A Rhetorical Assessment of Lyndon Johnson's Presidential Press Conferences.

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A RHETORICAL ASSESSMENT OF LYNDON JOHNSON'S PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of Speech

by

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to apply standards of rhetorical analysis and criticism to the presidential press conference as an oral communication situation, and more specifically, to examine Lyndon Johnson's effectiveness in his official, presidential news conferences.

Before Woodrow Wilson, few presidents had direct, regular dealings with reporters. Under Wilson, the presidential news conference became an institution, as he and later chief executives continued the practice with varying degrees of success. While most modern presidents have contributed to the evolution of the conference, Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy were unusually productive in establishing and maintaining presidential leadership through that channel of communication.

President Johnson experimented with a variety of formats, but preferred informal, impromptu meetings with reporters. Johnson's press relations were mercurial and were criticized severely by newsmen. Reporters complained of his secrecy, his lack of candor, and the propagandistic nature of his press communications. President Johnson was annoyed by personal criticisms, speculation, and interpretative journalism. Johnson's goals were to explain, publicize, promote, and defend his administration. Further, he wanted to improve his image. He also wanted to control the conference and to regulate what correspondents reported.
President Johnson's opening statements and reporters' questions generated the content of the meetings. Johnson frequently used lengthy opening remarks to announce executive appointments, decisions, and policies. Newsmen asked about presidential, political, domestic, and foreign affairs. They inquired more about Vietnam than about any other matter.

The development of Johnson's opening statements was characterized by the use of statistics, details, narration, and testimony. Repetition and restatement were used often for amplification. Johnson's announcements were presented to avoid specific issues, to anticipate and direct inquiry, to demonstrate progress of "Great Society" programs, to reply to critics, and to reiterate policy statements. Many of the announcements were newsworthy. Some were dramatic. Often, however, they were so redundant, long, and promotional that they appeared to be ineffective.

Reporters' questions were timely, important, and appropriate for the situation. Newsmen seemed to have been clear, concise, and tactful for the most part.

President Johnson used a variety of techniques to control and fence with the press in his answers. He anticipated questions, interrupted and instructed reporters, demanded sources, attacked questions, and used sarcasm and humor. Johnson employed the devices of backgrounder, repeating, amplifying, exhausting, generalizing, arguing, and appealing to discuss issues in his replies. To avoid answering, he used a variety of tactics associated with the strategies of refusing to answer, referring questions, and circumventing specific ideas raised
By questions. In general, he probably avoided inquiry so extensively that his general effectiveness was diminished. In terms of audience adaptation, Johnson may have been too unresponsive to the needs of the press and the public to fulfill his presidential press conference purposes.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

The presidential press conference is an unusual communication situation. The format challenges the nation's leader to stand before representatives of the news media for an extemporaneous exchange of questions and answers. The meeting is a test of the president's character, especially his skills in listening and speaking. A chief executive who meets the press in this manner has much to gain, depending upon those skills. He listens to understand more than the substance of inquiry and he replies for more than a mere release of information, just as he analyzes his audiences and carefully prepares for such other communications as formal addresses to the nation. The news conference provides more than a passive expression of leadership. The situation allows a salient demonstration of ability and a platform for persuasion.

For these reasons, a president's performance in his attempts to influence the press and, ultimately, the public seem highly amenable to analysis and evaluation. Unfortunately, few attempts to study the presidential press conference from other than a historical or descriptive standpoint have been made. Moreover, rhetorical assessments of communication in the news conference situation do not appear in many academic studies, let alone professional publications.
Another impetus for the present work lies in the speaker selected. Lyndon Johnson's speaking has received little attention from researchers in speech. This partial void is probably due to several factors. Johnson is a fairly recent president and background materials on his administration are just now becoming available. Further, Johnson's public speaking, while forceful and probably very persuasive at times, lacked the polish and charm of such previous presidents as John Kennedy. Finally, Johnson left office without accomplishing an end to what is and was one of the nation's most serious problems, a war. Johnson retired from public life with low national esteem. Many more years may pass before major consideration is given to his spoken communication.

Nevertheless, Johnson was a fascinating and powerful politician and president. More significantly, his approach to the presidential press conference was unlike that of any other individual president. His dealings with reporters and even the variety of ways he held news conferences became the subject of much reporting and commentary by contemporary print and broadcast journalists. Further, Johnson met so often with reporters, both informally and officially, that a large body of transcripts of the press conferences became available. Because President Johnson's press conferences were not only news events but often yielded important communications to the public, they merit more than cursory consideration.

This study may be of value in demonstrating some ways in which speech critics can evaluate the performance of speakers in question and answer sessions, especially press conferences involving important government officials. The paper may also contribute to a fuller
understanding of Lyndon Johnson's speaking abilities and his effectiveness with press relations.

The problem then is two-fold. First, previous studies of presidential press conferences do not use the viewpoint of rhetorical criticism, so models for applying speech criticism to the format do not exist. A major purpose of the study has been to discover and apply appropriate standards of rhetorical evaluation to the press conference situation. Second, the study seeks to assess Johnson's communication skills in the meetings with reporters. This study attempts to describe and evaluate Johnson's attitudes toward the press and the press conference situation, his general and specific preparation, his aims, and the techniques he used. Also included are such aspects as the importance of the content of the conferences and the quality of the questioning. The main objective of this study, then, is to determine President Johnson's effectiveness in his press conferences.

A variety of materials are used in the paper. Historical studies of the press in America and of the history, evolution, and institution of the presidential press conference give important background material. Books and essays on the presidency and on presidential press relations further contribute bases for analysis. Newspaper and magazine articles found in a variety of periodicals help explain Johnson's press conference style as do biographical and autobiographical pieces on various presidents, especially those on Lyndon Johnson.

Taped interviews with George Christian, correspondence with Bill Moyers, and books by Pierre Salinger and by George Reedy provide data and reflections from the men who were Johnson's press secretaries at different times between 1963 and 1969.
Specifically, Johnson's one hundred and thirty-five official news conferences are studied. Only written transcripts of the meetings are presently available for extensive research. All but one and the opening of another of the conferences appear in transcripts released by the White House which are published in Johnson's Public Papers by the Government Printing Office. The published transcripts correspond with transcripts published in the New York Times and assure textual authenticity.

The conferences have been examined carefully. First, each conference was read to gain a general idea of the content, questions, announcements, and answers. Next, each transcript was analyzed for specific content in terms of general topic areas and with regard to specific issues. The subject areas were studied quantitatively to discover trends in announcements and in questions. Newspaper and magazine articles and chronologies of current events surrounding various conferences provided reference materials by which to gauge the quality of the content.

Criteria from traditional and contemporary works on persuasion, communication, and speech criticism were refined to devise a means for qualitative assessment of the opening statements, the questions, and the answers. The conferences were then restudied in light of those criteria.

Finally, a few terms bear brief explanation. Words such as "the press," "correspondents," "reporters," and "newsmen" generally refer to representatives of newspapers, syndicates and agencies, wire services, and broadcast networks or stations. The term "press conference" (or "news conference") refers to official question and answer
sessions and not to "briefings" or other encounters with the press, unless otherwise stipulated. "Impromptu" press conferences are those held without advance notice. "Formal" conferences were announced, usually at least twenty-four hours in advance. "Broadcast" conferences were usually "live," although a few were taped or filmed for later broadcast. The terms "desk" and "office" conference occasionally appear in related literature and refer to informal, usually impromptu meetings in the president's office in the White House.

**Introduction to the Presidential Press Conference**

The remainder of this chapter provides a background for understanding the institution of the presidential press conference. Four sections present (1) a discussion of the functions of the presidential press conference, (2) a general characterization of the conference, (3) a brief history of early presidential relations with the press, and (4) a review of the modern evolution of the conference.

**Functions of the Presidential Press Conference**

The purposes and functions of the presidential press conference must be considered from the point of view of the participants: the president and the press. The conference also serves the needs of the public and, in this country, the purposes of a democratic society. Because of the nature of this study, the purposes of the press conference from the president's point of view will be prominent in the following discussion.

A president has numerous means of communicating with a variety of audiences. Among his audiences are the citizens of the country,
the congress, government employees, heads and citizens of foreign
governments, special interest groups, and the press itself. The
means of communication available to the president to reach those
audiences are also numerous. Pollard has listed twenty-five "channels and devices" for the president's communications. Among these
are formal addresses, written messages and proclamations, briefing
sessions, press releases, correspondence, executive orders, and press
conferences.

Of all channels of presidential communication, one of the most
unusual is the press conference, which, according to Zelko, is "the
most challenging communication experience of the President's many
public appearances." Rossiter has referred to the conference as
"The most influential channel of public communication to and from
the President ..."

A president has several purposes in using the press conference
for communication. Generally, they are to inform, to persuade,
and to receive feedback.

The first presidential purpose is to provide information to
the public about the affairs of government. The chief executive
does this through opening announcements and with replies to questions.

1 Douglass Cater, The Fourth Branch of Government (New York: Vin-
2 James E. Pollard, The Presidents and the Press: Truman to Johnson
3 Harold P. Zelko, "President Kennedy's Press Conferences: Some
4 Clinton Rossiter, The American Presidency, rev. ed., (New York:
Lippmann has carried the informational aspect of the press conference further by saying that "The purpose of the press conference is to explain the news . . .," not just to provide it.\(^5\) Indeed, the presidential press conference can serve this purpose of explaining, since reporters can probe for clarification in the questions they ask.

The second purpose, persuasion, is best understood with reference to the leadership role of the president, especially as it has emerged in the twentieth century. Few students of government would deny that the office of the president has become more and more important and powerful over the years, especially in this century. This is due to several factors, including the many roles that the chief executive must play. The president is "Chief of State, Chief Executive, Commander in Chief, Chief Diplomat, Chief Legislator . . ."\(^6\) He is also head of his party, the "Voice of the People," "Protector of the Peace," "Manager of Prosperity" and "World Leader."\(^7\) All of these are roles of leadership, and as Rossiter asserts, these roles have made "external leadership a requisite of effective operation."\(^8\)

To carry out the leadership functions of the executive, a president has the power to command and, more importantly, the power to persuade. The most important aspect of presidential power, according to Neustadt, is the power to persuade.\(^9\) Neustadt's thesis is taken from


\(^{6}\) Rossiter, p. 30.

\(^{7}\) Ibid., pp. 30-40.

\(^{8}\) Ibid., p. 28.

a cue by Truman, who analyzed the presidency by saying, "I sit here all day trying to persuade people to do the things they ought to have sense enough to do without my persuading them. . . . That's all the powers of the President amount to." Among the chief objects of presidential persuasion are congress and the public. To reach congress, the president must sometimes use the force of public opinion. As Sorenson wrote, "He has a responsibility to lead public opinion as well as to respect it, to shape it, to inform it, to woo it, and win it. It can be his sword as well as his compass."

The president has more of an advantage, perhaps, in persuasion than does any of his competitors. This is partially because of the nature of the office and the great amount of public interest in it. There is increasing evidence that the president has been able to use his advantage to win public attention. The competition for publicity between the president and congress is usually won by the president. A definite historical change in news patterns exists. This trend shows increased attention to the president at the expense of congressional news since World War I.

Attracting public attention is only part of the persuasive aspect of the presidential press conference. While the president must

10Neustadt, p. 22.


try to persuade congress and the public, he must also win reporters. Former White House correspondent Tom Wicker has said that the president "has to make his case to the press; it's just like an advocate in court. He has to cover up his weak points and emphasize his strong points and the government does it all the time." Added to his other persuasive goals, the president, then, has the persuasive function of building rapport with the press. This follows, because the press determines, in some cases, the effect of the presidential news conference on the public by what it reports in substance and in tone. The press not only helps to determine the persuasive effect of the president's programs, it molds the president's public image as well.

The third function of the press conference from the presidential point of view is that the conference can serve as a vehicle of feedback. To the extent that reporters are in tune with public attitudes and interests, the questions asked at the conference may reveal to the president some of the main concerns of the public at the time. The questions, to some extent, are an index of public opinion and interest. Awareness of public opinion is vital to the leadership function of the chief executive.

The purposes and functions of the presidential news conference from the standpoint of the press must be mentioned. The conference allows reporters to get new information. Reporters compete for news and news becomes a commodity in a sense.\textsuperscript{19} The conference allows the press not only news, but the opportunity to gain deeper understanding of current affairs. Direct contact with the president also provides reporters and commentators with stories on the president's health and his moods.\textsuperscript{20} While most newsmen would prefer private interviews with the president, most of them use the press conference extensively as an important source.\textsuperscript{21}

In some ways, the press acts as an "arbiter" of public opinion.\textsuperscript{22} According to Kraft, "the chief function of the Washington press, indeed, is to put forward the conflicting arguments of the various elements of the government and the Congress for public favor."\textsuperscript{23} The presidential press conference thus serves the press in this role by allowing it to present and elicit elements of differing points of view in the questions that are asked and with the replies of the president. As the "fourth estate," the correspondents may even use the conference to influence the president. For example, "as one systematic channel of communication between Congress and the executive," reporters

\textsuperscript{19}Cater, Power in Washington, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{22}Cater, Power in Washington, p. 225.
may serve the congress to assert that branch of government's position. According to Reston, however, the idea that the press serves as a "restraining influence" on the president is largely mythical now since that power has gradually decreased. This notion of the press as a "check" on the president is clarified in the discussion that immediately follows. Ultimately, the presidential press conference chiefly functions for the press as a staple of news.

Aside from the functions of the presidential press conference in meeting the needs of the president and of the press, the conference also serves the interests of government and of the society as a whole. Inherent in this idea is the suggestion that the press conference can hold the president accountable for his actions. In this way, the conference is seen to serve as a "check and balance" mechanism on the executive branch. As an extension, perhaps, of the idea that the press is a "fourth branch" of government is the common analogy of the American presidential press conference to the question period of the British Parliament. In the House of Commons, a daily thirty-minute segment is devoted to questions from members of the House to the various ministers.

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25 James B. Reston, "The Press, the President and Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, 44 (July 1966), 559-562.
27 For a discussion of this institution, see Robert R. James, An Introduction to the House of Commons (London: Collins, 1961), pp. 81-86.
Enough differences between the presidential press conference and the question hour exist to merit discussion at this point. These differences have been noted by Cater, Rinn, Bone, and Rossiter. First, the question period is a fixed, legal part of British government; the press conference is completely extra-legal. Second, the question period is a daily affair in the House, save Fridays; the presidential press conference is only as regular as the president decides. Third, questions are put to ministers of the British government by elected representatives, not by reporters. Fourth, the question period is initiated by written questions from members, although oral "supplementaries" may follow. This allows ministers time to do research. Questions at presidential press conferences are oral. Further, the British institution differs here in that there is a built-in system for follow-up questions, which is not always possible in the American press conference. Fifth, answers to questions put by members of the House of Commons may be in writing or oral, or both, depending upon a variety of circumstances; answers at presidential press conferences are immediate and oral. Sixth, ministers of the British government are under more duress to provide satisfactory answers to members' questions than is the president to reporters' questions. Seventh, queries at question time are screened by the government for appropriateness in tone and content, while a reporter at a news conference is free to ask any question in his own way.

30 Bone, p. 150.
31 Rossiter, p. 117.
32 R.R. James, p. 81n.
Along this line, reporters may ask a wide variety of questions of one man, the president; questions from the House are filtered automatically to appropriate ministers. An eighth difference is that the question period can be used to advantage by the opposition party to exploit weaknesses of the party in power; this is not always true in the press conference because of the power of the president and because of the reportorial role of the correspondent. Reporters tend to play a non-partisan role in the press conference. Ninth, the question period is only held when the House of Commons is in session; presidential press conferences often occur when congress is not in session. Tenth, the presidential press conference is largely designed to inform and persuade the public and to give the reporters news; the question period is more a function of government and has less news value. Finally, the question period is more institutionalized and has a more formal procedural arrangement than the presidential press conference.

The question period has some advantages over the press conference. One is that the ministers can be pressed more severely for responsive answers. Also, the question hour is held regularly, when policy is still being made, allowing the members of the House to influence the formulation of policy in a direct way. In this manner, the question period does more to hold the government responsible or accountable for its actions.33

Other societal and governmental functions of the presidential press conference exist. The conference can serve as an executive

"check" on the congress and even on the Supreme Court. The president can use the conference to prod congress as well as to help determine the impact of a decision of the courts. The press conference serves society by providing immediate information. The conference can help develop a "social nearness" between the public and the president. Along this line, a broadcast conference can give the public a sense of participation in government and can heighten public interest in governmental affairs. Further, the public can monitor governmental action and gauge the effectiveness of its leadership. A final societal function of the conference is that it demonstrates democratic ideals, that democratic government is working.

In summary, the functions and purposes of the American presidential press conference are many. The conference serves the president in his leadership roles. The president informs the nation. More importantly, he uses the conference as a channel of persuasion to reach public opinion, the congress, the press, and the world. The president gains publicity, argues for his policies, and defends his actions. The conference functions for the press to provide news. The conference serves the government as a source of communication and information and as a "check and balance." The conference serves society in providing prompt information, in holding the executive accountable, and by allowing society to judge its leader's effectiveness.

35 Bogardus, p. 181.
36 Ibid.
38 Ibid., pp. 333-335.
Characteristics of the Presidential Press Conference

The presidential press conference in this country is an extra-legal and extra-Constitutional phenomenon. As shall be explained later, the institution simply evolved over a period of years, chiefly in our own century, at the initiative of various presidents. Further, most of the characteristics of the press conference are determined by the individual president, although some features are constant and somewhat institutionalized.

The chief participants of the conference are the president and attending reporters. There are two variations to this composition. Sometimes a president may share his conference with another official or dignitary. In 1941, President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill met the Washington press together, both responding to questions. More commonly, a president will hold a joint conference with one of his own cabinet members. While the president usually faces the press alone, he often has advisers, such as his own press secretary, nearby to call upon for specific information if necessary. Any number of reporters, from twenty to five hundred, may attend, depending upon the circumstances and the location of the conference. Generally, any reporter, domestic or foreign, with official credentials may attend. The second variation to the composition of the conference is the broadcast news conference, where the listening or viewing audience becomes an indirect participant.

Locations vary. Most conferences take place in Washington, D.C. Recent presidents have held conferences in foreign countries as well as at various sites within the United States while on tour or on vacation. Within the Capitol, specific locations also vary. Some presidents meet the press in their White House office or in other rooms in
the White House. Large conferences, such as those which are televised, meet in auditoriums such as that of the State Department Building.

Another varying characteristic is the scheduling of the news conference. Timing is at the discretion of the president. Some presidents have tried to meet regularly, at fairly predictable intervals, with the press; others have been unpredictable in scheduling, as will be seen later. Some presidents have had favorite days and times for their conferences while others have tried to accommodate reporters' deadline problems by varying their scheduling. The frequency of holding the conferences has also varied considerably. Finally, most conferences are announced in advance, although some presidents, notably Lyndon Johnson, have held impromptu meetings with the press.

The standard length of a press conference is thirty minutes, especially if it is broadcast. Some conferences have lasted only ten minutes while others have gone beyond an hour. Ostensibly, the length of the conference is determined by the press. By tradition, the senior wire service correspondent ends the conference.

The degree of formality is another variant of the presidential press conference. Televised conferences are the most formal. Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson preferred small, informal conferences in their offices, while they sat at their desks with reporters either standing or sitting around them. The degree of formality is also influenced by the size of the group of correspondents, the location of the conference, and the individual president's personality.

The basic pattern of the conference is as follows. After the reporters have gathered, the president walks in and usually begins the conference with a series of announcements. He then calls for
questions. The president recognizes whichever reporter he happens to notice. The reporter states his question(s). The president responds and then calls upon another questioner. Presidents before F.D.R. required written queries and rarely entertained oral questions. Since F.D.R., only oral questions have been asked. Sometimes, before the conference begins, presidential aides will "plant" questions with reporters to make sure that certain topics are brought up. The conference ends, sometimes abruptly, with the senior wire service correspondent's traditional "Thank you, Mr. President."

