unit may not bear the name of "press office" or "public information department" but may be disguised behind many different euphemisms. In larger cities, however, these staff members are likely to be called "press secretaries" while in the smaller cities, the term "public information" or "public affairs" is preferred.

The press secretaries have various duties and responsibilities but the "big four" duties have to do with reporters. Almost every individual receives and answers media

inquiries (usually 5 a day, rarely more than 10), produces press releases (2 to 5 in a regular week), monitors media coverage about the administration and the mayor to give the elected officials and appointed executives feedback on their activities, and tries to be available to give quotes or inform the press about what is going on in the administration. Aside from these media responsibilities, press secretaries do a lot of other things and, apparently, are not always in their office, not only because of their dealings with the media. They may write speeches for their bosses, advise them on legislative matters, answer constituency correspondence or simply represent the mayor in public. It is probable that the press secretaries with journalistic or public relations background perform more press-related tasks than their colleagues with work experience in other fields.

The press secretaries are in daily contact with reporters calling each other several times each working day and often on weekends. Press secretaries understand that being available, accessible, and knowledgeable is important to reporters. Press secretaries' relationship with the media is characterized as mutually dependent with cooperation and mutual benefit at its core, although the press secretaries clearly recognize the adversary roles of both parties citing distrust and lack of understanding for each other's jobs as the main reasons for some tension in their relations. Despite often being called a "flack," "spin doctor" or "barrier" by reporters, press secretaries have a very good perception of their own image and there are more who do not think that reporters look down on them than those who think otherwise.

The press secretaries believe that they have much control over the communication by the administration with the public through the media. But even more, they believe in the prominent role that media play in shaping individuals' beliefs and

opinions. Nine of ten press secretaries think of the media as the principal source of information for an average citizen in their city and also as an important opinion leader. Almost the same number of press secretaries believe that the political future of their elected officials very much depends on how media report on their activities and performance in office. Three of four press secretaries regard media as agenda setters in their cities. These findings suggest that press secretaries undoubtedly subscribe to the powerful effects theory of communications, the so-called "bullet theory" of media effects.

At the same time, the press secretaries do not think particularly high of media performance when objectivity, fairness and accuracy are concerned. While reporters are more highly esteemed, media institutions are believed to present their own viewpoints of events rather than a balanced picture of all viewpoints. According to the press secretaries, reporters are mostly interested in scandals and sensational facts, although this is not seen as a deficiency in reporting. It merely illustrates the nature and priorities of today's reporting. Press secretaries tend to think that media work on a partisan principle but the more they stay in the position and the less partisan the administration in which they work, the more favorable view of the journalistic profession they have.

Testing Hypotheses. The following research hypotheses were examined in this study.

Hypothesis # 1: Press secretaries have previous media experience and/or journalism higher education. This hypothesis was supported. The mayoral press secretaries bring a significant amount of journalistic experience to their position in the local government administration. Every other press secretary to the mayor worked, prior to becoming the mayor's spokesperson, as a journalist. Of those with a journalistic past,

50 percent had print media work experience, and the other 50 percent worked in television or radio. Another 30 percent of press secretaries entered their present job with some public relations work experience which means that, overall, four out of five press secretaries had some practical experience in media relations. Combined with another finding that almost 50 percent had a college degree in journalism and/or mass communications, the research hypothesis was supported. Journalism, mass communication and public relations, by practical work experience rather than by education, accounted for the majority of mayoral press secretaries' previous professional background.

Hypothesis # 2: Press secretaries are among the closest members of the mayor's staff. This hypothesis was supported. Mayoral press secretaries, at least in their own perception, are among the closest staff members to the mayor. More than 80 percent of the respondents agreed with this statement. The press secretary is one of the three or four staffers (the others might be chief of staff, finance director, public works director and legislative aide) who know the mayor best in terms of what he prefers, dislikes, and what he would say in different situations.

