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Presidential Leadership of Television and Newspaper Coverage Through Press Conferences

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Does presidential leadership of the news through press conferences extend to both television and newspaper coverage? Presidents speak directly to reporters during their press conferences, and it is likely that both newspapers and television news cover them. Despite important differences between television and newspaper coverage of politics, however, we do not know whether newspapers and television cover the president's press conferences, how this coverage differs, and what these differences mean for presidential leadership of the news. Theoretically, journalistic professionalism and the profit incentive of news media predict that newspapers and television will cover press conferences, particularly those held in Washington, D.C. Using plagiarism detection software to create similarity scores between the text of the president's press conference and subsequent news coverage, I find that although both media cover press conferences, newspapers devote much more coverage to primetime conferences, a finding that has important implications for the president's leadership of the news media.

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On July 22, 2009, President Obama held his fourth and final primetime press conference, in which he repented his call for Congress to enact health care reform legislation. Not only was the president's opening statement centered on health care reform, the first seven questions, including all but three overall, centered on the president's health care reform plan. In responding to these questions by reporters, the president was able to simultaneously advocate for health care reform, while clarifying his position in response to journalists' questions. Although the president enjoyed a sizable television audience, it was smaller than his previous primetime press conference and his subsequent national address to a joint session of Congress on health care reform in September.¹ Thus, if most Americans were to learn about the content of the president's press conference, they would have to watch or read about it on the next day's news.

In other words, a press conference needs to generate news coverage of the president's policy preferences for it to be an effective and sustained part of the president's public leadership strategy. Of course, the president intends to be able to lead all manner of media, including television and newspaper coverage, so as to maximize the reach of his message. Unfortunately for the president, this primetime press conference did not have this desired effect evenly across television and newspapers. If one were to read *The Washington Post* the next day, for example, one would have seen a front-page, substantive recap of the president's health care reform position.² Instead of recapping the president's message concerning health care reform, however, the *CBS Evening News* led with a story on the president's remarks concerning the arrest of Harvard Professor Louis Gates, which were made in response to the last question asked in the press conference, one of three that did not query health care. These examples illustrate how newspapers and television cover the president's press conferences differently and reveal important implications for the president's media leadership strategy, especially as it concerns primetime presidential addresses.

Why is the press conference important to presidents? Simply, the presidential press conference is the preeminent event of presidential-press relations. Presidents use them to cultivate relations with the news media, promote their policy agendas to the public, and satisfy a democratic tradition that they hold press conferences (Kumar 2007, 255-8). Journalists want presidents to hold

press conferences so that they have direct access to the president, the most newsworthy political official in the United States (Graber 2006). Reporters also expect presidents to hold press conferences as a fundamental feature of a democratic free press and to act as surrogates for the people, playing watchdog and as a check on governmental power (Kumar 2007, 256; Smith 1990). Although they vary in number, format, and style across presidencies, the president holds press conferences regularly, averaging 26 per year since 1990.³

Despite its centrality to the American democracy generally and presidential-press relations more specifically, much of the literature focuses on the press conference itself, not subsequent news coverage of the event (see Clayman et al. 2007; Eshbaugh-Soha 2013). But with a decline in the number of primetime press conferences, fewer televised press conferences, and smaller audiences of live conferences, what the president says during a press conference will be known to most of the public through news coverage. Because of this, it is important to explore whether presidents are able to generate news coverage of their press conferences, how much coverage they can expect to receive, and whether the president's leadership strategy should vary based on his leadership of newspaper or television news.

Although we know a great deal about presidential leadership of television news (see Edwards and Wood 1999; Farnsworth and Lichter 2006) or newspaper coverage of the presidency (see Barrett and Peake 2007; Cohen 2010; Eshbaugh-Soha 2008), we know very little about the president's effectiveness influencing one or the other, controlling for the same public event. In fact, of the few studies that do examine both newspaper and television coverage, they do not explore the question of presidential leadership of the media, but rather study the impact of the media on the public's agenda (see Palmgreen and Clarke 1977) or coverage of campaigns (Dunaway 2008) and advertising effects on the public (Fowler and Ridout 2009). Studying the responsiveness of newspapers and television to the same press conferences reveals important differences in when each covers the presidential press conference, and generates important implications for the president's public relations strategy and his ability to lead diverse media.

To this end, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: To what extent and under what conditions do television and newspapers cover the president's press conferences? What implications do these differences have for presidential leadership strategies? To answer these questions, I have collected

¹ Nielsen reports that the president enjoyed over 24 million viewers, down 14 percent from his April 29, 2009 press conference. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newsroom/2009/obama-primetime-health-care-press-conference.html>. 32.1 million Americans watched his September address.