The conference is usually "wrapped up" an hour later with a distribution of transcripts of the conference prepared by the White House staff.

**Early Presidential Relations with the Press**

Although the presidential press conference is a development of the twentieth century in America, its foundations can be seen in the evolution of presidential relations with the press since the American Revolution. This section traces those relations and the way that Presidents Washington through Taft dealt with the press.

Up until the time of the Civil War, the most important periodical publications were political, partisan organs. Administration organs were used by the various presidents through the administration of Buchanan. Some presidents were able to use the same organ as their predecessors. For example, the National Intelligencer served

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most of the presidents from Jefferson through John Quincy Adams. Rival publications were numerous and espoused the views of anti-administration factions and parties. To some extent, a president's press relations depended upon his capacity to use such party organs effectively. The administration organs not only became almost the sole sources of White House news, but, to some degree, they controlled much government news.

George Washington found the press useful in two ways before becoming president. The press served during the Revolution to provide military information. Also, Washington sought press approval and support for the new Constitution. Washington, like most presidents until Jackson, had little direct contact with the press. But Washington was aware of the publicity power of the press as he sought publication of his "Farewell Address."

John Adams was a prolific writer for newspapers but had no direct contact with reporters. He did propose an official government paper, but the proposal was never taken seriously and partisan papers continued to dominate. Thomas Jefferson, one of the nation's leading champions

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41 Cater, The Fourth Branch of Government, pp. 75-76.
44 Ibid., p. 4.
47 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, pp. 36, 46.
48 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
for press freedoms, also worked behind the scenes. He is famous
for his attitude, expressed before the adoption of the Constitution,
when he said, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a
government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I
should not hesitate to prefer the latter." 49 Jefferson carried his
zeal for freedom of the press into the presidency by pardoning edi-
tors and publishers who had been convicted under the Alien and Sedi-
tion Acts of 1798 for disagreeable criticisms of the previous adminis-
trations. 50 As President, Jefferson was able to establish his own
organ, the National Intelligencer, under the direction of Philip Fre-
neau. He did this by offering Freneau a position in government, a
practice to be followed by other presidents. 51

Madison, Monroe, and John Quincy Adams continued the use of the
administration organ to release news. Both Madison and Adams had
written for newspapers and were able to use the press to advantage.
Monroe was largely ineffectual in his press relationships. 52 Madison
suggested the establishment of a bi-partisan publication, but the
idea did not bear fruit. 53

Until the time of Jackson, no president had been aggressive in
his use of the nation's press. Jackson reversed the trend. According
to Rivers, "Jackson used the party press so astutely that one noted

49 Quoted in Mott, p. 170.
50 Mott, p. 152; and Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, p. 71.
51 Rivers, The Adversaries, pp. 10-11; and Pollard, The Presidents
and the Press, p. 70.
52 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, pp. 96-146.
53 Mott, p. 175.
historian claims that Jackson actually ruled the country by means of newspapers. Jackson accomplished favorable press coverage in various ways. One method was to award government printing contracts to friendly publishers, a device used by previous presidents, and one which remained useful until 1860 when the Government Printing Office was established. Jackson also appointed many journalists to important government positions, perhaps as many as fifty-seven, including three of the five members of his "Kitchen Cabinet." Pollard concluded:

Andrew Jackson excelled in aggressive, partisan use of the press. He knew what he wanted, he meant to have his own way, and he was fortunate in finding journalists devoted to him and capable of carrying out his desires. The result was the most effective employment of the press for partisan purposes in the long history of the Presidency.

The presidents between Jackson and Lincoln were generally undistinguished in their use of the press. Van Buren continued use of the party organ and may be the first president who allowed publication of an interview by a journalist. William Harrison revived the National Intelligencer for his administration and used the press to defend his war record, to refute charges of being an abolitionist, and to campaign for the presidency. Tyler, who was a "strong believer in

54 The Adversaries, p. 12.
57 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, p. 147.
59 Mott, p. 225.
60 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, pp. 201-208.
the power of the press . . . set up a new paper, the Madisonian, in Washington, and an organ in nearly every state, all of them bound to the administration by patronage." To those and other favorable papers he submitted articles from time to time. Polk again changed organs to the Washington Union. It was during the Polk administration, in 1846, that a law was passed to give printing contracts to the lowest bidder, a blow to the patronage powers of the presidency with the press. Polk disliked public attention and was distrustful of the press, although he appointed journalists to government positions. While Polk realized the powers of the press, he was basically unsuccessful in using them to presidential advantage. Taylor also established a new paper but took little initiative with the press. Although Fillmore had previously used the press to present information and publicize his opinions, his presidential efforts at using the press were limited to the establishment of relations with a small group of publishers. Pierce and Buchanan used the Union as their spokesman but made minimal use of the press.

61 Mott, p. 256.
63 Mott, p. 256.
64 Ibid.
66 Ibid., p. 252.
67 Ibid., pp. 256-267; and Mott, p. 257.
69 Ibid., pp. 282-292; and Mott, p. 257.
Like Jackson, Lincoln once again changed the pattern of presidential press relations. Lincoln was a frequent contributor of reports and editorials to Illinois newspapers and discovered the power of the press over public opinion early in his political career. By making friends in the press, Lincoln was able to gain publicity locally and nationally in his various attempts to gain office. Among these friends was the powerful Chicago Tribune. One way in which Lincoln gained a favorable press was to provide copies of his speeches to various papers, including his famous "House Divided" speech and his address at Cooper Union. Lincoln even took the trouble to read newspaper proofs to assure accuracy and emphasis in the printing of his speeches. Lincoln was an "inveterate newspaper reader" and well understood the workings of the press.

In the White House, Lincoln dropped the use of the partisan administration organ so that he might establish favorable relationships with a variety of publishers. In fact, Lincoln sought to win understanding and support of such antagonistic papers as Horace Greeley's Tribune as well as the New York Herald. Perhaps even more important is the fact that Lincoln cultivated the first really direct relations with Washington reporters. As President, he saw reporters often and

70 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, pp. 312-313.
72 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, pp. 325, 334.
73 Ibid., p. 313.
74 Rivers, The Opinionmakers, p. 7.
75 Rivers, The Adversaries, pp. 15-16.
76 Boaz, pp. 22-23.
at length and occasionally gave impromptu interviews. He had many informal dealings with correspondents and his accessibility laid the groundwork for more extensive presidential press relationships.\textsuperscript{77} In sum, Lincoln’s press relations were probably better than those of any previous president.

Johnson, Grant, Hayes, Garfield, and Arthur were undistinguished in their press relations. Johnson’s chief contribution was to give a number of exclusive interviews with reporters.\textsuperscript{78} Grant had had little prior contact with the press and was not effective in dealing with it.\textsuperscript{79} Hayes knew many publishers well and attempted good press relations.\textsuperscript{80} Garfield, too, had "extensive dealings with the press," but these were more "personal than official," and were not used to advantage.\textsuperscript{81} Arthur began with bad press relations and stayed away from reporters, preferring to work directly with congressional leaders.\textsuperscript{82}

While Grover Cleveland carried an "active antipathy" toward the press throughout his years in office, he was fairly successful in using the press to support his programs.\textsuperscript{83} Cleveland received questions from reporters through his staff and often provided answers in return, but indirectly. He occasionally gave interviews to individual

\textsuperscript{77}Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, pp. 348, 369-373.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., pp. 413-427.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., pp. 434-452.
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., p. 455.
\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., p. 480.
\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., pp. 488-497.
\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., pp. 499, 533.
and groups of reporters. He frequently prepared news releases to make announcements. He also wrote a number of letters to papers in order to defend and explain his policies, sometimes rebutting criticism.\(^{84}\) Cleveland disliked press speculation, was angered when reporters interfered with his personal life, and he distrusted papers so much that he was against the practice of providing advance texts of his speeches and messages.\(^{85}\)

Benjamin Harrison and McKinley remained inaccessible to Washington correspondents. Harrison did not get along well with the press, although he appointed a number of journalists to positions in government.\(^{86}\) Failing to understand the power of the press, he was unable to use it to his advantage.\(^{87}\) McKinley, an avid newspaper reader, also remained aloof to reporters. His chief contribution to developing relations between the White House and the press was to provide chairs for reporters in a corridor of the White House.\(^{88}\)

It was Theodore Roosevelt, cognizant of the value of publicity and not reticent about projecting his ego into the front pages of the land, who first began to treat the newspapermen with a consideration calculated to have its rewards.\(^{89}\)

As Governor, Roosevelt had met the press twice daily with a free oral

\(^{84}\)Ibid., pp. 501, 513, 516, 528.

\(^{85}\)Ibid., pp. 500-501, 515, 522; and Mott, pp. 510-511.

\(^{86}\)Mott, p. 511.

\(^{87}\)Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, pp. 538-539, 557.

\(^{88}\)Ibid., pp. 551-557.

interchange of questions and answers, although direct quotation was never permitted.\(^9^0\) He carried his basic attitudes toward the press to the White House. "The thrust of his method was orchestration; both courting the correspondents and commanding them."\(^9^1\) Roosevelt established the first White House press room for correspondents.\(^9^2\) He wrote for several publications, prepared press releases, and suggested news items to reporters. Roosevelt timed his press releases carefully. Knowing, for example, that publishers lacked news for Monday papers, he made a practice of issuing news releases on Sundays to capture attention in the next day's press.\(^9^4\) Roosevelt is also credited with being the first president to use the "trial balloon" technique, a device which allowed him to publicize an idea without public knowledge of the source.\(^9^5\)

Roosevelt's presidential press conferences were not the types of meeting ordinarily thought of as press conferences in the modern sense. He did not meet with large groups of reporters. Instead, Roosevelt called in selected "favorites," who would give him favorable publicity.\(^9^6\) To these chosen few he gave exclusive interviews and answered questions, but he always molded and directed these meetings to suit

\(^9^0\)Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, p. 510.
\(^9^1\)Rivers, The Adversaries, p. 18.
\(^9^3\)Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, pp. 573, 594.
\(^9^4\)Ibid., p. 573; and Boaz, p. 36.
\(^9^5\)Raymond P. Brandt, "The President's Press Conference," Survey Graphic, 28 (July 1939), 448; and Rosten, p. 22.
\(^9^6\)Rosten, p. 22.
his own designs. He continued the rule prohibiting direct quotation.\textsuperscript{97} The meetings were held at various times and were not scheduled on a regular basis, although Roosevelt remained accessible to reporters throughout his administration. Roosevelt's relations with correspondents were as mercurial as his personality. He charmed reporters, bullied them, lectured to them, and vented his wrath upon those who (or whose papers) printed unfriendly articles. Reporters who violated Roosevelt's trust were "elected" to the "Ananias Club" and were likely not to see the President again.\textsuperscript{98}

Roosevelt was highly sensitive to press criticism, and he in turn responded with criticism as well as legal action. In his first message to Congress he placed a share of the blame for McKinley's assassination on the press.\textsuperscript{99} In 1909, he instructed the Attorney General to file libel suits against two publishers, including Joseph Pulitzer, for stories on corruption in his administration.\textsuperscript{100} He initiated other suits after he left office.\textsuperscript{101}

Roosevelt, then, was probably the most effective president since Lincoln in his dealings with the press. He saw reporters as public servants, and he went out of his way to cultivate their services.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.; and Rivers, \textit{The Adversaries}, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{98} Rivers, \textit{The Adversaries}, pp. 18-19; Pollard, \textit{The Presidents and the Press}, pp. 569, 572, 574; Rosten, p. 22; and Mott, p. 608.

\textsuperscript{99} Mott, p. 541.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., pp. 605-606.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., pp. 606, 608.

\textsuperscript{102} Pollard, \textit{The Presidents and the Press}, p. 594.
His understanding of the workings of the press and his deliberate wooing of reporters paid off in large measure.

Taft's relations with reporters were not as successful. Taft had a working knowledge of the press, since, after graduation from college, he had been a reporter in Cincinnati.\textsuperscript{103} As Secretary of War, Taft held daily afternoon press conferences. "He enjoyed the cross-fire of questions at his conferences,..."\textsuperscript{104} In the White House, Taft attempted to hold weekly press conferences.\textsuperscript{105} Because of sensitivity to press criticism and an inability to follow his predecessor's rapport with reporters, Taft came to see the press less frequently and his press relations came to be ineffective.\textsuperscript{106} It is paradoxical that Taft was unable to utilize well his newspaper experience and relations with the press as War Secretary to advantage during his term as president.\textsuperscript{107}

In reviewing this section on the early history of presidential relations with the press, several points emerge. Presidents Washington through Buchanan relied chiefly upon partisan political organs to promote their administrations. Early presidents remained aloof from the press. They declined direct relations with reporters although they favored editors and publishers with various types of patronage and friendship. The most successful early presidents were Jackson,

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., p. 601.
\textsuperscript{104}Mott, p. 608; and Rivers, \textit{The Adversaries}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{105}Rosten, p. 23; and Mott, p. 608.
\textsuperscript{106}Pollard, \textit{The Presidents and the Press}, pp. 605-620.
\textsuperscript{107}Ibid., p. 627; Rivers, \textit{The Adversaries}, p. 20; and Boaz, pp. 37-40.
Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. Jackson cultivated relationships with many journalists and was thus able to have, in effect, more than one administration organ. Lincoln was the first president to become accessible to reporters, and he vigorously sought press support in a number of ways. Roosevelt set the stage for the modern press conference in his meetings with reporters and used his contacts with the press better than any previous chief executive. How the modern press conference evolved is the subject of the last section of this chapter.

**The Twentieth Century Evolution of the Presidential Press Conference**

The ten presidents that followed Taft developed relations with the press in more sophisticated ways than those before them. The twentieth century witnessed a rise in the influence of independent newspapers, an increase in the powers of the presidency, and the establishment and institutionalization of the presidential press conference. The following discussion describes the evolution of the presidential press conference as well as the increased reliance of the presidency upon the press. Each president's press relations and contributions to the press conference are considered separately.

**Woodrow Wilson.** Most historians of the institution credit Wilson with the formal establishment of the presidential press conference. Wilson was probably the first president to have a stenographer present.

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108 Bogardus, p. 181, says Cleveland was the first to hold press conferences, possibly because Cleveland granted interviews to reporters. Other historians cite Theodore Roosevelt and Taft with the invention. But Wilson was first to hold formal and regular press conferences open to all accredited correspondents; see Pollard, *The Presidents and the Press*, pp. 630-631.
at press meetings. He may have been the first to have a staff member who served as a press secretary. Since Wilson did not permit direct quotation, the "official spokesman" technique for attribution was initiated under Wilson.

Wilson held his conferences twice weekly, on Mondays and Thursdays, during the first two years of his administration. Beginning in 1915, he held only one a week, on Tuesdays. After the sinking of the "Lusitania," Wilson discontinued his press conferences, partially as a security precaution, since foreign correspondents were allowed to attend.

Wilson's conferences were of three types. In some he answered a broad range of questions. Other conferences were held on one subject only. In the third type, Wilson lectured at length on his attitudes and policies. In the first type of conference, Wilson took little initiative and allowed reporters to determine the content and direction of the meeting. He had a "self-imposed rule of passivity." In the conferences with a single topic, Wilson "fenced" with correspondents and was probably more aggressive. The third type of

109 Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., "The Press Conferences of Woodrow Wilson," *Journalism Quarterly*, 39 (Summer 1962), 293; and Boaz, p. 44.
111 Rosten, pp. 24-25.
113 Rosten, p. 25; and Boaz, p. 56.
114 Boaz, pp. 54-55.
116 Boaz, p. 54.
conference revealed Wilson's habit of lecturing to reporters. "There was in Wilson's manner something of a professor facing a classroom. He regarded newspapermen as intellectual inferiors. . . ." In general he was somewhat unresponsive in his press conferences. He remained cautious, aloof, and at times terse with reporters. He was even evasive and misleading on occasion.\(^\text{117}\)

Although reporters were friendly with Wilson, several factors lessened the effectiveness of his conferences and his press relations. There is evidence that Wilson did not really like the cross examination atmosphere of the news conference.\(^\text{119}\) His tendency to lecture to reporters did not help. He was especially sensitive toward questions about his personal and family life and rebuked prying reporters.\(^\text{120}\) Wilson was bothered by criticism in papers and was hurt by unfavorable publicity about his administration.\(^\text{121}\)

Wilson was probably glad to discontinue his conferences.\(^\text{122}\) When he did, he turned his press relations over to his secretary, Joseph Tumulty, who met the press daily to provide news and answer questions. This practice was the forerunner of contemporary press secretaries' news conferences, now usually held twice daily in Washington.\(^\text{123}\)

\(^\text{118}\) Boaz, p. 46; and Brandt, p. 448.
\(^\text{120}\) Pollard, *The Presidents and the Press*, pp. 633-638.
\(^\text{121}\) Ibid., pp. 634-642.
\(^\text{122}\) Boaz, p. 56.
1917, the White House became less of a news source. Wilson established the Committee on Public Information, headed by George Creel, to coordinate and disclose government information. Although Wilson no longer had many direct contacts with the press, he continued to be irritated by "leaks," by speculation in the press, and by inadequate publicity for his programs.

Warren Harding. Harding published his own paper in Marion, Ohio, many years before he entered politics. His prowess in understanding the needs of newspapermen was shown in his campaign for the presidency, as he made special efforts to accommodate reporters and meet with them.

After the election, Harding reinstated the press conference. "He was affable and communicative, the epitome of good-fellowship. He met the corps twice a week and enjoyed a high degree of popularity. He was the first President to divulge, quite carelessly, what went on at cabinet meetings." Harding liked the press, treated it well, and enjoyed his meetings with reporters. He was, in turn, treated well by reporters. His conferences were on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, after cabinet meetings.

The basic policies of Harding's conferences were as follows. Like Wilson, Harding occasionally spoke off-the-record. As Roosevelt

124 Ibid., pp. 659-687.
125 Ibid., pp. 654-655, 658, 690, 686-687.
126 Ibid., pp. 697-701.
127 Rosten, p. 27; and Stein, p. 71.
128 Brandt, p. 448.
129 Boaz, p. 60.
had done, Harding demanded that reporters not break that confidence when he did speak off-the-record. Another rule was that Harding was not to be quoted directly without permission. \(^{130}\) In November of 1921, another change came about: written questions were to be submitted in advance. This rule evolved as a consequence of an embarrassing slip of mind and tongue on a delicate matter of foreign policy during a news conference. \(^{131}\) The rule was relaxed as time went on so as to allow oral follow-up questions and oral questions on topics initiated by Harding. \(^{132}\)

Toward the end of his administration, press criticism and breaches of his trust led Harding to become more cautious in his dealings with reporters. \(^{133}\) In sum, Harding had made a contribution to presidential press relations. He helped the development of the press conference by making it permanent and regular and by participating with reporters actively.