Hypothesis # 3: The range of press secretaries duties and activities as well as their extent vary depending on the size and the characteristics of the city and/or region, and the local media market. This hypothesis was not supported. The size of the city played only a moderate role in the relationship with the extent of different duties. It was found that press secretaries in the cities with population under 300,000 were more likely to deal with correspondence and write for a city hall newsletter than their colleagues in the cities with more than 0.5 million residents. Other duties were not affected by city size. The size of the city partly affected the extent of some duties. The

larger the city the more media inquiries are to be answered and more press releases are to be distributed to the media but the differences in the extent of duties were significant only between the largest cities with population more than 0.5 million and smaller cities under 300,000 residents. While this hypothesis was supported it is noted that city size is only one of the possible factors that affects the extent of the press secretaries' tasks and duties and the variations are accounted for by many other elements, e.g., work experience and gender.

Hypothesis # 4: Press secretaries perceive that the media generally hold them in disregard. This hypothesis was rejected. None of the subjects of the study rated the perception of their own image as "lesser" or "poor" on a five-point scale. Almost 75 percent of the mayoral press secretaries think they have a good or excellent image and 25 percent were neutral. Also, 46 percent of the respondents did not feel that reporters looked down on press secretaries just because they were press officers serving a political boss compared to 30 percent who expressed some feelings of being looked down on. The former journalists, males and press secretaries to the Democratic mayors were more likely to have negative feelings. Finally, there were almost as many of those press secretaries who answered that the typical words a reporter would have used to describe them were "helpful," "resourceful" or "accessible" (33 percent) as there were those who had used more negative connotations, such as a "flack," a "roadblock" or a "mouthpiece" (45.6 percent).

Hypothesis # 5: Press secretaries strongly believe that the media are agenda-builders. This hypothesis was supported. Three out of four press secretaries agreed with the statement that "the media sets the news agenda, in other words, it is able to tell the people what to think about" (75.6 percent) while 13.6 percent disagreed.

On a five-point scale, where 5=strongly agree, and 1=strongly disagree, the mean was 3.9. The respondents also agreed that the media is the principal source of information for an average citizen able to shape individuals' beliefs and opinions.

Hypothesis # 6: Press secretaries think and work with the assumption that the media present partisan unbalanced viewpoints of the news events. This hypothesis was supported although this was true more of the media as institutions than reporters as individuals. Data show that 60.8 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement that "media presents a balanced picture of all different viewpoints and do not promote their own viewpoint." Also, 56.7 percent agreed that "reporters are mostly interested in scandals and try to find sensational facts even behind a serious news story." Finally, 86.5 percent believed that "media is vital to political future of the mayor and can affect his or her re-election" by the way it reports on the mayor's performance in office. The press secretaries with more time in office and those from nonpartisan administrations were more favorable toward the media.

Conclusions

Older, More Stable, and Busier

Press secretaries are growing older, more stable, and more women are entering the field. Of 97 Senate press secretaries at the beginning of the 1980s, only 19 were women but by 1989 33 percent of all Senators employed a woman as press secretary.¹ At the city government level, the women's seizure of the job is even more dramatic as two out of three mayoral press secretaries are women. This trend is supported by the enrollment data of college undergraduates majoring in public relations where female

students account for more than half of the students. If the trend continues, it would be interesting to explore whether spokeswoman's perception of the complex relationship with the public elected officials and reporters differs from that of spokesmen and what is the credibility and accountability of female governmental public relations experts compared with male credibility and accountability.

The average and median length of time that the press secretary remains in office observed by the previous studies was two or two and a half years. Mayoral press secretaries seem to be more stable, remaining with the administration for at least one electoral period of four years. Also, the job becomes more complex and sophisticated. The knowledge of computers, cable communication, using electronic mail and the Internet is becoming critical to get the government's message out.

The levels of activities and extent of duties of mayoral press secretaries are impressive. While Cook estimated that the press officers in the House of Representatives sent out an average of 85 press releases and produced 35 radio actualities per year², the mayoral press secretaries are even more active sending at least one press release per day, responding to 5-6 media inquiries daily and writing about 3 speeches per month. The press secretary often works 60-70 hours a week and after the working hours he or she participates in various campaigns. One press secretary wrote that in the past 18 months the administration has done 593 press conferences and news briefings for local and national media.

However, a mayoral press secretary is there for much more than just answering media inquiries, although press-related duties are the top priority for every press secretary. But most of the mayoral press secretaries' duties extend far beyond press or public relations. He or she keeps elected officials aware of what is being said, both

formally (media monitoring) and informally (in the community). Press secretaries can best serve their mayors and other executives by helping them understand the media's viewpoints, recognizing the needs of reporters and trying to accommodate them. The real challenge for the press secretary is to learn how to get the message out in the media market that is being increasingly splintered.