² Connolly, Ceci, and Michael D. Shear 2009. "In Televised Address, Obama Seeks to Calm Nation's Fears about Health Care Reform." *The Washington Post* (July 23): A1.

³ Data compiled by the author. I count 542 press conferences between 1990 and 2010.

a sample of 33 presidential press conferences from 1990 through 2010, 51 matching television news transcripts, 58 matching newspaper articles, and a set of variables that should help us understand differences in how television and newspapers cover this important press event. Specifically, I compare the text of the presidential press conference with television news transcripts and newspaper articles using plagiarism detection software. This allows for an examination of the variation in news coverage of the president's press conference using the president's words and the words of each news story as a means of comparison. Although presidents have some success influencing news coverage across both media, a central finding of this paper concerns the primetime press conference: presidents can expect newspaper but not television coverage of this important and high-profile event. This finding alone has important implications for the president's news management strategy concerning press conferences and speaks to the primetime press conference's continued relevance, even amid scholarship that calls this event risky and ineffective.

Presidential Leadership of the News

Presidents are engaged in a permanent campaign for public support (Blumenthal 1982; Edwards 2003). With declining audiences and opportunities to reach the public directly (Baum and Kernell 1998), they use speeches to target the news as a way to communicate with the American people (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2011). Presidents have multiple avenues to lead the news, whether through national addresses (Peake and Eshbaugh-Soha 2008), radio addresses (Horvit, Schiffer, and Wright 2008), or "going local" (Cohen 2010). Many of these studies show presidential responsiveness to news coverage (Edwards and Wood 1999), however. Even when presidents might generate news coverage by going local, this coverage tends to describe where the president spoke and who attended his speech, rather than analyzing the costs and benefits of the president's policy proposals (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2006).

Although the press conference is designed specifically to influence journalists, research has yet to explore whether press conferences facilitate or hinder the president's leadership of the national news media. Much research focuses instead on whether or not the press conference is an antagonistic event, one that hinders presidential leadership of the public. According to Rottinghaus (2010, 34) press conferences "are net negatives" for presidential communications, that only serve to suppress public support for the president's policies (Rottinghaus 2009). Through the Reagan Administration, moreover,

presidents held few press conferences (Hager and Sullivan 1994), perhaps because the White House saw little payoff in engaging the press so formally. Because primetime press conferences may be particularly risky, presidents employ many alternatives to deal with the press directly, whether through short question and answer sessions, joint press conferences, or less visible press conferences held during the afternoon in the press briefing room, a favorite location for President George H.W. Bush's press conferences (Kumar 2003; Han 2011).

It may not be surprising when presidents avoid press conferences given the antagonistic nature of the interaction. Clayman and his colleagues (2006) note that questions have become more direct, assertive, and adversarial. In another article, they conclude that Watergate was the watershed event in presidential-press relations, with questions asked during press conferences held after 1968 being statistically more aggressive than those asked during press conferences held before 1968 (Clayman et al. 2010). In addition, Clayman et al. (2007) find that presidents face more aggressive questions during their second term in office and when the economy sours. This perspective implies that even if the president's press conferences make the news, the focus of the story may be on these antagonistic interactions, not the president's policy positions.

Another line of scholarship contends that in spite of these risks, presidents have many incentives to hold press conferences. The White House sees the press conference as an opportunity to drive news coverage, build public support, and explain policy decisions (Kumar 2007, 256-7). Responses to questions, which can be anticipated, allow presidents to state their positions on a number of issues that presidents may not be able to address in a single, topical speech. The White House may also schedule conferences to advantage the president. President George W. Bush, for example, scheduled some afternoon press conferences at the last minute, making it difficult for some reporters to reach the White House in time and prepare questions for the president. Moreover, Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton held more press conferences than their predecessors (Eshbaugh-Soha 2003), suggesting that these presidents valued the press conference as a way to reach the media and, perhaps, the public. Finally, because journalists attend and are active participants in the press conference, there is a realistic expectation it will make the news (Cohen 2010, 105). Even so, Cohen (2010, 116 and 136), in one of the few tests of the impact of press conferences on local newspaper coverage, shows a statistically insignificant relationship between press conferences and news coverage.