**Calvin Coolidge.** Coolidge continued most of Harding's press conference practices, meeting reporters twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays. \(^{134}\) Written questions were required and Coolidge answered as many or as few as he liked. He so rarely allowed direct quotation that his conferences were basically off-the-record. Coolidge viewed the press conference as a source of background information rather

\(^{130}\) Pollard, *The Presidents and the Press*, p. 704; and Boaz, p. 61.  
\(^{131}\) Pollard, *The Presidents and the Press*, p. 705.  
\(^{132}\) Rosten, p. 27.  
\(^{133}\) Pollard, *The Presidents and the Press*, p. 705; and Stein, p. 71.  
\(^{134}\) Boaz, p. 67.
than a source of news. His penchant for forcing reporters to use the "White House spokesman" attribution device led Lyle Wilson to suggest that "Calvin Coolidge was the contriver of the most persistent and transparent political hoax of twentieth-century America." Coolidge would not even permit reporters to publish the fact that he refused to comment on a particular question. Coolidge sometimes used his conferences to make announcements, but his replies to questions provided so little and such dry information for reporters that the press was forced to manufacture news and to embellish Coolidge's remarks. The correspondents "exploited the trivial material he gave them." Coolidge was friendly with the press and actively sought its support. The real story of Coolidge's success with the press lay in his use of the press conference to promote himself politically, since he had no substantive legislative program to publicize. With the help of reporters who dramatized his statements, Coolidge rose to prominence from an unknown because of his ability to focus public attention on the White House. He courted the press on vacations and on the election trail and used the press to his advantage to win

135 Ibid.


137 Brandt, p. 448; and Rosten, p. 31.

138 Brandt, p. 448; and Rosten, p. 34.


140 Ibid., pp. 266-267.
the 1924 election.\textsuperscript{141} The press made Coolidge a public legend. As Rosten put it,

The Washington correspondents had been presented with the considerable task of popularizing a man of no historic talents, no engaging graces, no compelling personality. They had to transform a New England politician into a statesman. . . . The press hammered the Coolidge legend into the public mind. Mr. Coolidge was astute enough to let newspapermen pressed for copy endow him with extravagant talents which he did not possess, and magnify him to a stature which he could not have achieved by deliberate exertion.\textsuperscript{142}

Proportionately speaking, Coolidge held more news conferences than any previous or later president. He held 520 conferences for an average of about eight a month during his tenure.\textsuperscript{143}

In a way, Coolidge's only contribution to the evolution of presidential press conferences was that he held them unfailingly. More important was his contribution to presidential press relations. He demonstrated, even more sharply than Theodore Roosevelt, the use of the press to gain personal political advantage. He was one of the few presidents to enjoy mutually cordial relations with the Washington press throughout his administration.\textsuperscript{144}

\textit{Herbert Hoover.} While Commerce Secretary under Harding, Hoover had developed unusually good rapport with the press. He had met with reporters informally and often and proved to be a valuable source of news.\textsuperscript{145} His high popularity with the press and his favorable dealings

\textsuperscript{141}Brandt, p. 448.
\textsuperscript{142}Rosten, pp. 38-39.
\textsuperscript{143}Boaz, pp. 63-65.
\textsuperscript{144}Pollard, \textit{The Presidents and the Press}, p. 717.
\textsuperscript{145}Rosten, p. 39.
with reporters came to an end, as had Taft's, when Hoover came into the White House.

Hoover changed several of the policies of his predecessor. Hoover met the reporters less frequently than had Coolidge. In his first year, he averaged only two conferences a month. In his last three years, he held slightly more than an average of one conference a month, for a total of only sixty-six in four years. Another change involved the abolition of the "White House spokesman" attribution device. Hoover set up three categories of answers: (1) direct quotation by permission, (2) background information for use but not for quotation, and (3) confidential data which could not be used in any way. Hoover retained the requirement of written questions, which had to be submitted twenty-four hours in advance of a given conference. Hoover's press secretary then screened the questions, and many never reached the President's eyes. Like Coolidge, Hoover then decided which of the reporters' questions he wanted to answer and went as far as denying that he had received a question if a reporter pressed for an answer.

Hoover's press conferences and press relations were marred in a number of ways. Hoover read his answers, which were not particularly informative anyway. He demeaned reporters. He often gave out misleading and inaccurate information and was generally reticent.

146 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, p. 737; and Boaz, p. 73.
148 Brandt, p. 448.
149 Ibid.
150 Stein, p. 74.
151 Rosten, p. 40.
152 Boaz, pp. 74-80.
Hoover disliked stories about his personal and family life and grew more and more resentful of press criticisms of the policies of his administration.\textsuperscript{153} He attempted to coordinate all news in the executive branch through the White House press secretary and reporters cried "censorship."\textsuperscript{154} In a downward spiral of distrust and dislike, Hoover became increasingly distant and the press more bitter in criticism. Relations deteriorated to such an extent that in September of 1932, Hoover discontinued meeting with the press.\textsuperscript{155}

Hoover contributed little to the evolution of the presidential press conference and the development of presidential press relations. Many reasons account for his failures with the press. An economic depression, problems with congress, and a hostile press added to his demise. Hoover's administration was also to blame. Pollard concluded:

\begin{quote}
Much of its personal failure and political tragedy lay in his inability to keep the confidence of correspondents. It remained for his successor to prove over a far longer and vastly world-shaking time what really skillful and adroit handling of press corps could accomplish in fat years and lean.\textsuperscript{156}
\end{quote}

**Franklin Roosevelt.** As Governor of New York, F.D.R. had established the practice of holding regular press conferences. He carried that practice into office as President.\textsuperscript{157}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{153}Rosten, pp. 40-41.
\item \textsuperscript{154}Ibid., pp. 42-44.
\item \textsuperscript{155}Pollard, *The Presidents and the Press*, p. 768.
\item \textsuperscript{156}Ibid., p. 770
\item \textsuperscript{157}James E. Pollard, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Press," *Journalism Quarterly*, 22 (Sept. 1945), 198.
\end{itemize}
As President, Roosevelt met the press twice a week, holding 998 conferences in all. He dropped the requirement of written questions. He had four categories of replies which included (1) direct quotation, (2) indirect quotation, (3) background information unattributable to him, and (4) off-the-record, confidential information not for publication in any form. The second of those categories was an innovation. 159

Roosevelt seemed just the opposite of Hoover. He was friendly, frank, and forceful. He flattered reporters with his candor and by the amount of background and off-the-record information he provided them. According to Rosten,

His answers were swift, positive, illuminating... He was informal, communicative, gay. When he evaded a question it was done frankly. He was thoroughly at ease. He made no effort to conceal his pleasure in the give and take of the situation. 160

Like Wilson, Roosevelt prepared for his conferences. He was adept at anticipating questions and sometimes used prepared answers. 161 Roosevelt may have been the first president to use the "planted" question. 162 To further guide reporters, he even suggested how stories might be written. 163 He used other tactics in his conferences. He used the "trial balloon," for example, on his idea to restructure

158 Ibid., p. 197; and Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, p. 773.
159 Rosten, p. 48.
160 Ibid., p. 49.
162 Dorothy E. James, p. 47; and Brandt, p. 446.
the Supreme Court. He sometimes made lengthy announcements in anticipation of reporters' questions. Roosevelt also set precedent by holding special conferences for groups other than the White House press corps. Roosevelt was probably the first president to hold a news conference with a visiting head of state when he invited Winston Churchill to join him in his conference of December 23, 1941.

Roosevelt's strength with the press was shown in other ways. He was often critical of newspapers and occasionally took reporters to task, threatening to revive the "Ananias Club," and sending reporters "into the corner" or telling them to put on a dunce cap. He once presented a reporter with a German cross. "He lectured the reporters. He called them liars and used the mighty weight of his high office in pile-driving fashion against the press." These attacks, however, were usually more a result of his hostilities with a number of Republican publishers. Aside from occasional flare-ups, Roosevelt generally got along extremely well with Washington correspondents.

Roosevelt deserves mention here for other novel features of his public relations program. First, Mrs. Roosevelt played an important role in publicizing F.D.R.'s administration with her travels, speeches,

164 Brandt, p. 447.
167 Bone, p. 144.
newspaper columns, and her own press conferences. Another innovation was Roosevelt's use of the "Fireside Chat," although, according to Rivers, Roosevelt preferred to communicate with the public through his press conferences. Further, Roosevelt made such extensive use of public relations personnel that a congressional investigating committee reported discovering 270 public information officers working for him.

Roosevelt's publicity campaign paid off. He won a large and sympathetic following among the Washington press corps. More tangible results followed. Cornwell analyzed selected periods in the administrations of Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower and found that F.D.R. got more news stories per press conference than either of the other two presidents.

Toward the end of his career, as the United States became more involved in the war, some changes marked Roosevelt's press policies and relations. Roosevelt cancelled a few of his news conferences. In his meetings, some topics were not discussed, and the off-the-record method was employed more frequently. The tone of the conferences became less jovial. To some extent, the White House coordinated news from various agencies, and there was a degree of censorship and

170 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, p. 774; and Rosten, pp. 51-52.
171 The Opinionmakers, p. 137.
172 Ibid., p. 139.
173 Rosten, pp. 49-51.
secrecy which aroused complaint from the press. Roosevelt also became less available to reporters. 175

The reasons for Roosevelt's extraordinary success with the press were summarized by Raymond Clapper, a Washington correspondent:

Clapper gave five reasons for Mr. Roosevelt's high standing with the White House corps. One was that their personal contacts were not only pleasant but often intimate. Another was that his press conferences were almost always certain to yield live news. Again, they admired his political skill and craftsmanship and, even when they disagreed with him, they generally believed in his sincerity, his courage and his readiness to experiment. Finally, Clapper observed that the original Roosevelt theme of doing something for the forgotten man struck a responsive chord with the reporters. 176

On balance, Roosevelt did more than any previous administration to develop and utilize the presidential press conference to its fullest advantage. By scrapping the written questions, spontaneity was added. By holding frequent and regular conferences, Roosevelt furthered the institutionalization of the news conference. Roosevelt's personality and his interest in newspapers led him to improve presidential press relations more than any previous president. He deliberately courted the press, understood reporters' problems, and enjoyed being with correspondents. He used every possible public relations technique in his dealings with the press. His carefully planned strategies as well as his habitual congeniality with reporters were highly successful.

Harry Truman. Truman must have learned much from his predecessor, for he followed many of Roosevelt's practices in press relations.

176 Ibid., p. 780.
Nevertheless, Truman injected his own personality and made some minor changes.

In his press conferences, Truman kept the four categories of answers used by Roosevelt. Unlike Roosevelt, Truman rarely employed the off-the-record reply. Truman also chose to meet reporters once a week rather than twice. Roosevelt had met reporters while seated at his desk in his White House office. The size of the White House press corps had grown to such an extent that, in 1950, Truman moved the location to the Indian Treaty Room of the old State, War, and Navy Building. Another change was to require reporters to identify themselves by name before asking a question. Further, Truman stood behind a desk and reporters sat, whereas in Roosevelt's conferences reporters stood and Roosevelt sat. Truman's conferences also varied in length from Roosevelt's. They were shorter, occasionally lasting only ten minutes or so.

Changes in the content of the conferences also emerged. Truman did not make use of the "trial balloon" device as had F.D.R. Although he was willing to allow partisan political questions, Truman did not

177 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press: Truman to Johnson, p. 27.
179 James E. Pollard, "President Truman and the Press," Journalism Quarterly, 28 (Fall 1951), 457.
180 Lorenz, p. 679.
183 Ibid.
like to comment on pending Supreme Court cases and did not elucidate foreign policy matters. He was not good at explanations and interpretations of policy and "hesitated to use the press conference to introduce and promote legislation, as previous Presidents had done."\(^{184}\) Truman's answers tended to be shorter than his predecessor's.\(^{185}\) In the latter part of his administration, Truman used announcements and prepared statements more frequently in his news conferences.\(^{186}\) In 1951, Truman began the practice of allowing edited excerpts of his conferences to be broadcast on radio, the first president to do so.\(^{187}\)

Truman went beyond Roosevelt in preparing for his conferences. Truman held meetings with his staff about thirty minutes before his conferences in order to anticipate questions and gather information. By 1952, the preparation process was so systematized that Truman's press aides put together a notebook of information for Truman to review before each conference.\(^{188}\)

Truman's press conferences sometimes proved to be embarrassing. On several occasions Truman made statements, which, when interpreted by the press, caused the White House to issue corrections and clarifications, a problem also faced by Eisenhower. Perhaps the most famous of these incidents was Truman's statement in his conference

\(^{184}\)Lorenz, p. 675.

\(^{185}\)Pollard, "President Truman and the Press," p. 458.

\(^{186}\)Ibid., pp. 463-464.

\(^{187}\)Lorenz, p. 679.

\(^{188}\)Ibid., p. 674.
of November 16, 1950, on the possible use of nuclear weapons. The impulsiveness of his remarks and misinterpretation by reporters forced the White House to release an angry denial several hours later. 189

Other aspects of Truman's policies led to a waning of his relations with the press. Truman angered reporters when he gave an exclusive interview to Arthur Krock in 1950. 190 When Truman placed restrictions on dissemination of military information by government agencies, he further displeased the press. 191 In his conference of April 17, 1952, Truman caused a stir when he implied that he had the power to take over the nation's press just as he had the steel mills. 192 Other developments led to exchanges of criticism between Truman and the press, especially in the last two years of his administration.

As a whole, Truman's press relations were good. Although Truman was sometimes at odds with the press, he seemed to enjoy his conferences and established a fair degree of rapport with reporters. 193 As he gained confidence in himself and when he was elected in his own right, he matured in his dealings with the press. Although he made a few minor changes in his conferences, he generally followed Roosevelt's pattern. He did less than Roosevelt to use his conferences to promote legislation. In spite of that, his concern for publicity led Truman to develop a public relations staff larger than any of his

190 Ibid.
192 Ibid., p. 280.
193 Ibid., pp. 273, 286.
predecessors. His administration employed over 3,000 public information officers at one time, according to one investigation. Truman, then, contributed to the development of the presidential press conference and to presidential relations with the press with a good degree of success.

Dwight Eisenhower. The army of information officers amassed by Truman was even doubled under Eisenhower. "In 1957, the Civil Service Commission was listing 6,878 'Information and Editorial Employees.' The increase continued during the second term." Eisenhower had dealt with the press often during his military career and was aware of its value.

Eisenhower continued many of Truman's press conference policies and added his own innovations. Eisenhower met less frequently with the press, averaging only one conference every two weeks. The conferences were held in the same location as Truman's. Eisenhower stood and so did reporters asking questions. Reporters identified themselves as they had for Truman. The average conference lasted thirty minutes, and the President did not like exceeding that length. The conferences were usually held on Thursdays, the favorite day of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. Eisenhower tried to aid reporters by varying the time of his conferences so that writers for

194 Rivers, The Opinionmakers, p. 141.
195 Ibid., p. 142.
197 Pollard, The Presidents and the Press: Truman to Johnson, p. 64.
198 Douglass Cater, "The President and the Press," Reporter, April 28, 1953, p. 27.
morning papers would have an equal advantage with correspondents for afternoon papers in breaking the news which resulted from his conferences. Other changes included allowing reporters greater freedom in direct quotation and a more extensive use of opening statements. Eisenhower's staff issued transcripts of the conference, but the replies were edited.

In 1954, Eisenhower became the first president to allow live radio broadcast of his press conference. And in 1955 he permitted filmed recordings of his conferences to be televised, having hired actor Robert Montgomery as television adviser. The White House reserved the right to edit the sound track of the television film. The delayed television broadcasts of Eisenhower's press conferences caught the interest of the public at first, but as time wore on, fewer broadcasts were carried because of decreased popularity.

Eisenhower was more reserved with the press than Truman or Roosevelt. He saw reporters less frequently. He made it a habit to

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200 Ibid.
203 Ibid., p. 285.
205 Bone, p. 145.
refuse personal interviews. Eisenhower carried his aloofness into his conferences, remaining formal and business-like in his deportment.

"There was little of the banter that sometimes cropped out under Franklin Roosevelt or Truman."  

In many ways, Eisenhower failed to use his potential initiative in his conferences. He was not forceful enough in pushing legislation. He refused to criticize his opponents or congress and avoided discussion of personalities and partisan political matters. Eisenhower also had difficulties expressing himself. His famous convoluted syntax provided one reason for editing his conferences. Eisenhower's occasional bursts of temper at news conferences were also counter-productive to his press relations. In his conference of April 29, 1954, an irritating question caused him to walk out of the conference abruptly. Eisenhower was criticized for giving ambiguous answers and for failing to understand the intent of some questions.  

Lapses in control were seldom, and Eisenhower generally got along well with reporters. He was not intimate, but he won respect. 


208 Ibid., p. 64.


Eisenhower contributed to the evolution of the presidential press conference by gradually allowing more freedom in direct quotation and by permitting broadcasts of his conferences.

John Kennedy. Both Kennedy and his wife had gained valuable newspaper, magazine, and broadcasting experience before Kennedy entered public office. As President, Kennedy "revolutionized relations between press and President." He expanded presidential press relations in numerous ways, and his policies brought praise, criticism, and success to his administration.

The press conference was for Kennedy "the primary communications arm" of his administration. Kennedy moved the conference to the State Department's auditorium. He met the press about twice a month, for a total of sixty-five conferences in thirty-four months. His most remarkable innovation was to hold his conferences before live television. Kennedy also changed the time of the meetings, holding most of them in the late afternoon. Televising and carefully timing his conferences helped Kennedy achieve his primary goal with them, which was "to inform and impress the public more than the press."

Other aspects of Kennedy's press policies were innovative. He granted frequent exclusive interviews. He held luncheons with groups of editors and publishers. He established close personal and social

relationships with a number of reporters and he frequently held off-the-record meetings with them. "The personal approach was used in the Kennedy administration to a degree unmatched previously."217 Sensitive to the value of newspaper publicity, Kennedy read the papers voraciously. He developed the habit of issuing reprimands and plaudits to reporters for their stories, either personally or through his press secretary. According to Knebel, his administration paid "closer attention to the press than any in modern times."218

Kennedy probably prepared for his conferences more elaborately than his predecessors, although "His own extensive reading, and his participation in every level of government, was his best preparation."219 The preparation process began on Tuesdays at Press Secretary Salinger's weekly meetings with public information officers of the various executive departments. At these meetings, the press agents anticipated questions of reporters and prepared a briefing book. Kennedy then reviewed the information which had been prepared. On the morning of the day of his conference, Kennedy met with Salinger, Vice-President Johnson, Kennedy's aides, and cabinet members. In these breakfast sessions, Salinger would review the questions for Kennedy and Kennedy would decide if more information was needed on particular topics. Salinger would gather any additional data, presenting them to Kennedy about an hour before the conference began. A last minute review of the latest news and government information took place about ten minutes


219 Sorensen, p. 362.
before the conference. Kennedy never rehearsed nor did he write out or attempt to memorize answers, but he was fully prepared. Kennedy and his staff were so adept at anticipating questions that the only times when Kennedy was not prepared for a question was when the question dealt with some local affair or some minor subject area.

In the press conference, Kennedy appeared warm, frank, and witty. He was "quicker and more articulate than Eisenhower." His answers were also more direct and brief than his predecessor's.

Kennedy usually opened his conferences with some short announcements. Facing a sea of often more than 400 correspondents, he then recognized one reporter after another. He occasionally employed planted questions. The conference lasted thirty minutes. After each conference, transcripts were distributed. Kennedy returned to the White House and watched a tape of the conference, making notes and criticizing his performance.

Kennedy's press conference techniques brought criticisms. One was that correspondents used the occasion to gain publicity for themselves, to ask lengthy questions, and even give speeches. Some reporters complained about the size of the group of correspondents.


221Sorensen, p. 362.

222Salinger, pp. 182-183.


224Salinger, p. 187.

225Ibid., p. 186.