Although some basic methods and techniques have been developed that are widely employed in practice, it is hard to say that public information officers and press secretaries are similarly organized and work alike. Their practices may vary as their offices, departments and administrations do.

The Closest Ally

For many press secretaries, being a close staff member to the mayor is an absolute "must" for successfully performing their jobs. Without being an ally, almost intimate friend of the elected official, the press secretary cannot fulfil the requirements of the profession and the expectations both of the public official and of the members of the media. Said George Reedy, press secretary to President Lyndon B. Johnson, "The one thing that is essential in my judgment, the one quality a press secretary must have is a very close, fine relationship with the President."³ A press secretary must be in the loop which is the Washington parlance for being included in the inner circle where alternative actions are debated, decisions concluded, and plans formulated, in order to serve effectively as an honest advocate for a political executive.⁴

To be in the inner circle, among the closest staff members of the mayor, and also participate in decision making of local government executives are two different things. The real proximity of the press secretary to the mayor or other local government

executives that is so valued by the reporters means that the press secretary is an integral part of all important discussions, plans and decisions and that he or she is authorized to honestly and accurately mediate them for the members of the media.

A "Helpful Flack"

The problem of the press secretaries' personal image and perceptions of this image was a very interesting question to examine. Most of the previous studies found that either press or the press secretaries themselves generally did not have very high self-esteem as far as their image was concerned. This problem partly arises because the press officers are not considered part of the government personnel elite. At the same time, reporters often feel superior to all career press officers⁵ looking at them as traitors to the "sacred profession" of journalism, the "higher calling." As one of the respondents noted:

Yes. I think they view me as a sort of a traitor to the profession of journalism. The reason is that most of the journalists view their profession as a "higher calling." They view themselves as pure and untainted. "You're now the enemy," they say. But if I didn't have a journalistic background they would probably not. They see press secretaries without journalistic background as simply public relations people.

The overall findings of this study showed otherwise. Although the job is often hectic and stressful, and it is not easy to care about oneself under constant pressure, the press secretary manages to maintain a very professional image, both in appearance and actions.

During a previous related study, fifteen reporters covering the local government agenda for their media institutions in the cities of Cleveland, Columbus (OH) and

Baltimore (MD) were asked to answer the same questions regarding their perceptions of the press secretary's image.⁶ Neither did they admit that they held press secretaries in disregard. They consider the job of press secretary just like any other person would. The most typical descriptions of the press secretary by reporters did not sound too positive although "flack" is considered to be more negative than "spin doctor" which recognizes press secretary's ability to spin the information and provide it from his "angle." For most of the reporters, press secretaries are often very helpful giving them the background they need for a story. Reporters use them because of their close position to the mayor. Nonetheless, reporters claim it is they who have to recognize that press secretaries are not independent journalists and reporters should not expect to get too much from them.

"Bullet Theory" Supporters

The press secretaries are diligent supporters of the powerful media effects theory often called the "bullet theory" of media effects. This theory predicts strong and more or less universal effects of mass communication messages on all audience members who happen to be exposed to them.⁷ Press secretaries hold that the media is extremely powerful and is aware of its power, which it is not afraid to use in order to shape public opinion. For some people, the press secretaries say, the media is the only link they have with their political representatives and the media is what they rely on. In elaborating on the possible reasons for the allegedly partisan behavior of the media, the press secretaries mention above all the economics of the media business, the rise of print monopolies, and the race for the sake of profit and ratings. Said one press secretary:

The media is a business that does not take positions that would end up in costing them money... Especially editors and broadcast production directors truly act as gatekeepers.

The press secretaries appear to be particularly sensitive to the possibility that their bosses might not be re-elected, which was expressed in the questionnaire by the statement that "the media is vital to the political future of the mayor and can affect his or her re-election." This finding is no surprise. When it is so rare to meet an elected official personally, the best chance to make an impression is via media. If the mayor does good things and the media writes about it, it may reflect positively on him, and vice versa. In some sense, the mayor's political future is in his own hands. However, it goes through the hands of media.