The literature thus presents two competing perspectives of the presidential press conference. On the one hand, the press conference is unlikely to help the president promote his point of view. If it is a net negative event as this literature suggests, then news reports should not cover the president's policies, but rather president-journalist animosity. On the other hand, the press conference grants presidents much opportunity to make the news on his accord. And even if questions are more adversarial or presidents make mistakes during the event, these may not make the news and thus be unknown to most of the public. Although both perspectives are plausible, the paucity of research on this subject leaves open the question as to whether or not the press conference can be a tool for presidential leadership of the news media, a tool that may affect differently national television and newspaper coverage.

Differences between Television and Newspaper Coverage

Newspaper and television news coverage of politics and government offer a mix of differences (see Sheppard and Bawden 1997), several of which should produce variation in each medium's coverage of the president's press conferences. Undoubtedly, both types of news media are staffed by professional journalists who face competing pressures to offer quality news coverage of important events, while considering the profit incentives of the increasingly corporate nature of news production. The profit incentive, to be sure, has affected both newspapers and television in dramatically similar ways. Both media have lost a substantial percentage of their viewers and readers since the explosion of cable television and cable news in the early 1980s, only to be accelerated with increasing economic pressures from the Internet and the financial crisis of 2008-2009.⁴ Trends in overall news audiences are no different when one examines the declining audiences for presidential news (Cohen 2008, Chapter 7).

In many ways, the similarities between national television and newspaper coverage end with their shared loss of customers. Although television effects on

the public and voters is substantial (see Iyengar 1991; Iyengar and Kinder 1987), most accounts of television news coverage is that it is relatively superficial. To this end, the amount of time a candidate's own words penetrate evening news coverage has declined over time from about 43 seconds in the 1968 presidential election to a relatively consistent 7-8 seconds since the 2000 presidential election (see Hallin 1992). More damaging may be the conclusion by the Annenberg survey that *The Daily Show with John Stewart*—a faux news program—was more informative to viewers than network news coverage during the 2004 presidential election campaign. Television now airs more soft news programming (Bennett 2009), further contributing to the perception that television covers more style than substance in its reporting of politics, government, and the presidency. In comparison with print media, television news is more uniform and covers a limited range of topics (Graber 2006). News segments are shorter than newspaper articles and events are covered episodically, and dramatized to entice the viewing audience. The move away from hard news on network television is especially pronounced during the time period of this study (Hamilton 2004, chapter 6).

Newspapers, on the other hand, are informative and grounded in hard news. Certainly, quality investigative reporting has declined as the profit-incentive and corporate takeovers have affected newsroom staffing and overall resources to offer independent reporting (Downie and Kaiser 2002). Moreover, the tendency for media to index the news to elite discourse has biased newspaper reporting, including during recent events of national importance, such as the War in Iraq (Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007). Even so, newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and independently-owned regional and local newspapers still offer a number of investigative reports that offer critical assessments of government and public policy. Just as readers of newspapers tend to be more informed than viewers of television (Robinson and Davis 1990), newspapers are also more likely than television to stimulate interest in politics (Boulianne 2011). Although recent research has focused on the agenda-setting prowess of television news, pioneering studies concluded that newspapers were more effective than television at setting the public's agenda given their more substantive nature (McClure and Patterson 1976; McCombs 1976).

Theory

Whether and to what extent media will cover the president's own words in a press conference is a function of two broad theoretical frames: journalistic professionalism and profit. Even though a press conference may be newsworthy

⁴ Network news has lost a substantial percentage of its audience. In 1980, the year after CNN entered the news marketplace, 52.1 million viewers watched the evening network news broadcast. Audiences have declined by nearly 45% to 28.8 viewers in 2004, and a further drop to 21.6 million viewers in 2010 (Project for excellence in journalism state of the media 2005 and 2011). Primetime viewing audiences have declined by approximately 44 percent between 1980 and 2007 (Nielsen). Newspaper circulation has dropped precipitously, as well. Although there had been a gradual decline in newspaper circulation since the 1960s, it has only accelerated in recent years. Newspapers have lost nearly 20 million in paid circulation numbers between 2004 and 2010 (PEJ 2011 State of Media). Although newspaper circulation has stopped hemorrhaging at the rate of over a 10 percent decline in circulation in 2009, the percent decline in circulation was still over 4 percent in 2010, maintaining an 8-year losing streak for newspaper circulation losses (PEJ 2011 State of the Media).

and its coverage likely under the frame of journalistic professionalism, other factors, particularly those related to the president's own political environment, may make covering a presidential press conference less profitable or newsworthy, whether because it is more costly to produce or because the audience is not interested in it. Thus, the tendency for these theories to predict the amount of press conference news coverage will vary by the larger political environment and the mediums, themselves.