There were also complaints of favoritism in recognizing correspondents to ask questions. Others contended that the lack of privacy afforded by the conferences made the President more cautious in his replies.227

Displeasure with other aspects of Kennedy's press policies led to a series of articles charging Kennedy with "management of the news," a phrase coined by James Reston. The way that Kennedy flattered some reporters and his habits of praising and blaming writers were disliked. Suspicion arose because of Kennedy's frequent interviews with reporters and the number of "favorites" he purportedly had among the White House press corps.228 Kennedy was even accused of using the F.B.I. to seek out sources of news leaks within his administration.229 Further suspicion and criticism came about when the White House issued orders to other executive agencies on the release of information to the press. This attempt to coordinate all news was designed to avoid conflicting statements but was viewed as another form of news management or excessive control.230 So many complaints were made that in March, 1963, the House's sub-committee on Government Information undertook hearings on the administration's news policies.231

On balance, Kennedy proved to be more effective than any previous president, save Franklin Roosevelt. Kennedy made the White House the chief source of news in the nation. His many efforts to win the respect

227 Bingham and Just, p. 20.
229 Ibid., p. 201.
and favor of reporters were highly successful. J.F.K. made effective use of television to promote his personal image and gain favorable public opinion. He conducted his press conferences astutely. Despite complaints over some of his practices, Kennedy made great strides. "News management, and mismanagement, did not mar the Kennedy image for a simple reason: He was the most sophisticated shaper of public opinion in Presidential history."232

Lyndon Johnson. Johnson's press practices were a result of many factors, including habits formed while he was in the Senate and, possibly, an emulation of F.D.R.'s policies with the press.233 In the Senate, Johnson met daily with reporters and held numerous background sessions with writers.234 As Majority Leader, Johnson's relations with the press were sometimes stormy. He carefully controlled his meetings with correspondents. He was so sensitive to criticism that he castigated some reporters and was known to dismiss a reporter who proved to be unfriendly.235 Johnson's press relations as Vice-President were limited to interviews and off-the-record meetings. According to Jack Bell, Johnson

... always had on the desk before him written answers to every conceivable question, just as he had carried written statements into the Senate to read to reporters at his center aisle desk a few minutes before that body convened.236


236 Bell, pp. 139-140.
Johnson went to the White House with a determination to win press support. His policies went beyond Kennedy's in intensity. He employed almost every technique that his predecessor had used to court the press. For example, he gave 374 individual interviews with correspondents in his first fifteen months in office.237 He also met frequently with groups of writers in off-the-record encounters. "His private background sessions rarely lasted less than an hour. Three hours was not unusual. One Saturday meeting with staff and reporters went for seven hours. . . ."238

Johnson's press conferences were markedly different from Kennedy's. On Salinger's advice, Johnson undertook a program of experimentation in news conference formats.239 No other president used such a variety of press conference types. He met with small groups in his office. Johnson had conferences as he strolled around the lawn of the White House. He held conferences outdoors at his ranch in Texas. He once held a conference with reporters and their wives and children on the lawn in front of the White House. He waited until his hundredth day in office to hold a televised press conference, the type he disliked most and used least. His favorite format seemed to be the impromptu conference, which he held in his office for the thirty or forty reporters who happened to be in the White House at the time. He was unpredictable in his scheduling. In the span of a week in November, 1966, he held five press conferences.

237Kraft, p. 104.


239Salinger, pp. 413-414.
He sometimes held two in one day. In his first six months he held twenty-six news conferences, twice as many as Kennedy had in a similar period. Later, months would go by with only one or no meetings with the press. In all, he held 135 official conferences in his sixty-two months in office, for an average of two a month.

Johnson's press conferences varied in other ways. He used longer opening announcements than any of his predecessors. His answers to questions were much longer than Kennedy's. The length of his conferences ranged from ten minutes to over an hour. Johnson also tended to be more informal and "folksy" in his conferences than either Eisenhower or Kennedy.²⁴⁰

Despite his massive efforts, Johnson encountered so many difficulties with the press that they will only be summarized here. There were many criticisms of his press conference techniques. Johnson was faulted for holding surprise conferences, for failing to hold many televised conferences, and for failing to hold his conferences with regularity. Other aspects of his press relations were challenged. Whereas the Kennedy administration was known for its "news management," Johnson's was the administration of the "credibility gap." L.B.J. was accused of undue secrecy, prevarication, ambiguity, excessive control over other government agencies, and censorship. He was criticized for his obvious attempts to woo and manipulate reporters and even for spending too much time with the press. Johnson's own sensitivity to criticism led him to retaliate to such an extent that after five months his press relations had reached a point of mutual antagonism.

and distrust between the President and the press. During his five years in office these relations waxed and waned but were never exceptionally good.

Cornwell described Johnson's approach as follows:

This then is the Johnson public relations style: massive and unrelenting use of available channels to reach the public, a restless experimentation about technique, a tremendous (to the point of being dysfunctional) amount of personal Presidential involvement in the process and a determination to wring the maximum in favorable and tactically useful publicity out of a pattern of feverish and carefully contrived White House activity.241

Kennedy's chief success with the press had been to build his image and gain favorable public opinion. Johnson, on the other hand, was never able to establish a high degree of rapport with the press. Nevertheless, Johnson was able to gain considerable attention in the media for his programs, especially for his domestic legislation. Johnson's impressive legislative record may have been due, to some extent, to his ability to use the press to arouse public attention and interest.

Richard Nixon. Nixon did not enter the White House with good press relations. His problems with the press began as early as his 1960 campaign against Kennedy. "The candidate and his staff decided very early in the year that the press was their enemy. . . ."242 Nixon then saw reporters in a "hostile conspiracy" against him, and his lack of trust in reporters and in the value of good press coverage


hindered him.\textsuperscript{243} Two years later, losing the race for Governor of California, he attacked reporters with his well-known statement, "You won't have Nixon to kick around any more, because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference."\textsuperscript{244} Poor press relations and a negative image had to be overcome to win the 1968 election. One way in which Nixon overcame these difficulties was to exploit the medium of television, circumventing, to some extent, direct relations with the press.\textsuperscript{245}

As President, Nixon, like Johnson prefers direct radio and television contact with the public. Nixon has kept his policy of avoiding reporters. "President Nixon is the most aloof President of modern times, maybe in history," wrote one editorialist.\textsuperscript{246} Nixon had eight press conferences in his first year of office, four in 1970, and nine in 1971, averaging fewer than one a month. Nixon seems to prefer the live television conference and evidently makes elaborate preparations for them.\textsuperscript{247} Nixon has also done some experimentation with formats. An example is his televised interview with one correspondent, Howard K. Smith, March 22, 1971, the first of its kind.

\textsuperscript{243}Ibid., pp. 402-403; and Rivers, The Adversaries, pp. 35-42.


Nixon's press policies have been faulted on several counts. First, he has been criticized for his reluctance to see reporters. The Washington News Committee of the American Press Managing Editors Association commented that "It is obvious that the President's relations with the press are more restricted and controlled in his behalf than those of any modern-day president." Further, Nixon's policies have led to a renewal of charges of a "credibility gap" in his administration. Nixon's effectiveness in his dealings with the press remains to be seen, but there is growing evidence that he has contributed little to the development of the presidential press conference and to presidential press relations in general.

Summary. The twentieth century evolution of the press conference and of presidential press relations reveals several trends. The press conference emerged from haphazard meetings between the chief executive and reporters into institutionalization under Wilson. The first of the modern presidents were detached and cautious with correspondents. Formal categories of answers and strict rules regarding attribution gave way to more directness and openness as well as more informality in presidential dealings with the press. The passage of time also showed an increase in presidential use of the news conference as

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248 "Nixon is Blasted by APME Group," *State-Times* (Baton Rouge), Feb. 5, 1972, p. 6-A.


250 President Nixon's press philosophy was explained in a letter from Press Secretary, Ronald Ziegler, Oct. 6, 1972. Other information about Nixon's views may be found in transcripts of his presidential news conferences of December 8, 1969, December 10, 1970, and June 29, 1972, available in releases from the White House.
a means of power. More and more, presidents have learned to use the conferences to gain favorable public opinion, push legislation, and publicize their programs. Increases in the amount of presidential leadership have gone hand in hand with increased exploitation of the news conference as a means of communication and persuasion, beginning especially with Franklin Roosevelt's press conferences.

The development of the broadcast media is another trend affecting the press conference and presidential press relations. Our last three presidents have shown more interest in going to the public directly rather than through the press, although both Kennedy and Johnson evidenced a high regard for the power of the press in reaching public opinion. Televising the press conference has made the public an immediate, if not direct, participant in the event, thereby diminishing, to some extent, the importance of the press. If future presidents continue to seek direct communication with the public, bypassing adversary proceedings with the White House press corps, the institution of the presidential press conference will no longer have importance as a means of presidential communication.
CHAPTER II

JOHNSON'S USE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCE

This chapter provides detailed information on President Johnson's handling of the presidential press conference. The chapter's purpose is to present a contextual setting preceding the chapters which analyze the conferences. Included here is a brief discussion of Johnson's background before becoming President, with emphasis on his press relations as Senator and as Vice-President. Next is a section on Johnson's attitudes toward and relations with the press. A third part describes Johnson's philosophy of the presidential press conference. The last section treats Johnson's press conference practices, including preparation, timing, and other details.

Johnson's Background

A brief investigation of Johnson's background may provide some understanding of the President's press conference habits, since, as former Press Secretary George Christian wrote, Johnson "could not break habits formed in his youth" in presidential relations with the press.

Johnson became interested in speech activities in high school. As a student at the Johnson City (Texas) Consolidated High School he entered various contests in public speaking and debate. These interests grew


when he entered Southwest Texas Teachers College in 1927. Johnson was a member of the college's debate team and was apparently successful. He was reported to be especially good in refutation. Also relevant was Johnson's interest in journalism while in college. He wrote for the college's student paper, contributing many editorials and other pieces.

Johnson's interest in speech continued in his brief career as a teacher. In 1928, while still a student at Southwest Texas, Johnson taught public speaking and debate in Cotulla, Texas. After graduation, he accepted the position of debate coach at Sam Houston High School in Houston. There he taught public speaking and debate and was successful in directing extra-curricular debate.

More important than those early experiences, perhaps, were the habits that Johnson formed with the press as he rose to power in congress, especially during his years as Senator and Senate Majority Leader. Johnson's early associations with reporters were good. "As a young Congressman back in the Roosevelt days, he was remembered as one of the best, most vigorous and earthiest conversationalists of the younger thinkers who were then remaking America." White described one aspect of Johnson's image with the press as follows:

Among these men, for years Lyndon Johnson had been a folk character, the man who dominated any conversations about the Hill--at once respected, feared, admired, a huge yet often comic figure. His almost daily briefings in the Senate when he was


5 Ibid., pp. 149-158.

Majority Leader, his hunger for recognition, his salty phrases, his virtuosity in negotiation and compromise, his professional dexterity as a lawmaker had enlivened Washington conversation for decades.  

In the Senate Johnson preferred the small group approach. As Senate Majority Leader, "his press conferences were fiascoes," and he was more effective in private sessions with reporters. Johnson developed the habit of "surprise" press conferences. But Johnson did not like the press conference format in dealing with reporters. "He had little patience for the normal press conference give and take...." One of the characteristics of Johnson's relations with reporters in his press conferences was the amount of control he exerted. Aside from timing, another aspect of this control was Johnson's determination of what questions might be asked. According to Sherrill, Johnson would throw out a reporter who "veered too far off the course" with his questions.

7Tbid., p. 69.


Johnson was even more forceful in his private sessions with reporters. Stuart Alsop described one of these as follows:

By gradual stages the relaxed, friendly and reminiscent mood gave way to something rather like a human hurricane. Johnson was up, striding about his office, talking without pause, occasionally leaning over, his nose almost touching the mesmerized reporter's, to shake the reporter's shoulder or grab his knee. Secretaries were rung for. Memoranda appeared and then more memoranda, as well as letters, newspaper articles and unidentifiable scraps of paper, which were proffered in quick succession and then snatched away. Appeals were made, to the Almighty, to the shades of the departed great, to the reporter's finer instincts and better nature, while the reporter, unable to get a word in edgewise, sat collapsed upon a leather sofa, eyes glazed, mouth half open. Treatment A ended a full two hours later, when the majority leader, a friendly arm around the shoulder of the dazed journalist, ushered him into the outer office.13

Johnson was generally successful in his courting of the press while Senator, but his attempts to control reporters and his developing sensitivity to press criticism led to problems. According to Bell, "As the Senate's Democratic leader, Johnson had been known among the newsmen who covered him as a whiner."14 White described that sensitivity:

As Senate Majority Leader and as Vice-President he would grow furious at indignity or neglect to himself in print—he could denounce in ugly terms an old friend who had reported on the enormous gold cufflinks he wore with his shirts; or dress down like a top sergeant the eminent head of a broadcasting bureau who had been forced to cancel a broadcast with him.15

Johnson's sensitivity toward criticism caused him to become wary of the press. He "developed a fine contempt for reporters."16 His sessions

15 White, pp. 71-72.
16 Evans and Novak, p. 410.
with reporters were often stormy. Coincidentally, Johnson suffered a major coronary after one explosive meeting with reporters in July, 1955.\(^{17}\)

There was nothing remarkable about Johnson's press relations during his three years as Vice-President. "As Vice-President, Johnson confined his remarks largely to off-the-record and background interviews."\(^{18}\) No longer in the public eye and no longer a major force in congress, he was less of a news source than previously. The Vice-Presidency did provide Johnson an opportunity to view closely the techniques of one of the most successful presidents in dealing with correspondents. For example, Johnson was a regular participant at Kennedy's press conference preparation breakfasts.

Three other aspects of Johnson's background may have influenced his later press conference practices. The first was a possible emulation of F.D.R.'s style. An editor, who had covered the press conferences of Presidents Roosevelt through Johnson, opined that Johnson had "worshipped" Roosevelt and based almost everything on the latter's style.\(^{19}\) Discussing Johnson's press relations, Golden expressed the same idea when he wrote that "there is no closer student of how President Franklin D. Roosevelt conducted himself than Mr. Johnson."\(^{20}\) When asked if other presidents' press practices had influenced Johnson, a former press secretary under Johnson responded, "He liked FDR's press conferences

\(^{17}\text{Ibid.}, pp. 90-91. \)

\(^{18}\text{Bell, p. 139.} \)

\(^{19}\text{Interview with Sam Wood.} \)

in the Oval Office around his desk, and was most comfortable in
imitating them."

Another aspect in Johnson's background was his "contempt" for,
rather than rapport with, what has been stereotyped as the "Eastern
press." Johnson entered the presidency with "a great uncertainty
and uneasiness about the press," and was especially concerned about
his image with the Eastern press, which he felt was not favorable.

Johnson had reservations about running for president in 1964 because
of that fear. Concerning his possible election, he wrote:

I was convinced... that the metropolitan press of the
Eastern seaboard would never permit it. My experience
in office had confirmed this reaction. I was not thinking
just of the derisive articles about my style, my clothes,
my manner, my accent and my family—although I admit I
received enough of that kind of treatment in my first few
months as President to last a lifetime. I was also think­
ing of a more deep-seated and far-reaching attitude—a
disdain for the South that seems to be woven into the fabric
of Northern experience. This is a subject that deserves a
more profound exploration than I can give it here—a subject
that has never been sufficiently examined. Perhaps it all
stems from the deep-rooted bitterness engendered by civil
strife over a hundred years ago, for emotional clichés outlast all others and the Southern cliché is perhaps the
most emotional of all. Perhaps someday new understandings
will cause this bias to disappear from our national life.
I hope so, but it is with us still. To my mind, these
attitudes represent an automatic reflex, unconscious or
deliberate, on the part of opinion molders of the North
and East in the press and television.

I expressed this feeling to James Reston of The New
York Times in the spring of 1964. Scotty Reston disagreed
with me, and a few days later he asked James Rowe to per­
suade me I was wrong. Jim wrote to me expressing his belief
that as long as Reston and Walter Lippmann supported me, I
would "get a good press" from the rest of the Washing­

22 Philip Geyelin, Lyndon B. Johnson and the World (New York:
23 Bell, p. 140.
news corps, who represent newspapers all over the country. But it was not long before those two reporters ceased to support me and began their tireless assaults on me and my administration. What then happened, I could not help noting that it was hard to find many words of support anywhere in the Washington press corps or television media.24

The passage, although written after Johnson's tenure in office, reveals something of his distrust of the "established" press.25

A final factor, not unrelated to Johnson's feelings toward the Eastern press, was the new President's sensitivity to being compared with his predecessor.26 One way in which this was manifested was in Johnson's selection of a press conference format. Johnson had looked at Kennedy's news conferences with "awe and secret admiration."27 According to Moyers, "He feared . . . contrast with JFK's style and resisted televised press conferences in the State Department Auditorium, where Kennedy had been so successful."28 Since Johnson and Kennedy were so unlike in style and personality and since Kennedy had developed considerable rapport with the press, it is not surprising that Johnson wanted to avoid being compared with Kennedy.

In Johnson's background, then, were a number of factors which had some influence on his relations with the press and his news conference practices. His early interest and activities in speech and in journalism provided some knowledge and experience. Johnson's press relations


26Geyelin, p. 128.

27Bell, p. 145.

as Senate Majority Leader were marked with informality and a degree of control over meetings with reporters. Johnson also developed the habit of holding surprise conferences and small, background sessions with reporters. It was in the Senate, also, that Johnson's sensitivity to press criticism began. Finally, Johnson's distrust of the Eastern press, a possible emulation of F.D.R., and a dislike for being compared with Kennedy may have figured in his background as determinants of his presidential press policies.

Johnson's Attitudes Toward the Press

This section outlines Johnson's interest in and attitudes toward the press, including his ideas regarding publicity, his relations with individual reporters, his concept of journalism, and what he disliked about the press.

To begin, the daily workings of the press were of great interest to Johnson. "He was fascinated by the news media."²⁹ Johnson was not only interested in newspapers and television news, he was curious about the craft of both broadcast and print media. He liked to analyze content and the use of emphasis in the news media.³⁰ Johnson's reading habits also demonstrated this interest. Aside from the Congressional Record and other government documents, Johnson's reading was limited almost exclusively to newspapers and magazines.³¹ Other government officials often began their day reading the Washington Post. But, according to Christian,


³¹Geyelin, p. 34.
Johnson was already ahead of them on reading the Post. He had seen the bulldog edition at eleven o'clock last night. So he gave the city edition . . . only a cursory reading and turned to the other four papers he always rummaged through in bed—the New York Times, Baltimore Sun, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor. News stories and editorials were first, followed by the columns and the business page. The society section of the Post was always good for a few Washington gossip items and a "hard" news story or two. The sports section was ignored as too unrelated to business. Between newspaper items, he listened to network news on the push-button set the Signal Corps had devised for him. Three coordinated television sets were on at seven o'clock, each tuned to a network. The sound was on Channel 4, NBC, for a Presidential favorite, the Today Show. If something interested him on Channel 7 or Channel 9, he changed the sound by remote control.