Indeed, the political communication literature reveals that negative news stories can damage the reputations of elected officials⁸, and news coverage is crucial to the political aspirations of elected officials.⁹ But as far as the cause-and-effect relationship is concerned, the opinions are more cautious. Undoubtedly, causation is a far too complex process to say that the image in the news media can cause successful election. Factors such as the state of the economy and public content or discontent are always present.¹⁰ It is apparent that no one can state authoritatively that these images are the decisive factors in the final outcome of the election. But it is evident that politicians and their surrogates believe they are and try to make use of the news media as one of their principal agents in their search for election.

Reactive and Short-term Oriented

Mayoral press secretaries seem to practice Grunig's public information model of

public relations called “one-way symmetric” with some indications of persuasion (asymmetry) and two-way communication. According to this model, journalists are used by public information officers to disseminate relatively objective information through the independent mass media as well as controlled media, such as newsletters, direct mail, business and labor publications. Most local government information officers only send messages. Some of them do receive feedback, but primarily in the form of reporters’ inquiries to specific questions. Understanding communication as “a two-way street” is an exception rather than a general rule. It is possible here to draw a parallel between the White House Press Office and Office of Communications, the former being reactive and pursuing short term goals whereas the latter is proactive with long term goals. Although the best press secretaries attempt to anticipate issues and responses, participate in generating special events, and try to publicize and promote the administration and the city, this is more the function of a city’s communications or public information teams and departments. The press secretary deals mostly with the press and with communicating to the public through media, obtaining feedback through constituents’ correspondence and media monitoring. There is evidence that policy makers monitor press reactions more frequently and more extensively than they do public opinion surveys.¹¹

Servant of Two Masters

One of the most interesting and the least understood aspects of a press secretary’s role is their position as liaison between government and the members of the media. The importance of the press secretary as a buffer to protect the public official and deflect some of the most heated criticisms of the press was among the initial reasons that gave birth to the profession. Today, the press secretaries have to withstand

the schizophrenia of serving two masters, as one of the respondents noted, "catching bullets from both sides, the media and members of the administration." Some authors called it a "dual loyalty" and this study compared the position of press secretaries as being "between a rock and a hard place." Serving two masters certainly takes its toll. Although reporters may contribute to a press secretary's downfall by pressing complaints that he or she does not respond properly to their demands or provide accurate information, reporters cannot help a press secretary if they think he is doing a good job.¹² Most of the mayoral press secretaries surveyed, however, believed that it was possible for a press secretary to establish a strong working relationship both with the media and with public officials provided trust, honesty, and respect are present and government is open and accessible, with much citizen participation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations for the groups involved -- press secretaries, reporters, public elected officials -- are proposed here, along with a comprehensive list of research that might further enhance general knowledge and understanding of this area of political communication.

Recommendations for Press Secretaries

(1) Previous research (Hovland, Lazarsfeld, Klapper) did not provide much support for the model of the powerful effects of media. There is evidence that media are particularly ineffective in changing people's attitudes and actions. Mediating factors and selective processes also function in the process of mass communication. Therefore, it is recommended that the press secretaries put more emphasis on the important part of

communicating, which is to deal directly with the citizens. Here is a great potential for press secretaries to build the agenda and influence what is “news.” What the media emphasize certainly helps to make people concentrate on certain things. But the media is not the whole answer to the question who sets the news agenda. It is certainly the mixture of the public, the media and government itself.

(2) Effective communication helps in getting the message across. Effective communication means more than just a press secretary talking and somebody else listening. It means that both agree on the content of the information and ideas exchanged. It is critical for press secretaries to understand communication as a two-way process.

(3) The press secretary is there to speak on behalf of the mayor, provide accurate and complete information. It is recommended that the press secretary’s role shall not be to withhold information, or to tell the press what is to be published and what is not. A press secretary who is a skillful communicator tries to shape the message but not keep it from getting out.

Recommendations for Reporters

(1) Just like some reporters are good and some are not, some governments operate smoothly and some do not. Reporters should not view government as a necessary evil. Even government and its representatives can have good ideas, programs and intentions. Respect, trust and honesty would help avoid most of the tensions in relationships with the press secretaries.