The first theoretical frame holds that journalists are professionals who have an obligation to cover the president of the United States. This tendency does not mean that all presidential speeches, or even press conferences, will generate news coverage (Cohen 2009), but it places the president in an auspicious position to lead the news. Like the State of the Union address, the presidential press conference is part of the American democratic tradition and vital to ensuring a free press (Kumar 2007, 255). Media also expect the president to hold them, and presidents regularly do so, despite their own reservations (Eshbaugh-Soha 2013). Thus, journalistic professionalism means that news coverage of a presidential press conference is likely.

Even so, journalists may be obligated to build a story with views from sources other than the president, making the press conference unfavorable to the president's perspective. Whereas the news does this often with most other presidential speeches and events, the presidential press conference may be different. According to arguments put forth by Cohen (2010) and Zaller (1998), reporters are more likely to cover a news event when they are actively a part of it. Otherwise passive reporters, who might have sought commentary from other sources and competing perspectives, are active participants in a presidential news event. Active participation encourages reporters to cover the event, not seek out additional sources for comment. In other words, there are fewer benefits to journalists filling out a story with other sources when covering a press conference than when reporting on other speeches. This increases the benefit to the president's news coverage, making television and newspaper coverage of press conferences—and the president's own words—likely (Cohen 2010, 105; Zaller 1998).

The second theoretical frame is the economic model of news production, which holds that what makes the news is a function of the profit incentive of news organizations (Benett 2009, Cohen 2010; Dunaway 2008; Hamilton 2004). This frame hinges on audience demand for presidential news, on the one hand, and the reduction of the costs of news production, on the other.

Since viewership drives ratings and ratings dictate what networks can charge advertisers for commercial time during their programs, greater audience interest will enhance the likelihood of a presidential press conference being covered on the nightly news. According to the Pew Research Center's Biennial News Report (2012), 54% of Americans follow national news "most of the time", with 17% who follow politics and Washington news "very closely". Since media are interested in profit, and these data imply that the public have an interest in presidential news, audience demand predicts that presidential news coverage will be prominent. The president is indeed newsworthy, averaging about 41 monthly stories on the evening news broadcast, nearly twice the amount of news attention devoted to Congress and five times the amount of Supreme Court coverage (Graber 2006, 273).

Public support for the president approximates the public's interest in presidential news. When the president is more popular, this suggests that the public is more interested in hearing what the president has to say. When the president is unpopular, however, the public may be less interested in hearing the president's perspective. Since audience demand drives one side of the economic equation of news production, news should be more likely to cover what popular presidents say and less likely to cover unpopular ones. Therefore, the higher the president's job approval ratings, the more news media will cover the president's remarks in a press conference.

The cost of producing news is also important. If it costs less to produce a news story, then it will be more profitable. This motivation to reduce costs has contributed to significant reductions in news organizations' budgets, less investigative journalism, and elimination of international news bureaus toward more opinion-driven "news" on cable networks (Benett 2009). It also discourages fewer reporters with fewer resources to hunt for stories, who will rely instead on information provided by others (Kaniss 1991). It is also relatively costly to splice clips of the president's press conference into a story about or related to it since these have already been recorded or include such quotes in a newspaper article about the press conference. If a news organization already covers a presidential press conference, therefore, it makes sense economically to make it a news story and liberally use the president's own words.

In the world of presidential politics the White House beat generates much news (Cohen 2010; Eshbaugh-Soha 2008). Consistent with my theory of news production, the Washington Press Corps and national media outlets will have clearest access to the president while he is in Washington, DC since this is the

location from which presidential news is most likely to originate. Moreover, the cost to producing a news report on a presidential press conference should be less when it is held somewhere in the White House. Presidents, therefore, have a direct opportunity to cut costs of news production and increase their likelihood of leading the news by holding press conferences in Washington, DC.

The larger political environment should shape the profitability of presidential news—the president's newsworthiness—much as it conditions the president's decision to go public in the first place (Kernell 1997). Divided government is the first such condition. Not only does divided government reduce the president's legislative success (Bond and Fleisher 1990)—which provides fewer opportunities for policy credit claiming—it presents an alternative voice to the president's, which according to the indexing hypothesis (Bennett 1990), should reduce the amount of news coverage of the president's own words at a press conference. Second, when in recession or in general decline, the economy is more likely to make the news, given the tendency for media to report on negative rather than positive economic news (Eshaugh-Soha and Peake 2005). A poor economy may distract the media and public from following presidential speeches, thereby reducing the tendency for the news to cover a press conference. Third, presidential leadership of the news should be less likely outside of the presidential honeymoon, which reflects greater antagonism between presidents and the press (Grossman and Kumar 1981).