Lyndon Johnson absorbed news and current events like a blotter. During the day he listened to as many radio newscasts as he could. And in the Oval Office the Associated Press and United Press International teletypes clacked away until he retired to the Mansion late at night. Whenever he entered his office, morning or afternoon, he walked straight to the tickers. And he monitored them regularly during the day.32

Johnson's extensive reading of papers and monitoring of news broadcasts went beyond a desire to keep current. Johnson was also highly conscious of publicity. This desire was revealed in the instructions he gave his staff. Theodore White recounts a pertinent episode which took place in 1963:

Before going off for Christmas week, he assembled the senior press officers of Defense, of State, of Justice and half a dozen other departments at the White House, kept them waiting for forty-five minutes in a small chamber, then came to give them a brisk four minute dressing down: he was going off to a reception with some important officials, and all he had to say was they better get on the ball. The White House had been on the front page with only one story that week—the lighting of the Christmas tree, and he had done that himself. He was going down to Texas now and they had to let Pierre (Salinger) have as many stories as possible so he could release them down there. Then, as a parting shot, the President added that he'd been checking the Budget and the government was spending almost a billion dollars on people like them and they better start earning it.33

32 Christian, pp. 6-7.

33 White, p. 72.
A further measure of this publicity consciousness extended to an interest in the daily affairs of his press secretary. Johnson even took the time to read the transcripts of his press secretary's press conferences, analyzing the questions that were asked. Johnson, as was mentioned, also monitored the teletypes of the wire services to see what was written about him, sometimes immediately after a meeting with reporters. On one occasion, following an announcement to the press, Alvin Spivak of United Press International dictated a story over the phone in the White House Press Room. The story was immediately being sent out over the U.P.I. wire and the following occurred:

"I reached about the fifth paragraph," Spivak recalls, "and suddenly I realized that Bill Moyers was pounding on the door of the phone booth. I stopped a minute and opened it a crack and Bill said, 'Al, the President is reading your story as it comes into his office. He feels you've given the wrong emphasis to the lead.'" Johnson's concern for good publicity led him to adopt Kennedy's practice of calling reporters to praise them and having aides call writers to complain about unfavorable stories. Pierre Salinger, who served as Kennedy's press secretary, and for a time Johnson's, put it this way:

Both Presidents Johnson and Kennedy frequently told me to call reporters to complain of unfair or inaccurate stories. With JFK I knew that in most cases it was just a passing irritation, and I wouldn't follow through. But I couldn't


get away with that with LBJ. He not only expected me to make the call but to report back to him on the conversation. 38

Johnson's views of the press and of individual reporters were mixed. According to Strout, "He is divided about the press: he affects to decry it, and reverences it; he patronizes it, and he writhe under it; he will over-react in an extraordinary way to woo some individual reporter." 39 Johnson had many battles with the press, but he seemed to enjoy reporters. 40 Not only had he "liked them," he "enjoyed the adversary relationship" that existed. He took pleasure in debating with reporters and even "relished" some of his rows with the press. 41 While Johnson may have liked many reporters, he was unlike Kennedy in that he generally eschewed personal relationships with them. 42

Johnson's attitudes toward the press are more clearly seen in his expectations of correspondents. To some extent, he expected loyalty. In an interview for Newsweek magazine Johnson was quoted as saying, "The press is one of the best servants I have." 43 As Bill Moyers wrote, "Like other Presidents he looked upon the press corps at the White House as an adjunct of the Office, a tool to help him advance his interests, almost as a member of the White House family. . . ." 44


44 Moyers, letter.
seemed to have what one correspondent called a "mutual aid concept" in dealing with reporters. He tried to make a "deal" with them early in his administration. One story illustrating this has been recounted so often that it has credibility and deserves mentioning here:

Flying back to Washington from the ranch after the holidays of his first winter as President, LBJ laid out his press doctrine to a group of astonished reporters, including such luminaries as the New York Times's Reston, who had been a ranch guest. In the course of that rambling lecture he declared that it was his desire to "make big men" out of the newsmen who covered him. He would confide in them and treat them as his friends. In return for that, he would expect them to forget certain of his indiscretions and to purposely look the other way when he was doing something that would embarrass him if it showed up in print. It was clearly implied that he wanted them to write their stories as he suggested.46

If his expectations of reporters was demanding, so was Johnson's concept of what a good journalist should be. He discussed the qualifications and requisites of a good reporter as follows:

I think that a good journalist should know American and world history as intimately as does a competent historian. He should have a substantial and specific understanding of economics and politics and foreign affairs, especially under the most recent five or six Presidents. He should be able to find the meaningful in the welter of data thrown at him—and not simply rely on someone's cynical evaluation for a sensational lead sentence.

Second, I suggest that it may be time to change the basic attitude of journalism. Too little attention is devoted to the common everyday problems that plague society and to the efforts that succeed and therefore contain lessons we need to know.47

What Johnson disliked in the press also adds to an understanding of his attitudes. Among those dislikes were criticisms of him,


especially personal criticisms, speculation, interpretations of his motives, exaggeration, and "leaks."

Johnson's reactions to mistakes by reporters led to personal calls to individual writers, as has been discussed. Even a typographical error could send the President to the phone to get a correction.  

A more volatile sensitivity was to personal criticisms of himself or his family. An incident at the L.B.J. Ranch provides an example:

A curtain of ice first descended between press and President in March, 1964, after reporters wrote that Johnson had sped at 80 or 90 miles an hour down a Texas highway in his white Lincoln Continental with a Dixie cup of Pearl beer close at hand. The President had entertained us at his ranch that day. There was precious little drinking—of beer or anything else. When the first stories appeared, he felt, with some justification, that his hospitality had been violated.

Robert Sherrill wrote that, "On no point is Johnson more sensitive than on the coverage he receives from the society writers . . . . He reads every line of what the major society writers say about him." Johnson defended his sensitivity to criticism after he left office when he wrote:

"Criticism of the errors committed by public leaders is a necessary function of a free press in a democratic society. Criticism of their character, in terms so stark that it makes them appear monsters who have imposed themselves on a helpless people, is likely to destroy any hope that they might unite and lead the nation toward the goals it must achieve for greatness."

Another of Johnson's dislikes with regard to the press was journalistic speculation and unauthorized news "leaks." If the media publicized an appointment or a policy before Johnson was ready to announce it,

48Rivers, pp. 172-173.


50Sherrill, p. 49.

51Johnson, The Choices We Face, p. 137.
he often became so irritated that he would withhold the appointment or not carry through with the policy. Johnson's policy on speculation led to what reporters called the "Oshkosh rule." In his press conference of September 22, 1966, the President explained it as follows:

The point I want to make to you—when you see on the ticker that Oshkosh says that Bob Pierpoint may be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, you don't necessarily need to give much credence to it, because the very fact that it is on there is the best indication that it is not likely to happen. The policy led to many charges of unwarranted secrecy. Johnson defended his practice of what he called "keeping his options open." By doing so he was able, as he said, "to maintain as much flexibility as a man can until the moment a decision becomes final. . . . I took no action that would automatically trap me into a decision." Another aspect of journalism disliked by Johnson was what he often cited as exaggeration. He was especially sensitive to stories on the war in Vietnam. He described reporting on the 1967 Tet offensive as "emotional and exaggerated reporting. . . . The media seemed to be in competition as to who could provide the most lurid and depressing accounts." Reporting on domestic affairs sometimes evoked the same complaint from Johnson.

55Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 96.
56Ibid., p. 384.
57Ibid., p. 442.
A final sensitivity toward the press was revealed in Johnson's attitude toward interpretative writing and broadcasting. Editorials critical of his policies bothered him. Christian explained this and Johnson's preference for factual reporting as follows:

The President had a special liking for reporters who stuck to the "what, where, when, who" philosophy taught in sophomore journalism classes. When they wrote about the "why" they were in dangerous waters, he believed. . . .

Johnson's attitude toward interpretive reporting had a sounder base than one might imagine. He felt that most of the interpretations were not calculated to help him administer the business of the nation in the manner he thought best, and he reacted. To read abrasive editorials and columns every morning of the world does not help digestion. . . . This is a negative power of the "opinion makers" as seen through the eyes of a Chief Executive.58

Johnson's attitudes toward the press can be summarized briefly at this point. Johnson was fascinated with the news media. He read newspapers and monitored news programs extensively. He had a keen interest in publicity and made attempts to get attention for his programs in the media. He liked reporters but was not personally close to them. He expected reporters to help him achieve his administrative goals. Johnson was also sensitive to the press. He was displeased with much of what he perceived, including mistakes, attacks on his personality, speculation, exaggeration, and interpretative journalism.

Johnson's Press Conference Philosophy

If by "philosophy" is meant "an organized system of beliefs," President Johnson probably did not have a formalized philosophy to shape his use of the presidential press conference.59 Nevertheless, an

58Christian, The President Steps Down, p. 188.
examination of Johnson's purposes, preferences, ideas, and attitudes toward the press conference provides a general and useful understanding.

Johnson was indeed purposive in his view. He wanted his news conferences to function for him. Bill Moyers, Johnson's second press secretary, wrote: "He approached the press conference pragmatically, trying to construct it the best way for his purpose..." 60 Another of Johnson's press secretaries, George Christian, said that Johnson wanted to use his conferences to get "his position over to the public and to the world." 61 The press conference was, then, a means of reaching public opinion, a forum for presidential persuasion. As Reston put it,

From the start of his administration, President Johnson regarded the press conference not primarily as a duty to respond to questions about his stewardship, but as an opportunity to put over his views—an old FDR device—and he quickly learned that the more he talked, the less time there was for questions... 62 Johnson occasionally used the press conference to prod congress by arousing public opinion. As he said, "When traditional methods fail, a President must be willing to bypass the Congress and take the issue to the people... sometimes a President has to put Congress' feet to the fire." 63 Johnson went on to cite an example of his use of the news conference for that purpose. 64 The President saw the conference as a means of presenting new information. He made extensive use of

60 Moyers, letter.
61 Christian, interview.
63 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 450.
64 Ibid.
announcements and opening statements to announce presidential appointments and to publicize new programs. 65

Johnson was probably less concerned for the reporters' purposes at the news conference. As was mentioned, Johnson saw the reporters in a role of serving the government. Frank van der Linden of the (Dayton, Ohio) Journal Herald commented, "Johnson uses the press merely as one more group of spear-carriers in the grand opera of his public relations build-up to the exclusion of the conference's stated purpose." 66

Another aspect of Johnson's philosophy was his preference for informality, a habit developed before he became President. His first presidential press conference was held with reporters in the Oval Office over coffee. After a few of these informal, impromptu meetings criticism arose. Responding to that criticism, Johnson, at his conference of January 25, 1964, stated:

Don't run out of here if you have any questions you want to ask. Ask them. This is not a quicky news conference. I don't know what you call a formal one. I guess I ought to wear a white tie. I came to work this morning and I didn't think it was formal. I just thought I was supposed to be here, and if you are all here, I will give you anything I know at anytime. 67

A further attitude affecting Johnson's press conference philosophy was the President's preference for direct communication with the public. Moyers, commenting on Johnson's attitude toward the press conference, wrote, "At times he seemed to think of them as ways of reaching the public at large, but in fact, he preferred the televised announcement for that

65 Bell, p. 151.

66 As quoted in Delbert McGuire, "The Performance of the Presidential Press Conference as a Medium of Communication Between the President and the Nation Through the Mass Media," Diss. Iowa 1966, p. 44.

purpose . . . with no reporters to get between him and the viewers."68
This desire for direct contact with the nation through television is
ilustrated in several ways. For example, the networks set up "a
highly expensive TV room in the White House with warm cameras manned
throughout the day . . . meeting high weekly bills for its operation."69
Johnson used the facilities to make dramatic announcements of strike
settlements, to appeal for calm during the Watts riots, to announce
U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, to announce hostilities
in the Gulf of Tonkin, and in other ways. During the period of November,
1963, through November, 1966, he pre-empted network television twenty-
eight times.70 Aware of the power of television to reach the public,
Johnson scheduled his televised messages to congress in the evenings,
to get larger audiences.71 He also used the media of radio and tele­
vision for major addresses, such as his policy statements on Vietnam.

Johnson's attitudes toward the televised news conference provides
a paradox, in light of his preference for direct communication with the
populace. Johnson once told an interviewer for Newsweek, "They are a
kind of prearranged show where some reporters get to stand up and be
on TV."72 As Moyers put it, "Usually he'd rather go to the dentist
than submit to the formal setting of a televised conference which he
felt was more the making of the press than of his own design."73

68 Moyers, letter.

69 George E. Reedy, The Twilight of the Presidency (New York:

70 Phillips, pp. 307-308.

71 Cornwell, p. 6; and Reedy, p. 155.


73 Moyers, letter.
Johnson's attitude was that the televised format did more to suit the needs of the press than his own. As was noted, Johnson did not want to be compared with Kennedy in that situation. Also, Johnson was uncomfortable in the televised situation because he was concerned about his image and did not feel that he was capable in the broadcast setting.\(^7\)

Admirers of the Kennedy format and network representatives criticized Johnson's failure to hold televised conferences and because of the pressure of that criticism Johnson finally began to hold them from time to time. After leaving office Johnson wrote:

I believe I should have held more regular televised news conferences. I was always more comfortable meeting with reporters around my desk, as President Roosevelt did, because it often gave us the opportunity to explore questions in greater depth than in a televised spectacular. Yet broadcast news conferences are an effective means of communicating with the public and should be widely used by national leaders.\(^7\)

Aside from being more comfortable, Johnson preferred the non-broadcast situation for other reasons. One was that, in the informal conference, if he made a mistake, he could recover easily. Also, he preferred to have a more natural give and take with reporters. He liked "to have newsmen a bit more irreverent" in their questions than they might be on television.\(^7\) It is somewhat ironic that despite his dislike of the televised news conference, his standing in the public opinion polls often went up after he held that type of conference.\(^7\)

\(^7\)Phillips, pp. 123-124; and Salinger, pp. 188-189.

\(^7\)Johnson, The Choices We Face, p. 138.

\(^7\)Phillips, p. 35.

Three other aspects of Johnson's personality came to bear on his attitudes toward the presidential press conference. First was Johnson's love of secrecy and surprise. Johnson had used that tactic of surprise in holding his press conferences as Senate Majority Leader. This habit helps explain Johnson's preference for impromptu press conferences as President.  

A second and related habit was Johnson's desire to be in control of his press relations. Deakin wrote, "As President, Mr. Johnson wants to announce all the news himself, at times and places of his own choosing." This urge for control extended to the handling of his news conferences. In his conference of March 20, 1965, Johnson made it clear to reporters what his position regarding his dissemination of information was, saying, "How and where I do that is a decision that I reserve for myself, and shall continue to reserve for myself." He promised the same with regard to meeting reporters: "I will continue seeing the press at different times, different places and different ways at my own choosing." The desire for control also led Johnson to disregard suggestions for improvement of his press conferences which came from his staff. One way in which Johnson exercised control over his conferences was to call them on the spur of the moment, which led to criticism. James Reston postulated that Johnson called impromptu conferences when only the White House correspondents were around in order to avoid the penetrating questions.


81 Christian, interview; and Moyers, letter.
that might be asked by specialists, thereby giving Johnson control over the content of the conferences. Johnson offered this rebuttal: "I often wished that these critics had to subject themselves to the questions of these bashful reporters. I assure you they would be singing a different tune." Critics also saw Johnson as controlling his conferences by opening them with lengthy announcements and by replying to questions with long answers, thus limiting the number of questions that might be asked.

A final influence on Johnson's press conference philosophy was his proclivity for experimentation. During his first few weeks in office Press Secretary Salinger advised Johnson to experiment until he found the format he liked best. And that he did. Johnson experimented with a number of locations for his conferences. He tried holding conferences while seated, while standing, and even walking. Almost every possible situation was explored. Johnson hired a television executive, Robert Fleming, to help with the experiments in broadcasting. A variety of innovations were attempted with the televised conferences. Johnson tried a number of lighting techniques. For a while he used contact lenses. He experimented with a teleprompter. In terms of delivery, the best of

82 James B. Reston, "The Press, the President and Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, 44 (July 1966), 563.

83 Johnson, The Choices We Face, p. 138.

84 This criticism was not without justification. One study showed that the average number of questions at Johnson's conferences was 16.8, while Eisenhower averaged 22.5 and Kennedy, 27.9; see McGuire, pp. 58-70.

85 Salinger, pp. 413-414.

Johnson's press conferences came as a result of an experiment. In that conference, Johnson freed himself from the lectern and used a lavalier microphone. As Reed described it, Johnson stepped out from behind the podium and walked up and down in front of the camera like a revival preacher. He waved his arms, chopped the air, drew imaginary lines with his fingers, clutched his glasses, scowled, laughed, and ran his voice through a range of sound from high-volume to quiet, self-deprecating greatness. Beyond theatrics, he enlivened the content of the news conference with historical comparisons, scriptural quotations, jokes and a bit of sarcasm.

But this was only an experiment. He never did it again for television. Further, he thought that the favorable reaction he got for the performance was "silly."88

Several points have been made in this section regarding Johnson's presidential press conference philosophy. His approach was pragmatic. His purposes were to inform and to persuade the public, congress, and the world. His preferences for informality and for direct communication with the public shaped his philosophy. His habits of secrecy, surprise, his desire for control, and his urge to experiment also affected that philosophy, or rationale behind his press conferences as President.

Johnson's Press Conference Practices

Perhaps Johnson's philosophy toward the press conference is best revealed in his actual news conference policies and practices, as described in this section. The following discussion treats the types of conferences and his strategies in timing his conferences. Also discussed are


88 Christian, interview. According to Christian, the suggestion for Johnson's getting away from the lectern came from Senator John Pastore.
the scheduling, locations, and other details of the President's meetings with correspondents.

Types of Conferences

Johnson used several types of meetings with reporters, including background and off-the-record sessions; official news conferences, both formal and informal, scheduled and impromptu, filmed, broadcast "live," and not broadcast; private interviews and televised interviews. Johnson held a lot of meetings with writers, was fond of counting them and was sensitive to criticisms of being inaccessible to reporters. In his conference of March 20, 1965, Johnson reminded reporters:

Today marks the 39th on-the-record press conference that I have held, 18 off-the-record, or a total of 57. I have had 18 press conferences with advance notice, 16 covered by radio and television. Eight of these were live television in addition to 3 live television joint sessions in the little over a year that I have been President.

There have been other occasions upon which I have seen the White House press corps on an informal basis in order to give them some insight into my thinking. In addition to these 56 formal meetings I have had 9 informal, lengthy walks with the White House press corps. Some of you who used to enjoy those walks when they were scheduled a little earlier with President Truman and from time to time those of you who enjoy them will be invited back again.

On various occasions I have had conferences with pools representing the White House press. We have had 173 airplane flights with pools where they visited—two pool visits while I was in the hospital with a bad cold, and one pool visit in my bedroom in the Executive Mansion when I thought I was recuperating from it.

I have had additional visits from 374 accredited press representatives at their request; in addition, 64 who requested meetings with bureau chiefs, plus 200 telephone discussions that I have responded to.

There have been 9 other occasions where I have met with the press ranging from a barbeque at the Ranch to addresses made to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Associated Press luncheon, and of course last year each one of the social affairs, White House press conference and gridiron, etc., I believe numbered 8.
I have had 9 special appearances ranging from a television interview with all 3 networks to special statements concerning Vietnam and the railroad strike. 89

Perhaps the most frequently used type of meeting was the off-the-record conference and background briefing session held for individuals and groups of reporters. According to Strout, the reason that Johnson liked this type of meeting was that Johnson's "ideal is a private audience with selected reporters where he can talk and they can listen and nobody asks too many unexpected questions." 90 At least one correspondent, Arthur Krock, found the off-the-record sessions productive, even more so than official press conferences. 91

According to George Christian, the off-the-record sessions were held almost every day, and they often lasted two or three hours. 92 Although no agenda was used, the sessions were often arranged in advance. When they were scheduled, Christian made a list of seven or eight correspondents who were compatible with one another and then made invitations. In those meetings there was a good "give and take" between the reporters and the President, and Johnson was "at his best." 93 The four categories of attribution employed by F.D.R. were followed. Johnson sometimes used the meetings to "leak" information. He also occasionally practiced the "trial balloon" device. Usually, no recordings or stenographic records were kept of the meetings, although a press aide was always present to

90 Strout, p. 9.
93 Ibid.
take notes on the proceedings. According to Christian, this type of meeting was helpful to both the press and the President.94

Another type of meeting with the press was the television interview with a small group of reporters. For example, William Lawrence, Eric Sevaried, and David Brinkley interviewed the President in March of 1964.

The third general type of meeting with the press was the official, or on-the-record press conference. There were 135 of these. According to Johnson, over fifty of these were televised, either by video tape or live.95 Most of the official conferences were impromptu and informal as opposed to scheduled in advance and formal. Johnson once held a "double header," in which a non-televised meeting was followed by a televised conference on the three most important topics (as selected by reporters) of the first one.96

Preparation for Press Conferences

Like Kennedy, Johnson's best preparation for a conference lay in his daily work and his extensive reading.97 Johnson reported that he read 10 or 15 newspapers daily.98 Johnson also read the Congressional Record daily, as well as volumes of other government memoranda and documents.99

94 Ibid.
95 Johnson, The Choices We Face, p. 137.
President Johnson made no preparation for his impromptu conferences, some preparation for his formal ones, and even more careful preparation for his broadcast conferences.\textsuperscript{100}

The formal preparation process began two days in advance of the conference. Notice was given to the various executive offices and cabinet agencies, which prepared lists of anticipated questions and briefing books of information to answer the questions. Next, the President's press secretary and staff digested and filtered the briefing books and added other anticipated questions and background information. A press aide prepared a notebook of the digested and refined materials for Johnson to read the night before the conference. Eisenhower and Kennedy's habit of holding breakfast sessions with staff and cabinet members was not a general practice during the Johnson administration. Johnson occasionally held a pre-conference briefing session, especially in the earlier years of his administration. Later, this practice tapered off. "In critical times he might call a special meeting of his foreign policy advisers in advance of the conference to discuss his handling of key issues."\textsuperscript{101} Johnson sometimes got advisers such as Rostow and Rusk to prepare answers. He also sometimes used prepared, written replies on "delicate" subjects to avoid error and to make sure that his statements conformed to previous positions as stated by the administration. Johnson frequently took notes with him to his formal conferences. He did not rehearse his answers.