(2) Government has become a very complex issue to report on. Without journalistic excellence, accountability and knowledge of the governmental process it is

virtually impossible to accurately report on government. Reporters' lack of knowledge and understanding of government makes it easier for an elected official and his press secretary to eventually "spin" the truth. It is therefore recommended that, prior to reporting on local government, reporters should take their time and become familiar with the city hall and local government issues.

(3) The mayoral press secretary is not there just to answer individual media inquiries. Press secretaries have duties that reach far beyond press relations. But their top priority is to be available to the members of the media. Reporters should be aware that, before they finally get the required information, the press secretaries do a lot of briefing and digging that might be invisible to impatient reporters. Most press secretaries, however, work hard to get the reporter's job done. Also, it shall be noted that just like media have their deadlines, the city council or the mayor is not going to make their decisions only because the newspaper has a deadline.

Recommendations for Elected Public Officials

(1) The press secretary's effectiveness and relationship with the media depend greatly on overall local government philosophy. If the mayor operates a very open, accessible local government it helps the government's credibility. There are no conflicts and tensions in relations with the media reported from open local governments, with high citizen participation. Also, when there is a negative relationship with the media it encourages a reporter to be more negative and look for the government's "wrongdoings." On the other hand, if government is open and honest, reporters might be tempted to look at it in a more positive way. It is advocated that the local government executives shall attempt to run an open administration, with unrestricted access for

journalists and other citizens.

(2) If they are to help disseminate the mayor's message among the people, the press secretaries and public information officers must participate in the decision-making process of the local government along with other executives. The press secretary is particularly important in counseling and making the administration aware of the media's needs and viewpoints. It is recommended that public elected officials make their press secretaries an integral part of the inner circle of executives and advisors who discuss and make the most important programs, plans and decisions.

Recommendations for Further Research

There is a host of issues and questions related to the topic of this study that would be interesting to examine in further research. The most important are:

(1) The picture of press secretaries/reporters relations will never be complete unless the same questions are asked on the other side of the "barricade." It is more than probable that the reporters from local and national media covering local government perceive many aspects of their interactions with mayoral press secretaries different from the outcomes of this study. A similar study as this with a comparable sample of reporters would be valuable.

(2) Media strategies and operations of government vary in different stages of an electoral period. Some authors suggested that the relationship of a newly-elected government with the media in the first 100 days after the election is a "honeymoon." On the other hand, media operations tend to be much more intensive during an election year. A longitudinal study of press secretaries over the different stages of a four-year electoral period is recommended to examine these issues.

(3) Very little is known about how the agenda is formed between press secretary and journalist and who is "behind the wheel" when the news is being made. The news-making habits and techniques of the press, radio and television that transmit most of the messages from government are essential for understanding the press secretary/reporter relationships with respect to the news agenda. Such a study is recommended to be done separately for print and electronic media anticipating significant differences among different types of media.

(4) With respect to a massive influx of women to the field of public information, and public relations in general, it is important to study the credibility of press secretaries and the possible differences and indications of credibility between male and female spokespersons.

(5) Finally, the problem of what are some of the favorite communication strategies and operations of press secretaries and, particularly, the problem of access to media, might be an important aspect to explore in today's world of a fragmented media market.

Epilogue

The press has come to depend on public information officers for much of their information. Reporters would be frustrated and the public will not be informed on what is going on in government unless there are people like press secretaries and public information officers. Reporters must rely heavily on them. The reason for this is that there are now hundreds of government offices and programs but not enough reporters to cover all of them adequately. The result is a major mutual dependency of government information officers and journalists.

Despite the notorious lightbulb joke “How many press secretaries does it take...?” with the answer “I don’t have anything on that, but I’ll get back to you.”¹³, the press secretary is a valuable, important, creative, and compelling job that can be thoroughly enjoyed.

A good press secretary is not the one whom one can see in public more than the elected public official he or she is supposed to represent. A good press secretary is like a good referee -- the best are not those who interrupt the ball game every other second and make themselves visible and important. The people have come to see the athletes and the best referee will carefully enforce the rules of the game, though nobody would ever notice him as a part of the game. This parallel helps describe a good press secretary. Citizens want to hear from their public officials -- president, senators, congressmen, governors, mayors. They are not interested in a civil servant who was not elected to his position. Good press secretaries use all their potential and professional ability to make the elected official and his message available to the media and the people. The role of a press secretary is to provide honest, accurate and complete information.