Concerning whether or not press conferences will make either it into a newspaper or on television, both media have reason to report on them. Journalists from television and newspapers are invited to the press conference and there is often a balanced mix of questions asked by both television and newspaper reporters at a typical presidential press conference (Kumar 2007, 278). Nevertheless, there are two primary conditions that should affect the tendency of newspapers and television to cover the president's press conferences. First, newspapers tend to focus more on hard than soft news in their reporting of politics, suggesting that they should cover more of the president's words in a press conference than television news, which is more superficial and oriented less toward hard news. Second, since primetime press conferences occur after a network's evening news program but a full day before the evening broadcast on which it could be covered and before a morning newspaper is printed and distributed, the effects of primetime press conferences should have opposite effects by medium. In short, primetime press conferences should decrease television news coverage of them, just as primetime press conferences should

increase newspaper coverage of them. For similar reasons, any televised press conference is likely to encourage more coverage of the president's own words on television, but not newspaper coverage. After all, a televised press conference provides television, but not newspapers, with video that they can simply slice into a story on the event.

Data

I tallied the universe of solo presidential press conferences from the *Public Papers of the Presidents* between March 1990 and November 2010,⁵ and then selected a random sample of 33 press conferences, noting the date of each press conference, along with its time (primetime or not) and its location (Washington, DC or not). I copied the text of the entire press conference and pasted it into a text document. My database of news stories includes transcripts of the *CBS Evening News* and stories from the *Washington Post*. For CBS transcripts, I searched in Lexis-Nexis for all stories related to the president on the day of or day after the president's press conference and collected stories related to the press conference. If the press conference occurred prior to the evening news, I collected those transcripts. If the press conference occurred after the evening news, typically for primetime presidential press conferences, I collected transcripts for the following day. Whether or not the press conference was held during the afternoon or in primetime television hours, if the *Washington Post* covered it, the story would be published the next morning. I then copied these files into separate text documents, noting the word count (provided by Lexis-Nexis) of each story. If multiple stories cover a press conference, I combined them into one file, noting the number of stories. The CBS news transcripts helped to determine whether a press conference was televised or not. When the network televised the press conference, Lexis-Nexis produced a transcript of the actual press conference, along with opening remarks by the anchor or White House correspondent.

I examine press conferences between March 1990 and November 2010 for a number of reasons. First, the universe of press conferences begins with George HW Bush's March 23, 1990 press conference. This approximates when Lexis-Nexis

⁵ I found each news conference and copied and pasted the text of the news conferences from the American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>. I searched only "Oral: News Conferences" and "Oral: News Conferences—Joint". This approach is less inclusive than others, such as Rothiglaugus (2010, fn 142), who code a public remark as a press conference "if press officials who were able to ask any questions attended the event" (200). I do not consider informal, brief question and answer sessions to be press conferences.

makes *CBS Evening News* transcripts available, the earliest archive of any network transcripts. Second, I wanted to maximize exposure to a range of presidents who have had different styles in dealing with the press directly, which is important to explaining the number of press conference presidents deliver (Eshbaugh-Soha 2003). Third, I selected a more recent time frame to avoid complications associated with pre- and post-Watergate differences in press conferences (Clayman et al 2010).

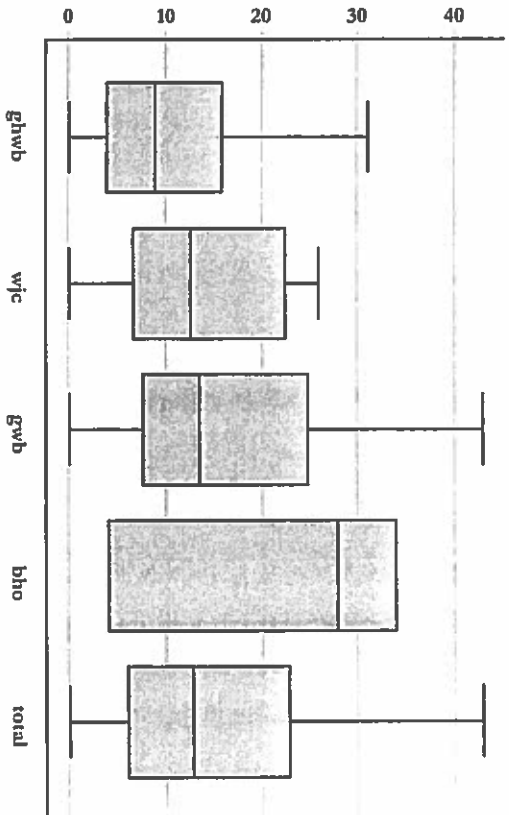
The primary dependent variables are byproducts of the text of the president's press conference and the corresponding news transcripts and newspaper stories. They are produced using a plagiarism detection software program called WCopyFind 2.7, available for download.⁶ The software compares two or more documents and according to the software's website, it "looks through them for matching words in phrases of a specified minimum length." It then produces a report file that indicates which phrases match and produces a percentage matching score. This score, the percentage of the news transcript or newspaper article that borrows directly from the text of the president's press conference, serves as the primary dependent variables. I report separate scores for the comparison of the entire press conference and all news transcripts and the entire press conference and all newspaper stories.