\textsuperscript{100}This and the following information is based upon the two interviews with Christian and the letter from Moyers; both sources were presidential press secretaries and participated directly in the preparation process.

\textsuperscript{101}Christian, \textit{The President Steps Down}, p. 199.
Johnson tended to prepare more carefully for his broadcast conferences because he felt the public would notice if he was caught off guard. He was very well prepared on the matters he felt most important or on topics he wanted to emphasize during the conference.

Johnson's preparation for his formal conferences was more extensive in the earlier part of his administration than later. He gradually did less reading of the briefing books and sometimes just flipped through them or did not look at them at all. Also, he gradually discontinued seeing advisers before the conferences. As Moyers put it, "That practice disappeared as time went on, partly because I think the President thought he knew more than we did and partly because the President did in fact know more than we did. There is no better preparation for the Presidential press conference than the President at work." 102

In any event, the preparation was successful, at least in anticipating reporters' questions. Seldom was a question asked that had not already been guessed by Johnson or his staff prior to the conference. 103

Press Conference Timing

Johnson was so unpredictable in the scheduling of his presidential press conferences that it could easily be said that his personal whim was the principal deciding factor. Indeed, being unpredictable may have been a strategy in itself since Johnson had a predilection for the tactic of surprise. But closer examination reveals other strategies. An examination of the timing of Johnson's conferences shows five other...

102 Moyers, letter.

chief determinants. Johnson was strategic in timing his conferences (1) to make important announcements, (2) to make immediate refutation to criticisms of his administration, (3) to promote pending legislation and to reach other objects of his persuasion, (4) to gain personal publicity and political advantage, and (5) to provide explanations to reporters on current technical matters.

The first strategy in timing was to make important announcements. It was not infrequent for Johnson to begin a press conference, especially a formal one, with the announcement of appointments and changes in personnel in the cabinet, the military and on the Supreme Court. For example, in his conference of April 10, 1968, Johnson announced the resignation of Larry O'Brien as Postmaster General and the appointment of Marvin Watson as successor, the appointment of two new presidential aides, the appointment of a new Commander in Chief of the Pacific, the appointment of General Abrams to succeed Westmoreland as Commander of forces in Vietnam, the appointment of a successor to Abrams as well as the announcement of the passage of the President's civil rights bill. In his conference of June 26, 1968, the President announced the resignation of Chief Justice Earl Warren, the nomination of Abe Fortas to succeed Warren, and the nomination of Homer Thornberry to the Supreme Court. Announcements were also made to disclose new plans and developments. In a conference on August 3, 1967, Johnson announced a new tax package and a build up of troops in Vietnam. Other examples abound.

Another strategy of timing was to use the press conference for refutation. For example, on November 16 of 1967, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed a series of resolutions on curtailing the Vietnam war and urging the President to act in halting the war. The following day Johnson held a conference in which he attacked critics

A further reason for scheduling conferences was to push congressional legislation which was deadlocked and to reach other objects of persuasion. On February 2, 1967, Johnson used a conference to urge the Senate to approve a treaty with the U.S.S.R. In November of 1967, Johnson went to a press conference to press congress to act on pending tax legislation. On September 1 of the same year the President criticized the steel industry for recent price increases. Also, the same day (July 1, 1968) that Bethlehem Steel announced price hikes, the President opened a news conference with a lengthy criticism of Bethlehem's actions. In March of 1965, a civil rights protest and march was held in Selma, Alabama. Two days after the death of one of the demonstrators, Johnson called a conference to urge Governor Wallace to act in protecting the marchers (despite the fact that he had met with Wallace personally that same morning, before the news conference).

A fourth strategy in timing the conferences was to gain personal and political advantage and attention. During the campaign of 1964, this was done. After a formal press conference in September of that year, Johnson called reporters back in to point out the results of a primary election in Arizona. Johnson held press conferences both before and after his nomination by the Democratic Party on August 26, 1964. Johnson sometimes competed for attention by holding conferences at the same time that others were. On June 17, 1965, Johnson held an impromptu conference lasting almost an hour and a half in his office at the same time that
Senator Goldwater was holding a news conference. Johnson used the same tactic in 1965, when Charles deGaulle was holding one of his highly infrequent meetings with the press, and "many correspondents decided that deGaulle had been undercut." Johnson held news conferences on March 12, 1966, three different times to publicize results of a Governor’s Conference which included a resolution supporting Johnson’s policies in Vietnam. Finally, Johnson used his November 3, 1966, conference to gain personal attention by announcing that he would soon have surgery.

The final strategy in timing was to hold news conferences in order to explain crucial technical matters. This was a regular practice of Franklin Roosevelt. For example, on August 3, 1967, the President sent a special message to congress on the budget. At the same time he held a press conference and explained in detail various aspects of the tax message, using a blackboard. A similar situation led to a news conference on March 9, 1967, the same day that another special message was sent to congress.

Before concluding this section it is important to point out that Johnson often failed to hold conferences at strategic times. Sometimes he made nationwide television announcements instead. At other times, he simply avoided public statements. For example, between February 1 and February 29 of 1964, no conferences were held. During that period Cuba cut off the water supply to the naval base at Guantánamo, a major civil rights bill was in congress, problems had developed on the island of Cyprus and the Kashmir question was before the United Nations. In 1967, the President did not hold a conference between March 21 and May 5, a period of over six weeks. During those weeks U.N. Secretary-General

104 Rivers, p. 172.
U Thant made two peace proposals to the United States, the United States was carrying on extensive bombing raids in North Vietnam, and a coup d'état took place in Greece, among other events. On many other occasions Johnson neglected to hold a press conference when it might have been to his advantage and to the advantage of reporters as well as the public.

Other Details of Johnson's Press Conferences

To round out the present consideration of Johnson's press conference practices attention is given in this section to such matters as the scheduling and locations of the conferences as well as other details.

Johnson was prone to schedule his conferences to suit his own convenience. During his first year, the Saturday conference, held about noon, was most common. Johnson rarely held news conferences in the morning or late in the evening. About half of his conferences were held within an hour or two of noon. The other favorite time was the late afternoon, around five p.m. Johnson's favorite days were Saturday, Thursday, and Friday, in that order. The televised conferences were usually at noon or in the afternoon, on various days of the week.

Locations varied considerably, although Johnson preferred his own office in the White House. Other locations at the White House included the Fish Room, the Theatre, the East Room (for televised conferences), the Cabinet Room, the Press Office, the Blue Room, the Rose Garden, and the South Lawn. On occasion Johnson used the State Department's auditorium. Thirty official press conferences took place outside Washington. Many of these were held at the L.B.J. Ranch in Johnson City and in other locations in Texas. Johnson's travels provided other locations, including the New York World's Fair, St. Louis, Missouri, and Guam.
Johnson was fairly frequent, if not regular, in meeting the press. From November 22 until the end of 1963, he had three conferences. He held thirty-two in 1964, seventeen in 1965, forty-one in 1966, twenty-two in 1967, nineteen in 1968, and one in January of 1969, his last month as President. Johnson's average was two conferences per month.

Attendance at the conferences varied. At the impromptu conferences twenty to forty reporters were present. At the televised conferences, over 400 sometimes appeared.

Johnson sometimes used planted questions in his press conferences, as had other presidents, to insure that certain topics received attention.\textsuperscript{105}

Johnson occasionally spoke off the record at his official conferences, but not often.\textsuperscript{106}

After the end of each news conference, usually within an hour, transcripts were provided by the White House Press Office. Editing was almost always limited to changes in grammar or syntax, when there was editing of the transcripts. On a few occasions vocabulary was edited. Substantive changes were extremely rare and were limited to such matters as mistaken statistics.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105} Phillips, pp. 38-39.

\textsuperscript{106} Moyers, letter.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTENT OF JOHNSON'S PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCES

This chapter reports the findings of an analysis of the content of Johnson's press conferences. The guiding factors of the press conferences' content were, first, Johnson's opening statements, or "voluntaries," and, second, the questions which reporters put to Johnson. Other characteristics of the content of the conferences such as timing, frequency, and length, are described in the next chapter. This chapter, then, is made up of two major sections beginning with a treatment of Johnson's use of the voluntary.

Johnson's Opening Statements

Since the President made extensive use of opening statements in his news conferences, the voluntaries have been studied in detail in terms of the topics and themes developed. Primary attention is given to the subject matter of the opening statements and the frequency with which the various topics occurred.

Johnson began almost all of his conferences with various announcements and statements. Each conference has been studied to determine the themes and topics, explicit and implicit, in the voluntaries. In analyzing the conference, five main categories of subject matter emerge: (1) executive matters, (2) domestic issues, (3) foreign affairs, (4) personal concerns, and (5) miscellaneous items. Under the first three areas, subtopics have been analyzed. While the system of categorizing the themes and topics is arbitrary, it provides useful insights
for the purposes of this study. A similar method is used to examine the questions reporters asked of the President.

**Executive Matters**

President Johnson used opening statements at his press conferences to report and promote the activities of the Presidency more than for any other purpose. Voluntaries on executive affairs were of three types. First were announcements regarding presidential appointments and other staff changes directly related to the executive branch of government. Second, Johnson often gave details of his executive plans, activities, and decisions. Third, Johnson made statements regarding the nature of briefings and meetings which had recently been concluded.

More than half of Johnson's voluntaries on executive affairs dealt with presidential appointments and changes in personnel. To some extent, the press conference was Johnson's favorite format for announcing those new appointments and resignations which are under direct presidential control. Included were the White House, the Cabinet, the Supreme Court, the military, and others. Over two hundred, or almost a third of all of Johnson's opening statements, were of this nature. Some examples follow.

In his conference of March 28, 1964, Johnson announced a number of appointments, including an ambassadorship, an appointment to the Atomic Energy Commission, an appointment to the Export-Import Bank, three appointments to a study commission on Puerto Rico, a new Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, and others.

In his first conference of 1965, Johnson announced fourteen changes in the White House staff, including a new press secretary and other important presidential assistantships.

During one of his longer official press conferences, on June 18, 1966, the voluntaries took up almost half of the conference's time. Johnson announced eleven resignations, appointments, and nominations. Among the persons discussed were Ellsworth Bunker, Nicholas Johnson, Richard Helms, and John Connally.

Press conference voluntaries also involved announcements such as the appointment of Sargent Shriver as Ambassador to France, Wilbur Cohen as H.E.W. Secretary, General William Westmoreland as Chief of Staff of the Army, Arthur Goldberg's resignation as Ambassador to the United Nations, Chief Justice Earl Warren's resignation, and others.

A second type of opening statement related to executive affairs embraced presidential plans, activities, and decisions. Voluntaries of this type were used more frequently in Johnson's first year of office than in any other.

From time to time Johnson used his introductory remarks to give details of his activities prior to the press conference. Among these were meetings and briefings, receptions for dignitaries, telephone conversations, and other daily business such as the preparation of major addresses to congress.

Johnson also announced immediate and long range plans. Occasionally the President used the news conference to announce his travel plans. For example, in the October 13, 1966, conference he gave details of his itinerary for a trip to several Asian countries as well as his intent to attend the Manila Conference. During the fall, 1964, election campaign...
he advised reporters of his travel plans a week or two in advance, at
times. Johnson also used the conference format to announce White
House schedules of meetings with individuals and with groups such as
delегations of congressmen.

Aside from plans and activities, the President sometimes announced
other important decisions, although he usually preferred going directly
to the public. Among such executive decisions was his New Year’s Day,
1968, voluntary describing an Executive Order to ameliorate the balance
of payments problem. In a televised conference on March 20, 1965,
Johnson read a telegram which he had sent to Governor George Wallace
of Alabama, thereby announcing the President’s decision to provide
federal military assistance to protect civil rights marchers between
Selma and Montgomery, Alabama. On a few occasions Johnson used his
opening remarks to present awards, such as military citations.

The third subcategory of opening statements related to the executive
affairs included remarks made by Johnson and other press conference guests
after meetings with the President. This type of voluntary gained in
frequency of use during the last three years of Johnson’s administration.

Now and then Johnson met with reporters for a briefing after cabi­
net meetings. For example, in his conference of September 22, 1966,
Johnson took over half of the news conference time with a lengthy review
of items discussed in that morning’s cabinet meeting. On that and other
occasions, Johnson sometimes deferred detailed questions regarding the
cabinet meeting to his assistants or to others present at the cabinet
session. Usually Johnson’s remarks to the press after such meetings were
in the nature of a summary.

Johnson also met with reporters after meetings with individual
cabinet members and other advisors. The President utilized that
technique in his fifth official press conference, January 25, 1964. On that occasion, two-thirds of the conference was spent by Johnson's opening statements, many of which described his meetings with the Secretary of Defense and with other administrative officials.

Other voluntaries were used from time to time after meetings with economic and military advisors, ambassadors, special counsels, individual members of congress, and White House aides.

A more commonly used voluntary of the post-meeting variety consisted of Johnson's having an individual or two hold a joint press conference with him in order to allow participants in the meeting to give their views and to answer queries of reporters. An interesting illustration of this followed a presidential briefing by Ambassador Averell Harriman, who had just returned from a tour of Asian and European countries following the Manila Conference (October, 1966). In Johnson's November 11, 1966, news conference Harriman reviewed his trip for reporters and replied to five of the twelve questions asked during the official press conference.

Following the Guam Conference in March, 1967, Johnson used voluntaries to summarize the meeting in his press conference of March 21. After a few questions, the President's press conference ended, and Ambassadors Lodge and Bunker met with reporters. Later in that year, on July 13, Johnson, McNamara, Westmoreland, and Wheeler held a joint press conference to discuss their meetings with each other. All four participants made statements and answered questions. A final example is the May 30, 1968, televised news conference, in which opening statements by Johnson, Prime Minister Gorton (Australia), and Westmoreland took half of the press conference's allotted time.
The last type of post meeting voluntary discussed here was that which followed Johnson's meetings with various governors and conferences of governors. On March 12, 1966, L.B.J. held three impromptu, official press conferences in less than five hours, following sessions at the National Governors' Conference in Washington, D.C. Johnson and various governors made announcements of the results of the sessions and answered questions. The President exercised this kind of voluntary, or joint voluntaries, on other occasions.

Topics for opening statements regarding executive concerns were generated by three general factors. First were appointments, resignations and other staff changes under Presidential control. Second, the activities, plans, and executive decisions of the President led to various announcements and statements. Third, Johnson's meetings with leaders in governments provided topics for many of Johnson's news conference voluntaries.

Domestic Issues

The second most common type of opening statement in Johnson's press conferences dealt with the domestic affairs of the United States. Statements on the economy, on legislation, and congressional activity, and on related issues appeared.

Almost a third of Johnson's opening statements pertained to domestic affairs. As might be expected, voluntaries of this kind were most frequent during the first year of his presidency. After 1964, Johnson displayed a tendency to use statements on internal matters of the United States less frequently. That tendency also corresponded with Johnson's decreasing use of voluntaries as a whole after his first year as president.
Opening statements related to the economy occurred. Announcements on matters such as the budget and employment were analyzed as well. About a tenth of all of Johnson's voluntaries brought up domestic economic matters.

During his first two years in office, it was common for the President to begin a news conference with a discussion of the state of the economy. During this period, the theme was almost always that of frugality in government and a healthy situation in general. The development was reassuring and positive. Johnson's second, third, and fourth televised press conferences contained topics of an economic nature. In the conference of March 7, 1964, for example, the President discussed public favor towards a tax cut, new figures on unemployment, increasing business activity, and various price indices. On April 16 of that year he reported on the gross national product, increases in personal income figures, labor statistics, and prices. Then, on May 6, Johnson addressed the nation and an immediate audience of reporters, and wives and children of reporters, gathered on the South Lawn of the White House. In that news conference Johnson presented information on the gross national product again, on "higher productivity," on "taxes," on "price stability," on "business corporate profits," and on other economic factors.

The pep talks on the domestic economy were not limited to the televised press conferences. For instance, in an impromptu news conference, July 10, 1964, following passage of "all" of the 1965 appropriations bills by the House, Johnson discussed the budget and "glowing reports on our recent economic advances in employment, sales, profits, and income," to use his words. That conference was one of the best examples of Johnson's use of the voluntary on the economy theme. However, after the first part
of 1966, the transcripts indicate that L.B.J. rarely introduced the theme in an opening statement at his official meetings with correspondents, whether broadcast or not.

As mentioned above, topics related to the theme of the domestic economy included employment and unemployment, the national budget, taxes, wages, prices, the Gross National Product, corporate profits and spending, general business activity, and frugality in the monetary affairs of the federal government. In sum, over a third of Johnson's voluntaries on domestic affairs, and roughly ten percent of all of his official press conference voluntaries, treated domestic economic matters.

A second area of interest among domestic affairs touched upon congressional activities and legislation. About one in ten of L.B.J.'s voluntaries were of this kind. Johnson used this theme more in 1964 and in 1967 than in other years. He used the theme in about a fourth of his official press conferences, all told. Among the topics along these lines were the President's messages to congress, vetoes, specific pieces of legislation and treaties.

On January 7, 1964, the second session of the Eighty-eighth Congress was convened. The State of the Union address came the next day. Prior to that, Johnson held at least two unofficial press briefings. Later, on January 25, he had an impromptu press conference in which about two-thirds of the time allocated was devoted to opening statements and announcements. Among those were statements on various bills in progress, bills passed and signed since he had taken office, and praise for congressional action on legislation of interest to the White House. At the time, a major tax bill was pending, as were bills on education, civil rights, and others.
Johnson continued to promote legislation in his press conferences that year. For example, at the June 2, news conference, held in his White House office, Johnson talked to reporters about the morning's meeting with legislative whips. He discussed the recent income tax reduction and pending fiscal bills.

On his fifty-fourth birthday, August 27, 1966, L.B.J. reviewed various acts in his "Great Society Program." He also commented upon congressional efforts in behalf of his legislation, mentioning specific bills and specific congressional leaders responsible for the "bipartisan support" behind his legislative achievements. Later that year, in a televised news conference on October 13, Johnson used a voluntary to praise and blame Republicans of the Eighty-ninth Congress for various bills, including social security and medicare. He ended the voluntary session of the news conference by saying, "The 89th Congress, my prediction is, historians will record as the great Congress."

Domestic issues other than the economy and legislation came up in voluntaries. The topics here were mostly related to specific, current events in the United States. Among voluntaries of this type were those related to the military, to the space program, to strikes, to domestic violence and disasters, and to the draft. Fewer than ten per cent of all of Johnson's opening statements had to do with these current affairs. Further, the President tended to talk less and less about such topics in press conference voluntaries as his term in office progressed.

A few examples of topics on current affairs were noteworthy. In February and March of 1965, for instance, the President employed voluntaries in two televised news conferences to discuss the voter registration drive in Alabama and, particularly, the racial violence in Selma
at the time. In Johnson's tenth, and one hundred and tenth official
news conferences, he used voluntaries to express himself on the 1964
Alaskan earthquake, in the former, and the effects of "Hurricane
Beulah" on Texas and Mexico, in the latter (September, 1967). Johnson
used his July 10, 1964, press conference to urge settlement of disputes
in the auto industry which had led to strikes. In June of 1968, Bethlehem
Steel announced a five percent price increase. A few hours after the
announcement, Johnson held an impromptu meeting with White House corres­
pondents and reacted to Bethlehem's decision, in his first opening state­
ment.

In summary, Johnson used approximately two hundred announcements
and opening statements in his news conferences to discuss various
domestic affairs. He spoke on the economy, employment, taxes, and the
national budget. He spoke on congressional affairs with attention to
the specific proposals and the general programs of his administration.
Finally, from time to time he spoke on various current topics of impor­
tance in the United States.