If the press secretary understands this very basic premise of the job, even the position “between a rock and a hard place” does not need to be so hard.

Endnotes

1. Stephen Hess, *Live From Capitol Hill! Studies of Congress and the media* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1991), 63.
2. Timothy E. Cook, *Making Laws and Making News: Media Strategies in the U.S. House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1989).
3. Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., *Three Press Secretaries on the Presidency and the Press. Jody Powell, George Reedy, Jerry terHorst* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 9.
4. W. Pederson, "Brookings Study Profiles Government Press Officers," *Public Relations Journal* 40 (November 1984): 44.
5. Ibid. 46.
6. Milan Vajda, *How Reporters Perceive Their Relationship With Mayoral Press Secretaries*, Term paper for MC5770 Independent Study, October 1995, 9.
7. Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard, Jr., *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses in the Mass Media*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 1992), 247.
8. Marion R. Just, "Channeling the Flow of Information: New Books on Government and the Press," *Polity* 20 (January 1987): 166.
9. Phyllis C. Kaniss, *Making Local News* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 161.
10. J. Herbert Altschull, *Agents of Power. The Media and Public Policy*, 2nd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995), 159.
11. Just, 166.
12. Michael B. Grossman and Martha J. Kumar, *Portraying the President: The White House and the News Media* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 131.
13. Hess, 62.

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APPENDIXES

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 10-10-95

IRB#: AS-96-016

Proposal Title: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: HOW MAYORS'
PRESS SECRETARIES PERCEIVE THEIR RELATIONS WITH REPORTERS

Principal Investigator(s): Charles Fleming, Milan Vajda

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved


ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
AT NEXT MEETING.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A
CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD
APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR
APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval
are as follows:

Signature:


Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: October 23, 1995

APPENDIX B – COVER LETTER FOR SURVEY INSTRUMENT

October 20, 1995

att. Press Secretary to the Mayor, or
Public Information/Public Affairs Director

Dear Sir/Madam:

Perhaps you agree with me that the job of a press secretary working within the city government is one of the most difficult of any governmental administration. There is no other place in the government where the contact between public official and citizens is so close. Besides, press secretaries must deal with the press and perform the role of liaison between the mayor they work for and the demanding press. Hardly any other comparison is so illustrative of their positions as the one I used to title my study: "Between a rock and a hard place."

Who are the individuals who supply information to the reporters? Who are the press secretaries, spokespersons, press or public information officers, public affairs directors - whatever their title may be? Our daily duties do not allow us to stop for a while and think about our profession, our beliefs, motivations, and perceptions of our relations with reporters. Although, it might improve our performance.

Since 1991, I have been working as a press secretary to the mayor of City of Bratislava, the 0.5 million capital of Slovakia in East Central Europe. Now my boss gave me a one-year leave of absence to finish a Masters program in mass communications at Oklahoma State University. Having received this opportunity, I decided to do a study to define the role of mayors' press secretaries in the political communication process at the local government level in the United States.

But to achieve this goal, I would like to ask for your help. Please take a few minutes and complete the enclosed questionnaire on the perceptions of your relationship with reporters. Your answers, combined with those of 102 other colleagues of yours working as press secretaries for U.S. mayors around the country, will help me to shed more light on many problems the mayors' press secretaries or public information officers confront in their jobs.

I guarantee absolute confidentiality for your responses. The numbers in the right upper corner of the questionnaire are for keeping track of respondents in case a second mailing is needed. They will be removed on receipt of the returned questionnaire. I intend to publish the results only in my thesis' summary and, perhaps, in a journal article in one of the communications journals of our field.

Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed, self-addressed and postage-paid envelope by Monday, November 13, 1995. Your answers are really valuable to me.

Should you have any questions, please call me at (405) 744-1598 or leave a message at (405) 744-6354 and I'll get back to you as soon as possible. If you have any questions about me or the purpose of this survey, please contact my adviser, Dr. Charles A. Fleming, at the above address or (405) 744-8270.