To give the reader some perspective on what these numbers look like, Figure 1 reports the average score comparing presidential press conferences and *television news transcripts* by presidential administration. This figure is a box plot of the percentage of the president's own language in his press conferences that the evening news incorporates into its report. The lower and upper quartiles of the evening news incorporate into its report. The lower and upper quartiles of the variable are represented by the lines outside of the boxes, while the dots indicate any outliers. The middle line is the median percentage of the president's press conference remarks that make the news. The median tends to be fairly consistent across presidential administrations, and also for the variable that represents all data in the sample (the total category). President George HW Bush has the tightest range, whereas Barack Obama has the widest range, with no outliers, either range, whereas Barack Obama has the widest range, with no outliers, either Obama's higher median percentage of coverage by television news is likely a function of his truncated term (only the first two and more positive years) in this study. The entire sample reveals a mean of 14.64 and standard deviation of 11.22 for television news coverage of presidential press conferences.⁷

⁶<http://plagiarism.phy.s.virginia.edu/WCopyFind.html>
⁷Judicial Politics scholars have used this software to compare lower court and Supreme Court opinions (Corley, Collins, and Calvin 2011). They show an average of around 4 percent similarity between lower and Supreme Court opinions, implying that the nearly 11 percent average similarity score for presidential press conferences and news coverage is impressive.

Presidential Leadership of Television and Newspaper Coverage Through Press Conferences

Figure 1. Percentage of the President's Press Conference Comments on the CBS Evening News by Administration, 1990-2010

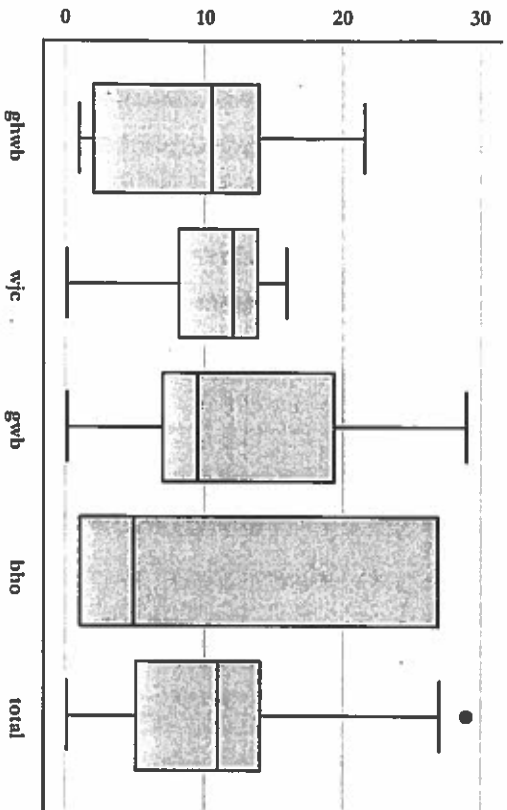


Note: ghwb = George HW Bush; wjc = William Jefferson Clinton; gwb = George W Bush; bho = Barack Hussein Obama

Figure 2 presents a box plot of a slightly different dependent variable, the percentage of the president's own language that is borrowed by the *Washington Post* in its coverage of the president's press conference. Like television news coverage, the newspaper median is fairly consistent for President Clinton and both Presidents Bush, at around 10 percent. Yet, Obama is much lower. Moreover, Clinton has the tightest range of any president, with the lowest maximum value at approximately 15 percent. The greater variation in plagiarism scores for newspapers, as opposed to television, is the variety of types of stories found in newspapers. Even front page stories can be written by different reporters, who may have different styles of writing, just as the president is likely to find coverage of his press conference in other parts of the paper, such as the metro and business section. Television reporting, at least for our sample, tended to be much more uniform. Overall, the entire sample reveals a mean of 10.79

and standard deviation of 7.87 for our primary dependent variable for television news coverage of presidential press conferences.⁸