Foreign Affairs

President Johnson also employed opening statements and announce­
ments to comment on foreign affairs. However, on the whole only about
one in ten of his press conference voluntaries considered topics of this
nature. In the conferences from the beginning of his office until the
end of 1966, Johnson was more frequent in his use of the theme. In his
last two years as President, he introduced the theme only in a half-dozen
official meetings with reporters.

Indochina was one concern. Statements about Vietnam had topics on
troop increases, military efforts, peace negotiations and other attempts
to settle the war, and conferences on Southeast Asia. Topics on Vietnam appeared in fewer than a third of Johnson's news conferences, although some of the announcements on the theme were probably significant. Sometimes voluntaries on Vietnam were dramatic.

One of Johnson's first lengthy voluntaries on Vietnam came in his June 2, 1964, press conference. On that occasion Johnson presented a summary of U.S. policies in Vietnam which he had just reviewed in a session with his legislative leaders. Included in the statement was a letter from President Eisenhower to President Diem, dated October 25, 1954, which supplied ideas for Johnson's development. Johnson went on to mention the purpose of United States' involvement in Vietnam ("... to help build a stable peace.")", to praise the military for its efforts, to note the need for economic assistance programs, and to describe the agenda for the Honolulu conference on Southeast Asia then in progress.

At the President's next press conference, June 23, Johnson announced Henry Cabot Lodge's resignation as Ambassador to Vietnam, and the nomination of General Maxwell Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson to succeed Lodge. L.B.J. went on to repeat points he had made in his June 2 conference. In the June 23 meeting the President discussed Viet Cong activities in Laos.

In a televised conference, March 20, 1965, six months after his Johns Hopkins speech on Vietnam, Johnson devoted a portion of his opening statement to the topic of the government's position on Southeast Asia. On June 1 of that year the President used a televised press conference voluntary to announce a request to the Congress for an eighty-nine million dollar appropriation bill for economic aid to Southeast Asia.
The June 18, 1966, broadcast conference contained a long voluntary on Vietnam. Johnson presented a six months' review of policies, military efforts, and internal affairs. He emphasized the necessity of "... honor for all in making peace," and said, "Let the killing stop," in reply to critics of his policies. The tone of the voluntary suggested hope and a possibility of a peaceful end to the war. Johnson continued those lines of thought in his next conference, also televised, on July 5, 1966. There he developed the topic of social and economic progress in Vietnam, based on a recent report to him by Robert Komer, (Johnson's aide in charge of social and economic development in Vietnam). On November 5, of that year, Johnson used the press conference format to permit Secretary McNamara to brief reporters at the L.B.J. Ranch on military affairs in Vietnam. McNamara expressed a belief that there would be less U.S. military activity and that spending would not be increased in the future. The statement was lengthy and continued the theme of optimism, or hope.

Johnson's final important press conference announcement on Vietnam was May 3, 1968. The conference was broadcast "live," over radio and television. The President announced that, "I was informed about 1 o'clock this morning that Hanoi was prepared to meet in Paris on May 10th, or several days thereafter." That announcement followed Johnson's March 31 address to the nation in which he proposed plans to end the war, including some cessation of bombing. Johnson also announced his intention not to run for re-election in the March 31 address.

Aside from the topics on Vietnam numerous voluntaries on a variety of other foreign affairs, especially those of direct involvement by the United States appeared. From time to time Johnson used the press conference
voluntary to describe such matters as American relations with Panama, intervention in the Dominican Republic, relations with the U.S.S.R., developments in the Middle East, the test ban treaty's progress, foreign aid, and other matters of foreign diplomacy. These topics, as was the case with Vietnam, accounted for less than ten per cent of press conference voluntaries. Further, Johnson was found to be more infrequent in his initiation of topics on foreign affairs after his first year in office.

However, several of Johnson's announcements and statements of this nature were of importance. A few examples have been selected for presentation here.

Difficulties in U.S. relations with the Canal Zone and with Panama evolved early in Johnson's administration. Johnson first introduced the problem at a press conference on January 23, 1964, following Panama's January 10 break in diplomatic relations with the United States. In press conferences held March 23 and May 15, L.B.J. continued to review the situation for reporters and the nation. Later in the year, peaceful negotiations were developed.

At a televised press conference on Tuesday, April 27, 1965, Johnson made a brief statement on civil strife in the Dominican Republic. He announced the evacuation of American citizens from the danger in the area that day. On Wednesday, the President announced to the nation the intervention of United States troops in the Dominican Republic. Four days later, May 2, Johnson devoted a televised address to the nation justifying the military involvement and recounting the events which led to it. The topic came up in other speeches of the President in May. On June 1, Johnson held his first press conference
since his announcement of intervention in the Dominican Republic. Johnson used the June 1 televised conference to announce, publicly, withdrawal of U.S. troops. The topic of American involvement in the affairs of the Dominican Republic was found in press conference voluntaries in broadcast conferences in June and July, 1966. On July 5, 1966, Johnson reported to the press that the situation was improved and promising.

In 1967, other press conferences provided the President an opportunity to bring up international affairs. For instance on March 2, the President told reporters of an exchange of letters with Chairman Aleksei Kosygin which indicated progress in arms limitations. On September 1 of that year Johnson announced his authorisation to provide increased wheat shipments as aid to India.

During his last year in office, the President eschewed voluntaries on foreign affairs, save three on matters related to Vietnam.

Personal Concerns

Only on occasion did the President employ the official press conference to initiate matters related to his private life. Such voluntaries accounted for only a handful of all of his opening statements and were more frequent during his first year of office than in any other. Topics related to the area of personal affairs embraced Johnson's health, personal finances, travel and recreation, politics, and family. A few specific instances are noted here.

On November 3, 1966, an entire news conference was devoted to the subject of an announcement by the President that he would have abdominal surgery. The President announced more specific details at a press conference later in the month, November 13. At his fourth official meeting with reporters, January 23, 1964, Johnson responded to recent
news stories on his personal and family financial holdings. He also discussed the fact that, "The [Bobby] Baker family gave us a stereo set," a number of years before Johnson became President. In the first official press conference after the 1964 Democratic National Convention, L.B.J. announced the forthcoming publication of his book, *My Hope For America*. In his August 26, 1965, conference Johnson briefed reporters on his birthday plans of the morrow. In the next to the last of his official press conferences Johnson outlined his Christmas plans as well as his personal projects following the end of his tenure as President.

**Miscellaneous Topics**

Opening statements with topics of a miscellaneous nature accounted for only about five per cent of all of the news conference voluntaries. These topics included those derived from announcements regarding the press and press conference policies, partisan political matters, ceremonial statements, and certain statements made by guests at some of Johnson's conferences. Examples of such opening statements follow.

On July 24, 1964, the President welcomed visiting correspondents from South America to his news conference. Johnson's last press conference, January 17, 1969, contained a humorous opening statement for reporters assembled at the National Press Club in Washington. On occasions, especially during his first two years in office, Johnson would comment upon his press relations and policies. The outstanding example of this was his March 20, 1965, statement on his press relations, discussed in chapter two of this work. An unusual example of Johnson's use of the voluntary on a political topic was found in the August 15, 1964, news conference. At that time Johnson responded to statements made by Senator Goldwater, Republican candidate for the
presidency, on the subject of the use of nuclear weapons by the U.S. Finally, opening statements by guests at Johnson's press conferences provided news conference topics. For example, on December 6, 1965, Joseph Swindler, Chairman of the Federal Power Commission; Secretary of the Treasury Fowler; William Martin, Jr., of the Federal Reserve Board; and Gardner Ackley, of the Council of Economic Advisers, made statements to the press and were queried.

The first half of this chapter may be summarized at this point. Johnson's opening statements and announcements in official press conferences played a significant role as a determinant of the content of the conferences. The President often began a news conference with one or more voluntaries. The extent to which voluntaries were used in press conferences paralleled the number of press conferences Johnson held each year. However, after his first year in office, L.B.J. displayed less frequency in his use of that device.

The topics initiated by Johnson in the voluntaries were of five kinds. First were statements regarding executive matters, including Presidential appointments, personnel changes within the President's control; Presidential plans, activities and decisions; and statements following briefings and other meetings with White House aides, cabinet members, congressional leaders, governors, and others. Second, many voluntaries concerned the domestic issues in the United States. Included were topics related to the national economy, current legislation and the congressional affairs, and current events in the country. Third, Johnson used voluntaries to discuss foreign affairs. Vietnam and the war in Southeast Asia provided topics on a number of occasions. American relations with other countries such as the U.S.S.R. and Latin
America also figured in some of the opening statements and announcements. Fourth, only a few voluntaries which treated the President's personal (or private) and family concerns emerged in the analysis. Fifth, several opening statements of a miscellaneous nature emerged from time to time.

The Content Of The Questions

The second chief determinant of the content of the press conferences was the reporter's question. An average of sixteen or seventeen questions was asked at each Johnson conference.

This study analyzes all of the questions in terms of content to discover major topic areas and to discern specific subtopic categories. The system of studying the questions has been similar to the classification system used to study the voluntaries. Findings of the analysis of the questions are reported here under the four main topic areas which emerged: (1) the presidency, (2) domestic issues, (3) foreign affairs, and (4) miscellaneous. The following discussion treats each of the four topic areas and reports on important subtopics in each. In the next chapter, other characteristics and qualities of the questions receive attention.

The Presidency

More than a fourth of the questions put to Johnson by correspondents had to do with the President's public and private concerns. While determining the difference between a president's official affairs and his personal business may be arbitrary, the distinction proves useful in analyzing the questions.

First under the presidency were questions related to the official plans and actions of the President. Correspondents frequently asked
Johnson about his administration's goals, leaders, and activities. They also queried Johnson on his Presidential aims, actions, decisions, travel, staff and other appointments, meetings, and reactions to various events. Questions on the Presidency, and especially those on Johnson's official activities were more numerous in the press conferences during his first (1963-1964), third (1966), and last (1968-1969) years in the White House than in the other two years.

Questions on presidential activities were generated on occasion by Johnson's speeches, public announcements, and other official statements. Such questions occurred either in anticipation of, or soon after, those public statements. For example, on January 13, 1966, the day after the "State of the Union Address," an unscheduled news conference provided questioners an opportunity to probe the President on various ideas in the Address. One of the reporters said, "Mr. President, can you characterize the reaction to your speech last night? You talked about some 'con' telegrams, which we understand you said to be in the minority. How do you feel the reaction was?" Later that year on March 31, Johnson addressed the National Legislative Conference of the National League of Cities. At a noon, impromptu press conference on that date, reporters asked about some of the speech's statements. News conference queries also resulted from such addresses such as Johnson's major statements on Vietnam, including the September 29, 1967, "San Antonio formula" speech, also presented to the National Legislation Conference. Finally, after Johnson's March 31, 1968, address to the public on Vietnam, which included his announcing that he would not stand for re-election, reporters asked about fifty questions on the President's plans, official and private.
Since Johnson was fond of using the presidential press conference to announce staff changes in his administration, it is not surprising that a number of questions had to do with appointments and resignations. For instance, in the conference of April 11, 1964, a reporter asked, "Mr. President, sir, at what point in Mr. Lodge's career will it become necessary for you to re-evaluate his role as your ambassador?" Lodge resigned that position on June 19. On other occasions the press asked about resignations. For example, in the June 18, 1966, conference L.B.J. announced the retirement of William Raborn as Director of the C.I.A. One correspondent wanted to know why Raborn had resigned, saying, "... Is it health or other affairs?" Reporters occasionally questioned Johnson's choices. In the June 23, 1964, conference, Johnson said that General Maxwell Taylor would be the new Ambassador to Vietnam. One question in the conference was, "... why did you pick a military man for this post?" A related area of inquiry had to do with unfilled positions, as reporters did ask from time to time about Johnson's intentions to fill vacancies.

Among other official activities which led to questions were Presidential trips. Reporters asked for details in advance of, during, and after such trips as Johnson's 1964 tour of Appalachia. Reporters asked about the possibility of a Presidential visit to Detroit and Newark after rioting in those cities in 1967. In 1968 questions speculated on plans for a summit meeting in Moscow.

The President's press policies were questioned in more than one conference, especially early in Johnson's administration. The first question of this nature appeared in his first press conference. In Johnson's second official conference, December 18, 1963, a reporter
asked whether L.B.J. would continue to hold surprise meetings with reporters. A televised conference, March 13, 1965, yielded a question on the timing of press conferences, since L.B.J. had waited six days to hold one after civil rights protesters, according to Johnson, were "attacked and some were brutally beaten" in Selma, Alabama.

Various other White House decisions came under scrutiny in meetings with reporters. Johnson's decision regarding who would attend Churchill's funeral in 1965 began in a press conference on January 16, more than a week before Churchill died. In Johnson's February 4 news conference, a question was raised about why Vice President Humphrey was not selected to attend, since the President himself could not attend. Other decisions were questioned over the years. For instance, in the meeting of December 4, 1967, almost half of the questions related to official actions of the President. In that conference reporters asked about Johnson's plans for the budget, his handling of McNamara's resignation, a recent military appointment, a possible meeting with Prime Minister Harold Wilson of Britain, possible Cabinet changes, the next day's meeting with Cyrus Vance, what L.B.J. might do about a steel price hike, and Johnson's plans for "an all-Asian summit meeting."

Matters related to Johnson's personal life accounted for about two questions in an average press conference, or more than one in ten questions overall. Questions related to Johnson's private life were about as numerous as those on his official activities. Interest in L.B.J.'s private affairs was more acute in his first and last years in office than in others, as might be expected.

Several subtopics emerged. Reporters were interested in Johnson's health, family, personal finances, politics, and such items as his
feelings about his own press relations. A few examples of questions related to Johnson's unofficial affairs are presented below.

By far, politics was the key matter of inquiry when it came to L.B.J.'s private life. In the second Johnson press conference was this question: "Assuming that you are the Democratic nominee for president in 1964, will you agree to debate your opponent?" In Johnson's last official press conference, at the National Press Club in Washington, a correspondent wanted the President to say why the Democrats had not won the 1968 election.

The frequency of questions on Johnson's political aims and activities was cyclical and predictable. Election years, of course, brought about most political inquiries. In 1964, such questions became more and more numerous as the Democratic Convention approached. A similar pattern emerged during 1966, relative to Congressional and other elections. In 1967 and 1968 speculation as to when Johnson would announce his desire for reelection led to a number of press conference queries from time to time through the conference of March 30, 1968. In that conference, a reporter asked if Johnson planned to talk about L.B.J.'s "future role in this campaign, or candidacy" in a televised speech to be given the next day. (The response was "No." The next day, March 31, Johnson announced he would not run for reelection.)

Other political topics generated by questions included primary elections, political polls, press predictions, political figureheads close to the administration, the choice of a running mate, matters of campaign ethics, issues, political debating, opposing candidates, and opposition parties and their spokesmen. An interesting example of a press conference in which questions of a political nature predominated
was the televised meeting of July 24, 1964. Johnson had met with Republican nominee Barry Goldwater earlier in the day. Reporters used statements which had been made by Goldwater to get L.B.J.'s reactions. They asked about his choice for Vice President, about campaign issues, about Goldwater's ability to get votes, about George Wallace's withdrawal from the presidential race, about how much campaigning Johnson planned to do, and, again, whether Johnson would debate with Goldwater.

Other personal affairs also led to questions from time to time. Johnson's health was a matter of interest to reporters, especially when he was ill, and before and after surgery. In the November 3, 1966, official press conference, for example, all of the 37 questions asked were about a forthcoming abdominal operation, and Johnson's physicians handled the replies. At other times, questions of the "How do you feel?" type occurred.

Johnson's personal finances were subjects of queries in some of his early press conferences. Reporters asked about such things as L.B.J.'s business interests in Texas in more than one press conference.

Family matters emerged in a few conferences. For instance, on August 9, 1966, reporters queried the President about his daughter's seeking employment in New York City.

Another area of unofficial presidential concern of note in the conferences was Johnson's reactions to criticism, especially press criticism, and his attitudes toward and relationships with the press. For example, in the July 13, 1965, televised conference, Johnson was asked, "Mr. President, quite a bit has been written recently about your relations with the press. Some of these stories have been openly critical, to say the least, sir. We seem to have heard from everybody but you. I wonder if you could give us your views on the subject?"
Finally, conferences held on special occasions, such as L.B.J.'s birthday, and just before Christmas, evoked several questions about the President's private life.

The Presidency, then, was a major area of inquiry in Johnson's presidential press conferences. Reporters asked questions on a variety of topics related to both the President's official activities and his private life.

**Domestic Issues**

The second area of questioning in the news conferences centered around events, ideas, and people of national interest in the United States. Questions on domestic affairs accounted for almost a third of all questions asked from 1963 through 1969. While the percentage of these questions was basically static over the years, 1965 and 1966 yielded higher percentages than did the other years of the Johnson administration.

Questions on domestic matters dealt with the economy, legislation and congress, and "other" internal issues.

In an average press conference one question on the U.S. economy might appear. Sometimes questions of this nature were stimulated by Johnson's voluntaries. On other occasions, current events related to inflation, the national budget, taxation, the stock market, and employment figured in the questioning.

Cases in which the President's voluntaries or other official acts and statements elicited questions on the economy were of note from time to time. The administration's budget and other money requests of congress were common stimuli for inquiries. For instance, in the November 29, 1966, conference, L.B.J. opened with a lengthy statement
on major "cut backs" in federal spending for fiscal years 1966 and 1967, as well as other administration attempts to control inflation. The voluntary led to a number of questions including the effects of the budgetary cuts on federal employees' pay, on the space program, on money for building schools, and on the possibility of a tax reduction. Of the fourteen questions related to the economy in that conference, one reporter asked, "How are the cattle prices? Are they pretty good?" (The conference was held in Austin, Texas.) On August 3, 1967, Johnson held a press conference, using a blackboard, to prepare reporters on a "Special Message to Congress" on budgetary and economic matters. All of the questions related to his economic report.

The other situation, in which Johnson made no initial comments on the economy, led to an occasional inquiry on that subject. For example in a televised conference, on August 18, 1967, efforts by farmers to raise their prices were brought up by a reporter. Another reporter asked for specific information on a statement which had been made during the week by Charles Schultze, Director of the Budget. In the May 21, 1966, meeting a reporter asked the President about "public dissatisfaction" with inflationary trends in the economy. Other questions in that conference treated the possibility of a tax increase, the national debt, and Johnson's answer to the question on inflation.

Other topics, such as employment figures, wage and price figures, Wall Street, and the Gross National Product appeared in press conference questions off and on during the Johnson administration.

A second area of questioning relative to domestic affairs dealt with legislation and congressional activities. In an average conference one question of this type might occur. Over the years, less than ten per cent
of the questions broached the area of legislation and congress, except for the calendar year, 1967. The appearance of questions on domestic legislation was not always predictable. However, reporters tended to query the President more often on tax legislation than any other type. Reporters also seemed to ask more questions about pending legislation than about anticipated or passed legislation, except for money bills. Further, questions on domestic legislation seemed to occur more frequently when a particular administration measure was stalled or in some other difficulty than when Johnson's proposals were doing well in congress. The last phenomenon seemed to be true of questions about hearings on treaties and presidential nominations to federal offices.

Among the subjects related to this area were the success or failure of the "Great Society's" programs, specific pieces of legislation, committee hearings, treaties, and congressional action on Johnson's nominees for executive and Supreme Court appointments.

An example of a question anticipating legislation was found early in the Johnson administration. Less than a month after Kennedy's death, in Johnson's second official news conference, a reporter asked if the new President planned "for any legislation in the area of Presidential succession or disability. . . ."

On February 1, 1964, a reporter asked for Johnson's reaction to a "dispute" between Robert McNamara and the Joint Atomic Committee "over the atomic power plant for the carrier. . . ." In the same conference, another question dealt with Johnson's legislative priorities and what he thought his chances of success were with planned civil rights and tax legislation. A later question in that conference had to do with the development of the "war on poverty" and how Johnson thought it would
be promulgated for congressional consideration. (On March 16 of that year Johnson presented his proposals on poverty in a "Special Message to the Congress.")