Wishing you and your mayor success in all your endeavors,

Sincerely,

Milan Vajda,
Master's student,
Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX C -- QUESTIONNAIRE

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Journalism & Broadcasting

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Mayoral Press Secretaries Survey

Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed, addressed envelope by October 30, 1995.

If you have any questions, please call me at (405) 744 1598, or write me at:
Oklahoma State University, School of Journalism & Broadcasting, 206 Paul Miller Bldg.,
Stillwater, OK 74078.

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is entirely confidential. It will take less than 10 minutes to complete.

A: YOUR ROUTINE DUTIES AND DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

1. Your responsibilities include: (please mark all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> answering media inquiries | <input type="checkbox"/> conducting TV/radio actualities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> writing press releases | <input type="checkbox"/> writing for city hall's newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> monitoring media coverage | <input type="checkbox"/> answering correspondence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> writing speeches | <input type="checkbox"/> acting as a legislative aide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> giving quotes on behalf of mayor | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ |

2. How many media inquiries do you answer in an average day?

- 0-5 6-10 10+

3. How many press releases (by mail, fax, telephone, etc.) do you forward in an average week?

- 0-1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+

4. How many speeches do you write in an average month?

- 0-3 4-7 8-12 13+

5. Which of your duties do you think media find the most helpful for them?

6. Which of your duties do you think media find the least helpful for them?

(For the following statements please check the blank that best applies.)

7. For most of the time, I am accessible to reporters.

 Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I am knowledgeable about responses to media inquiries.

 Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I know the formats and the deadlines of the media I work with.

 Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. How often are you quoted by the media?

 Constantly Occasionally Never

11. In your opinion, what is the overall image press secretaries have of themselves?

 Excellent Good Neutral Lesser Poor

B. RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

1. On how many days a week do you usually come into a working contact with reporters?

2. What is the most principal way of contacting?

 Telephone Fax Personal Other

3. In your opinion, what would be the most typical words a reporter would use to describe the typical press secretary?

(For the following statements please check the blank that best represents your opinion.)

4. For some reasons, reporters tend to look down on press secretaries.

 Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. How would you describe your dependency on the media?

 Totally Somewhat Neutral Somewhat Totally
 Dependent Dependent Independent Independent

3. The media are vital to the political future of the mayor and can affect his or her re-election.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. The most principal source of information for an average citizen of my city is the media.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Word-of-mouth or personal experience, not the media, is the primary source of information for the citizens of my city.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

E: HOW MEDIA WORK

(For the following statements, please check the blank that best represents your opinion.)

1. Reporters from my city's media report accurately and fairly on local news events.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The media in my city presents a balanced picture of all different viewpoints and do not promote their own viewpoint.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. Reporters in general tend to editorialize the press releases or the reports sent to them by the press secretary.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. Reporters are mostly interested in scandals and try to find sensational facts even behind a serious news story.

Strongly Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

F: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Age _____ 2. Gender _____ 3. Title of position _____

4. Length of time in current position (in months) _____

5. Other professional work experience (title and length)

6. Highest education completed
_____ High School _____ Bachelors _____ Masters _____ Doctorate

7. Do you have a degree in journalism/mass communications? _____ Yes _____ No

8. How many people (including you) work in the press office of the mayor? _____

G: THE MAYOR AND THE CITY

1. Political affiliation of the mayor you work for
_____ Democrat _____ Republican _____ Independent

2. Length of time the mayor has been in office (in months) _____

3. What is the size of your city?

_____ under 100,000 _____ 100,000-300,000 _____ 301,000-500,000 _____ 500,000+

4. What is the character of the region where your city is located?

_____ very urban _____ urban _____ combined _____ rural _____ very rural

5. How would you rate the local media coverage of the mayor and the city government?

_____ sparse _____ modest _____ adequate _____ broad _____ extensive

H: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS?

1. Do you have any additional comments?

2. Are there any other areas vital to your job that we did not cover? If so, what are they?

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you once again for your cooperation. Your information is valuable to us. Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope by October 30, 1995.