Figure 2. Percentage of the President's Press Conference Comments in the *Washington Post* by Administration, 1990-2010



Note: ghwb = George HW Bush; wjc = William Jefferson Clinton; gw b = George W Bush; bho = Barack Hussein Obama

The remaining independent variables are operationalized in the following manner. First, the president's approval rating is the percentage of the public that supports the president's job performance indicated in the closest Gallup poll preceding the president's press conference. Second, divided government is coded one when either house of Congress is controlled by the opposition party or zero otherwise. Third, presidential honeymoon is coded one if the press conference occurred during the first six months of the president's first term in office or zero otherwise. Fourth, the state of the economy is measured

⁸There may be some concern that reporters' questions are driving the similarity scores. Fortunately, this is not the case. In this sample of stories, there were three instances where journalists' questions made the news story. At less than 10 words per question, this is an infinitesimally small percentage, one that should have no impact on these reported scores.

according to the misery index (inflation plus unemployment rate) the month before the president's press conference.

Findings

To compare the differences in news coverage of presidential press conferences between television and newspapers, I begin with a descriptive summary of the numbers. First, and as expected, both newspapers and television cover the president's press conferences. Television coverage occurred for 94 percent of the president's press conferences and although only 85 percent of the president's press conferences made the front page of the *Washington Post*, each press conference received coverage somewhere in the newspaper.

Second, the amount of coverage is substantial. Although the modal category for television coverage was one story for each press conference covered, 36 percent offered two or more separate stories, with a maximum of four television stories that covered President George HW Bush's August 16, 1990 press conference on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The average word count for all evening news transcripts per press conference is 598. Some press conferences generated several stories; of course, so when averaged by story, and not the total word count devoted to each press conference, the word count is a much smaller, 386. In comparison, the *Washington Post* devoted more space to press conferences, printing multiple stories on 52 percent of the president's press conference, with an average word count of 1964 per press conference, and 1099 words per story. This, in itself, is a reflection of the amount of space newspapers have to devote to the president, as well as the well-earned reputation that newspapers cover hard news in more substantive detail than television does.

To test my hypotheses concerning the impact that the political environment and primetime press conferences have on news coverage, I use Ordinary Least Squares methods and bootstrap standard errors (given the relatively small sample size) to compute the coefficients found in Table 1. Two of the most important variables concern factors of which the president has a good deal of control and can use to help lead news coverage. First, primetime press conferences have the exact opposite effect for television and newspaper coverage. Whereas television news borrows nearly 21 percent less from the president's primetime press conferences, the *Washington Post* increases its use of the president's own words in primetime press conferences by 17 percentage points. This is a large but practical development as the evening news can only cover the president's press conference the next evening, a full day after other events or additional

presidential speeches or interviews supplant the president's press conference as newsworthy in the 24-hour news cycle.⁹ Ultimately, this finding shows clearly that if the president wishes to influence newspaper coverage of his press conference, he is smart to hold one in primetime. Second, the president's efforts to cut the costs of news coverage by holding press conferences in Washington, DC matters to both media. Both newspapers and television news ($p = .068$) report about 5 and 8 percent more of the president's words from press conferences held in Washington, DC than those held elsewhere. In other words, presidential leadership of the news is most likely when he makes press conferences accessible to both media while in Washington, DC.

Table 1: The Determinants of Press Conference-News Coverage Similarity, by Medium

Variable	CBS Evening News	Washington Post
Primetime Conference	-20.99* (6.33)	16.97* (2.95)
Washington, DC	7.62* (4.17)	4.97* (2.44)
Honeymoon	4.06 (8.16)	9.47 (5.78)
Presidential Approval	-0.33* (0.15)	0.14 (0.09)
Divided Government	-2.30 (4.26)	-1.80 (3.09)
Misery Index	1.46 (1.57)	-0.72 (0.67)
Televised	0.30 (6.53)	-5.28 (3.46)
Constant	14.93 (12.96)	6.08 (7.40)
R-squared	.37	.46
Wald χ^2	76.26*	138.43*
N	33	33

* $p < .05$ (one-tailed)

Note: OLS regression with bootstrapping standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the percentage of similarity between the president's press conference and the corresponding news broadcast or newspaper story. A previous model controlled for the amount of coverage per press conference. This variable was statistically insignificant and excluding it does not change these results.

⁹ I also ran a model with individual presidential dummy variables, yet no presidential dummy is statistically significant. Moreover, these dummies produce multicollinearity that increases the r-squared values in both models, but suppresses the statistical significance of some variables. For these reasons, I do not report these coefficients in this paper.

The political environment shapes the president's leadership of news coverage but in variable and inconsistent ways across media. First, the honeymoon period matters but only for the *Washington Post*. The percentage of the president's words that the *Washington Post* borrows from the press conference increases by 9.5 percent for honeymoon press conferences, even though this coefficient does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance for a two-tailed test ($p = 0.10$). Second, presidential approval ratings matter to television but not newspaper coverage of press conferences. As a decrease in approval ratings lead to more news coverage, this is also at odds with my expectation that popular presidents insinuate audience demand for presidential news. Rather, this finding is consistent with the contention that presidential news coverage is more negative, that presidents are actually more newsworthy when their approval ratings decline (Groeling and Kernell 1998). Other variables do not appear to matter to news coverage of the president's press conferences.

Conclusion

Although there has been much research on the propensity of presidents to lead news media, few studies have explored presidential leadership of the news through a presidential press conference or explored differences in television and newspaper coverage of this quintessential president-press event. This study has done so in a relatively unique way, using plagiarism detection software to compare the percentage of the president's words that news reports include in their coverage of the event. Moreover, it adds a systematic comparison of television and newspaper coverage of the press conference, demonstrating important differences in each medium's coverage of the presidency, while also showing that both are sources of news coverage for the president's press conferences.

The findings reveal a number of points. Most importantly for presidents, press conferences can be effective tools to generate news coverage. Most presidential press conferences are covered on the evening news and in the newspaper, with over 10 percent of the president's own words penetrating news coverage on average. This follows from the expectation that journalists have a professional incentive to cover the president's perspective and are active participants in the presidential press conference. More coverage may also be likely when the press is deferential to the president during his brief honeymoon period, at least for newspapers. Other factors related to the profit incentive of news organizations add to our understanding of press conference-news coverage similarities. Mainly, when the president makes it less costly for the Washington Press Corps

to cover his conferences by scheduling them in Washington, DC, the president enjoys more coverage of his own words on newspaper and television news.

The findings are particularly relevant for presidential leadership of the news through the primetime press conference. Scholars have explained the decline in the number of primetime press conferences as being a function of primetime conferences being a high risk-low reward event for presidential leadership. This paper implies another reason why presidents may be unwise to hold primetime press conferences. If the president's goal is to influence television news coverage of their press conferences, primetime press conferences do not assist the president's leadership of the news. Nevertheless, the primetime press conference is not without benefit to the president, depending on his goals in holding one. If the president hopes to influence newspaper coverage of a presidential press conference, this paper reveals that the president will have a substantial percentage of his words included in those newspaper stories.

In all, this study provides important insight into newspaper and television news coverage of presidential press conferences. With the fragmentation of news audiences and the rise of new media, however, this paper is limited in what it can say about all media coverage of the press conference. Thus, future research should extend this comparative analysis to other media, including Internet blogs, talk radio, opinion-oriented programming on cable television, and entertainment television programs such as *The Daily Show with John Stewart*, *The Colbert Report*, and *Saturday Night Live*. Although the method employed here of comparing the text of presidential press conferences with the text of television and newspaper news coverage may be untenable with these formats, future research should also delve into the subject of new media and its coverage of the presidency to improve our understanding of presidential-press relations with the burgeoning role of new media. Doing so provides a rich and important research agenda.

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Reterritorialization or Deterritorialization? Israel's Gaza Withdrawal

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Contrasting theories have been developed in contemporary political science literature exploring the significance of international boundaries. A number of journal articles, citing increased cross-border economic and cultural ties, due in large part to globalization, have advanced the concept of deterritorialization, positing diminishing importance of Westphalian concepts of borders between nations. By contrast, other work in this field suggests a trend toward reterritorialization since the end of the Cold War, with the emergence of many new independent countries and drawing of new international borders. This paper examines theories of borders and sovereignty in international relations and political geography in the context of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Study of the reestablished boundary between Israel and Gaza contributes to discussion of the impact of borders in terms of demography, conflict and identity. The paper also discusses the extent to which theories of international borders are applicable in this and other conflict zones.