APPENDIX D -- LIST OF PARTICIPATING CITIES IN SURVEY

Pretesting (12)

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Albany, NY | 5. Dayton, OH | 9. Savannah, GA |
| 2. Ann Arbor, MI | 6. Knoxville, TN | 10. Tempe, AZ |
| 3. Charleston, SC | 7. Manchester, NH | 11. Topeka, KS |
| 4. Chattanooga, TN | 8. Santa Fe, NM | 12. Wilmington, DE |

Original Sample Frame (102)

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Akron, OH | 35. Fresno, CA | 69. Oklahoma City, OK |
| 2. Albuquerque, NM | 36. Grand Rapids, MI | 70. Omaha, NE |
| 3. Anchorage, AK | 37. Greensboro, NC | 71. Orlando, FL |
| 4. Annapolis, MD | 38. Hartford, CT | 72. Pasadena, CA |
| 5. Atlanta, GA | 39. Honolulu, HI | 73. Philadelphia, PA |
| 6. Austin, TX | 40. Houston, TX | 74. Phoenix, AZ |
| 7. Baltimore, MD | 41. Indianapolis, IN | 75. Pittsburgh, PA |
| 8. Baton Rouge, LA | 42. Jackson, MS | 76. Portland, ME |
| 9. Billings, MT | 43. Jacksonville, FL | 77. Portland, OR |
| 10. Birmingham, AL | 44. Jersey City, NJ | 78. Providence, RI |
| 11. Bismarck, ND | 45. Kansas City, MO | 79. Raleigh, NC |
| 12. Boise, ID | 46. Lansing, MI | 80. Richmond, VA |
| 13. Boston, MA | 47. Las Vegas, NV | 81. Sacramento, CA |
| 14. Bridgeport, CT | 48. Lexington, KY | 82. Saint Louis, MO |
| 15. Buffalo, NY | 49. Lincoln, NE | 83. Saint Paul, MN |
| 16. Charleston, WV | 50. Little Rock, AR | 84. Saint Petersburg, FL |
| 17. Charlotte, NC | 51. Long Beach, CA | 85. Salt Lake City, UT |
| 18. Cheyenne, WY | 52. Los Angeles, CA | 86. San Antonio, TX |
| 19. Chicago, IL | 53. Louisville, KY | 87. San Diego, CA |
| 20. Cincinnati, OH | 54. Madison, WI | 88. San Francisco, CA |
| 21. Cleveland, OH | 55. Memphis, TN | 89. San Jose, CA |
| 22. Colorado Springs, CO | 56. Mesa, AZ | 90. Seattle, WA |
| 23. Columbia, SC | 57. Miami, FL | 91. Sioux Falls, SD |
| 24. Columbus, OH | 58. Milwaukee, WI | 92. Spokane, WA |
| 25. Concord, NH | 59. Minneapolis, MN | 93. Syracuse, NY |
| 26. Corpus Christi, TX | 60. Mobile, AL | 94. Tallahassee, FL |
| 27. Dallas, TX | 61. Montgomery, AL | 95. Tampa, FL |
| 28. Denver, CO | 62. Nashville, TN | 96. Toledo, OH |
| 29. Des Moines, IA | 63. New Haven, CT | 97. Tucson, AZ |
| 30. Detroit, MI | 64. New Orleans, LA | 98. Tulsa, OK |
| 31. El Paso, TX | 65. New York, NY | 99. Virginia Beach, VA |
| 32. Fargo, ND | 66. Newark, NJ | 100. Washington, DC |
| 33. Fort Wayne, IN | 67. Norfolk, VA | 101. Wichita, KS |
| 34. Fort Worth, TX | 68. Oakland, CA | 102. Yonkers, NY |

VITA |

Milan Vajda

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: A STUDY OF THE ROLE AND
FUNCTIONS OF MAYORAL PRESS SECRETARIES

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Bratislava, Slovakia, on December 3, 1965, the son of
Miloslav and Maria Vajda.

Education: Graduated from Bilikova High School, Bratislava, Slovakia in June
1984; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Library Science from
Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia in June 1988. Completed the
requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Mass
Communications at Oklahoma State University in May, 1996.

Experience: Worked as a junior research assistant in the Information Center of
the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1988 to 1991; since June 1991, served
as the press secretary to the mayor of Bratislava, Slovakia.

Professional Memberships: Kappa Tau Alpha National Honor Society in
Journalism, Public Relations Student Society of America, Slovak
Syndicate of Journalists.