Good examples of questions on economic legislation were asked in press conferences which followed important budget proposals and related requests of the congress. For example, in the conference of January 17, 1967, reporters based most of the queries on Johnson's "Budget" and "Economic Messages" which included eighty-five specific proposals for consideration by the House Ways and Means Committee.

In September of 1966, one of L.B.J.'s major financial proposals and other legislation generated quite a few questions. For example, in the conference of September 21, one query had to do with whether the financial proposals were to achieve "a balanced budget." Also, two questions treated the administration's unsuccessful Civil Rights act of 1966 (which had to do with housing). On March 28, 1968, a reporter asked for Johnson's feelings about the fact that "the Foreign Relations Committee voted down funds for the Asian Bank and deferred funds for I.D.A. . . . ."

An interesting illustration of questions on Senate hearings was afforded by Johnson's nominations of Homer Thornberry as Associate Justice and of Abe Fortas as Chief Justice to the Supreme Court. Johnson announced the nominations in his June 26, 1968, press conference. In the next official conference, July 31, the last question asked was for a statement on the Senate Judiciary Committee's handling of the nominations. The next news conference of the year was on L.B.J.'s birthday. The Fortas nomination was in trouble and the Democratic Convention was in progress. No questions were asked about Fortas in
that brief conference. In the following meeting, September 6, one of Johnson's voluntaries discussed the situation in the Senate, where a filibuster on Fortas' nomination was in the making. Again, no questions were asked on that subject. The Senate filibuster began September 17. On October 2, Johnson announced his withdrawal of the Fortas nomination, thereby ending the filibuster. The matter did not appear in a press conference again until the last one, January 17, 1969, when a reporter asked, "Did you seriously consider naming Arthur Goldberg as Chief Justice after the Fortas nomination was withdrawn?"

A final area of questioning on domestic affairs is miscellaneous in nature and has many questions related to current happenings at home. An average press conference would have two questions on current events in the United States. Overall, about one in fifteen of all the questions asked was of this nature. Interest in current affairs as revealed by the questions peaked in 1965, a year of civil rights efforts, riots, and other acts of civil violence in America. After 1966, reporters asked fewer questions each year, proportionately speaking, on related matters.

Among the topics considered here were urban affairs, civil disobedience and violence, civil rights, labor-management relations, the draft, and disasters in the country. Also included were consumer affairs, environmental problems, the "space race," elections and voting, protest movements, and business and industrial matters.

From 1964 through 1966 reporters often questioned Johnson about civil rights and related protest movements and violence. The first question in the April 16, 1964, televised conference, for example, was "Mr. President, how do you feel about civil disobedience as a tactic in the civil rights
struggle?' Events in and around Selma, Alabama, led to questions in conferences during the spring of 1965. That summer, rioting in Watts made the news. On May 21, 1966, a press conference question was, "Mr. President, have you any thoughts on what seems to be indications of mounting racial tension in this country, such as in Watts and in some other areas?"

In a similar vein, protest marches and demonstrations related to the war in Vietnam, poverty, and campus violence drew questions from reporters later in the Johnson administration. For instance, in March of 1968, rioting in Memphis, Tennessee, led a reporter to ask in the March 30 conference, "... how do you feel about the proposed Poor People's March on Washington next month . . .?"

The military draft was another matter of concern in press conferences. For instance on July 5, 1966, after a recent study of the Selective Service System had been commissioned by L.B.J., the President was asked for his own attitudes toward the system. On other occasions reporters queried the White House on prospects for increased draft calls. In the July 13, 1967, meeting, a reporter asked Secretary McNamara, a participant in the conference, about the possibility of increased "draft calls" for Vietnam.

To conclude this section on questions relating to "other" domestic affairs, here are examples from selected press conferences. The September 9, 1964, press conference elicited several questions on civil disorders and government plans to solve the problems. Questions emerged on an F.B.I. investigation of violence in Mississippi, on Johnson's request for an F.B.I. study of rioting in such cities as Philadelphia and in Harlem, and about the possibility of "known Communists. . . among the
agitators..." in the riots. In the June 17, 1965, conference, was a question on Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., who apparently was considering running for mayor. Another question was "...is there anything you can tell us on the supersonic transport?" One reporter asked about the "Denver flood disaster." A televised press conference on July 20, 1966, revealed other examples. In that conference reporters asked about an airline strike, the "black power" movement in the U.S., "professional agitators" in the cities, the Virginia primary election, and the President's attitudes toward freedom of the press. The President's televised conference of March 9, 1967, also revealed a variety of questions on current domestic interests. Reporters asked about C.I. A. expenditures for student organizations, the report of the study commission on the Selective Service, the shipyards strike on the west coast, and the possibility of a manned lunar landing in 1970.

On March 30, 1968, questions dealt with the "Poor People's march on Washington," national defense, racial trouble in Memphis, and a strike in the copper industry.

Domestic affairs, then, proved to be an important area of inquiry in Johnson's news conferences. Reporters raised questions about matters of interest in the U.S., on issues related to the economy, on congress and legislation, and on various other topics. More often than not, current events in the country elicited queries. The next section describes the most frequented area of questioning in the conferences, foreign affairs.

Foreign Affairs

In general, questions on foreign affairs occurred more often than those in the other three categories, given the number of questions asked and the number of press conferences which took place in the Johnson
administration. Specifically, over a third of the questions were of this nature. The percentage of inquiries on foreign affairs accelerated after Johnson's first year in office. In 1965 and 1967, for example, about half of the news conference questions related to non-domestic issues. Reasons for this and other trends are suggested in the next chapter. At this point, a report on the content of the questions on foreign affairs is necessary.

The most common question area in Johnson's conferences was on the subject of Vietnam. About two-thirds of all the questions on foreign affairs related to U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, to wit, war and peace in Vietnam. Comparatively speaking, little interest in Vietnam was expressed during L.B.J.'s first year in office. After 1964, however, reporters increased the proportion of questions on Vietnam. Again, the years 1965 and 1967 were peak years for the topic.

Specific items of inquiry on Vietnam included American military support and activities, such as day to day operations, bombing, long range aims and efforts, battle conditions, troop strength, and expansion of the war. Reporters also asked about social and political developments in Vietnam, as well as American economic and other aid for the region. Other participants in the war, such as the National Liberation Front, neighboring countries, and allies of the United States received attention. Prospects of and attempts at peace were also topics. Critics of the war, at home and elsewhere, provided the basis for many press conference questions on Vietnam.

The first public statement by President Johnson on Vietnam was probably made in his first news conference. At the time, Johnson had requested that McNamara go to Vietnam to "look over the situation out there" for him.
In that December 7, 1963, meeting, one question was asked about Johnson's purpose in sending the Secretary. The topic did not appear again in a press conference until Johnson's sixth meeting with reporters, February 1, 1964. During that conference Johnson was asked questions about the future of American involvement in Vietnam, about de Gaulle's ideas on neutralization of the country, and about Johnson's own attitudes regarding the best possible solution. The next two conferences were televised and drew a dozen questions on Vietnam. For example, on February 29, a reporter asked whether the war would escalate and, "...are we losing there?" A question on the possibility of intervention by "Communist China" and the Soviet Union also appeared, as did a question on Laos. Another reporter asked about Johnson's previous statements regarding a search for peace in Southeast Asia. A week later, on March 7, questions pertained to the safety of non-military personnel of the United States in Vietnam, to Republican criticism of Johnson's handling of the problem, to secret communications with de Gaulle on Vietnam, and to the feasibility of withdrawing U.S. forces to allow the Army of the Republic of Vietnam to take over military activity on a gradual basis. These questions, taken from the first eight of Johnson's one hundred and thirty-five official news conferences, set the tone for most of the questions to be asked throughout his administration.

However, after the March 7 conference, reporters seldom asked more than one question in a conference on Vietnam until conferences in late July and early August. On August 4, 1964, L.B.J. addressed the nation on the Gulf of Tonkin hostilities. August 5 brought a "Special Message to Congress" which resulted in the August 7 resolution. Half of the press conference questions the day following that resolution were on
events related to the Tonkin battles and the congressional resolution. After the August 7 conference, interest in the matter waned in press conference questions. Moreover, as the presidential campaign increased in public attention reporters only occasionally queried the President on Vietnam.

Early in 1965 renewed interest in American involvement in Southeast Asia led to more frequent questioning on various, related topics. A televised meeting with reporters on February 4 evoked a number of such queries. The first of these was for a general review of the situation. Another reporter probed the chances of a settlement resulting from secret talks in Paris. One correspondent posed a question about the views of Albert Gore and Frank Church on solving the conflict. Other questions were on Johnson's attitudes toward the reasons for U.S. involvement in Vietnam, hinting at what was to be called the "domino theory" as a justification for continued American activity. A final question on the topic had to do with United States attitudes toward the current political and governmental structure in South Vietnam. An eighty-minute conference on June 17, 1965, brought up Senator Joseph Clark's statement on negotiating with the Viet Cong, about secret negotiations with Hanoi, about a proposal for negotiation made by British Commonwealth Prime Ministers, about the general "chances for improving international relations" because of American involvement in Vietnam (and in the Dominican Republic), and about the need for Johnson to request another Congressional resolution of support for his policies. Later in the year, several press conferences were dominated by questions on Vietnam. Among those questions were topics related to increased troops and overall "escalation," various peace proposals, the effects
of the war on the economy of the United States, bombing of "missile sites" in North Vietnam, efforts of allies of the United States, presidential war powers, United Nations attempts to deal with the problem, Soviet support for the "enemy," and continuing negotiations.

Throughout the next two years reporters maintained constant questioning on Vietnam. During these years questions increasingly reflected criticisms of Johnson's goals, policies, and actions in Southeast Asia. Also, the specific subject matter of many of the questions asked in previous years came up again and again. For example, on December 6, 1966, Johnson held a joint press conference with Secretary McNamara. In that meeting, reporters asked twelve questions on Vietnam. In 1967, on July 13, in a conference attended by Johnson, McNamara, and General Westmoreland, reporters asked all of their questions on Vietnam. Other press conferences in 1966 and 1967 reflected great interest in the topic. For example, in a televised meeting on November 17, 1967, correspondents wanted to know about troop levels, public critics of the war, bombing in North Vietnam, the Vietcong's attitudes toward negotiation, Johnson's "present assessment of our progress and prospects," attitudes of North Vietnamese leaders on American public opinion on the war, "confusion, frustration, and difference of opinion" in the United States, and draft evaders.

Most of the same questions came up again during L.B.J.'s last year as president. During this year much of the questioning was sparked by Johnson's final efforts to arrange formal negotiations with the leadership of North Vietnam. Questions on the Paris peace discussions and the handling of the efforts during the transition to the Nixon administration led to several questions in press conferences that year. For
example, in the November 15, 1968, conference, reporters asked about the role of the coming executive leadership in foreign policy decisions related to Vietnam. They also asked about progress in getting South Vietnamese participation in the Paris peace talks. One question in Johnson's last presidential press conference was "Mr. President, are you sorry that more countries did not take a more active part in the effort to help South Vietnam?"

It is clear that Johnson's news conferences afforded many and varied queries on the issues surrounding this country's continued engagement in the affairs of Southeast Asia. The problem stimulated questions on general goals; the causes of the war; military activity; social, economic, and political problems faced by the participants in the conflict; effects of the war in the United States and elsewhere; and various proposals and attempts to settle what may be the longest major war in American history. It is essential to note again that no other press conference topic brought about such frequent and persistent questioning as did the subject of Vietnam.

Other matters of international concern evolved. Whereas an average press conference would have four questions on Vietnam, it would also have two questions on other foreign relations. Over the years these questions tended to anticipate and follow international developments, as was the case with other domestic affairs. Further, no significant yearly trends appeared in the proportionate amount of questioning on other foreign affairs, except for Johnson's first year in office in which such items as the Panamanian crisis were important. It may be interesting to note that 1966, the year in which Johnson held the most press conferences (forty-one), and in which more questions were asked
than in any other year, was the year in which the percentage of questions on "other" foreign affairs was lowest.

Among the topics of questions on other foreign affairs were American relations with the U.S.S.R., Panama and the Canal Zone, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Germany. Reporters also asked about India, problems in the Middle East, other Latin American affairs and the Organization of American States, various European countries, Greece and Cyprus, Africa and problems in the Congo, China, and the "Pueblo affair." Examples of press conference questions from various years are presented below.

In L.B.J.'s first year, one of the most common subject matters among questions on other foreign relations was the Soviet Union. On December 18, 1963, for example, a reporter asked the President about the best way for the United States and the U.S.S.R. to improve their relationships. Other issues emerged during the 1963-64 period. For example, in Johnson's January 25, 1964, meeting with the press corps, a question on Soviet Union criticism of American violations of a "pledge for nondissemination of Nuclear weapons" came up. Another question in that conference was, "What do you think about the French intention to recognize Red China?" Reporters also asked about attempts to solve the conflict in Panama, about British bus sales to Cuba, and about a recent trip to Malaysia by the Attorney General. Later in 1964, the Cuban situation, the Panamanian crisis, trade with the U.S.S.R., Sino-Soviet relations, Russian-German relations, American intervention in the Congo, and Johnson's communications with de Gaulle were topics of questions.

In 1965 White House correspondents inquired about such matters as the plan for a "multilateral force" in Europe, arrangements for a visit to the United States by Russian officials, American involvement in the
Donlinioan Republio, efforts of the Organisation of American States, the United Nations and difficulties between Indonesia and Malaysia.

Although 1966 had fewer questions, proportionately speaking, the variety of questions asked is useful to note. 1966 brought up press conference questions on topics carried over from previous years and on some new problems in foreign diplomacy. Included in the queries that year were American aid to India, renewed hostilities in the Dominican Republic, United States foreign policy in general, and admission of China to the United Nations. Problems among North Atlantic Treaty Organization participants, including France's withdrawal of support, stimulated several questions. Difficulties between India and Pakistan were mentioned, as well as the possibility of trade with China, American cooperation with the U.S.S.R., United States troops in Europe and the situation in West Germany, plans for a Latin American "summit conference," and "prospects for a treaty on outer space." In November of 1966, North Korean attacks on an American patrol emerged in questioning for the first time. The President's trip to the Far East, and a forthcoming trip to Europe, and tension in the Middle East also came up. China's testing of nuclear explosions was a topic in the December 31 press conference inquiries.

In 1967 the two major topics of press conference questions were the U.S.S.R. and the war in the Middle East. In the spring of that year correspondents inquired about developments on attempts by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. toward a nonproliferation treaty. No official press conferences were held during the June, 1967, meetings between Soviet Premier Kosygin and Johnson. However, progress in other "Disarmament Conference" meetings was a frequent issue. In the summer and fall of 1967, war in
the Middle East and such events as the closing of the Suez Canal, Egypt's severing diplomatic relations with the United States, and American aid to Israel sparked a number of questions. Among other topics were United States' relations with Czechoslovakia, new ideas on "world Communism" by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the possibility of another "world war," American relations with China, and German Chancellor Kiesinger's visit to this country.

Johnson's final year in the White House revealed few questions on other foreign affairs. The "Pueblo incident" and activities of the Soviet Union predominated in the questioning during 1968-69.

In January of 1968 the U.S.S. "Pueblo" was taken by North Korean vessels and the Pueblo's crew was held captive through most of the year. These events stimulated several press conference questions. For example, on September 6, a reporter asked, "Mr. President, do we have any information that would lead us to believe that the Pueblo will be released this Sunday, or shortly?" Similar questions had been asked since February, and continued to be asked in the fall of 1968.

A second area of interest during the year had to do with various affairs of the Soviet Union relating to Berlin, to Czechoslovakia, and to other Eastern European nations. For example, in the June 26 conference, one question was, "Mr. President, what do you think are the reasons for the intensified Communist pressure on West Berlin at this time?" In the September 6, conference, a reporter asked if Johnson was thinking about providing "asylum for Czechoslovakian refugees." Also in that and other conferences were questions on the "Disarmament talks" and Senate action on the "nonproliferation treaty."

The Middle East situation came up in press conferences in March and October of 1968. For example, on October 24, a reporter asked, "Mr.
President, are we having any diplomatic consultations with the Soviet Union with respect to rising tensions in the Middle East?"

A view of the questions asked in Johnson's presidential press conferences showed that more questions on foreign affairs were asked than on any other area related to the presidency. Further, issues surrounding the war in Vietnam emerged in questioning more so than any other single aspect. Questions on Vietnam covered a gamut of ideas and events, as was noted. Finally, other matters of United States involvement in other countries led to inquiry in the conferences. Questions on other foreign affairs tended to cluster around current affairs and, occasionally, dealt with foreign policy in general.

Miscellaneous Topics

Topics of a miscellaneous kind accounted for less than ten per cent of the questions. In other words, about one question in an average conference would be of this nature. No significant trend was noted over the years regarding the proportionate amount of inquiry classified as "miscellaneous" in nature.

The most important topic area here included political matters which, seemingly, were not essentially related to Johnson's personal interests. Other miscellaneous questions pertained to such matters as immediate press conference procedures and arrangements and the whereabouts and activities of various persons formerly associated with the White House. Statements which reporters sometimes made to the President, although not questions, fell here.

Correspondents sought L.B.J.'s reactions to current political events in a number of news conferences. Usually, these matters had an indirect bearing upon the Presidency or on Johnson's political career, ostensibly,
but were, however, of some interest nationally or locally. For example, in a press conference on July 10, 1964, a reporter asked for L.B.J.'s comments on a statement made by Robert Kennedy concerning R.F.K.'s chances of being nominated for the Vice Presidency. In the same year Johnson was asked to comment on other political matters related to various campaigns and elections. Another election year, 1966, brought up some politically oriented questions. For example, on August 24, Johnson was asked about the prospects of the re-election of "those five freshmen Democrats you got from Iowa." On November 4 of that year Johnson was asked to speak to the fact that, "Last week, Senator Barry Goldwater predicted that Ronald Reagan would win the Governor's seat in California by either a minor or a major landslide." Two days later, another question put to Johnson before the election was, "Could you give us your judgment on how big a factor the backlash is in the campaign?"

The 1968 elections provided other examples, but one instance should suffice here. On October 24, L.B.J. was queried about the congressional races, about the "law and order" issue, and about Humphrey's desire to debate Nixon and Wallace.

Other "miscellaneous" questions were procedural. From time to time reporters would ask whether Johnson's comments were "on the record," especially during his first year in the White House when he tended to go "off the record" in official conferences. Other questions might ask if a particular statement was available in a White House release (or printed in some form) at the time. Questions for technical clarification were sometimes asked, as well. For example, reporters would sometimes ask the spelling or pronunciation of names, especially when Johnson had announced a new appointment of some kind. Reporters sometimes asked L.B.J. to repeat a statistic, also.
Once in a while, reporters made requests and other statements to the President in press conferences. These were rare and usually brief points made to clarify a question just asked, for example when Johnson seemed not to understand the meaning of a question. It was not at all common for a correspondent to use the press conference directly to confront the President on a matter. But Johnson's televised conference of July 20, 1966, revealed an example of that, when Richard Wightman, of the Fairchild publications chain, complained to the President and the nation that "The White House has withdrawn our press credentials to cover the wedding" of Johnson's daughter. The reporter went on to ask, "Don't you think in light of this that it rather goes against your own philosophy of press freedom?"

Thus, the fourth and last question category, on miscellaneous matters, contained inquiries on current political events, and on technical and procedural details of special interest to reporters.

In summary of this section on the content of Johnson's press conferences, as generated by reporters' questions, the following statements may be made.

The first major topic area was the presidency, including official activities and Johnson's private affairs. The presidency accounted for over a fourth of the questions asked. Reporters questioned the President on a variety of administrative aims, plans, and activities. Reporters also asked about unofficial matters, especially Johnson's political fortunes.

Domestic affairs accounted for many questions. The national economy, including employment, taxation, and governmental finance came up in correspondent's queries. Congressional activities and domestic legislation
provided many questions. Among other internal matters were civil rights, public violence and riots, labor relations, and natural disasters.

The third, and most popular area of questioning was foreign affairs. Questions on Vietnam emerged more and more often as the war progressed and as hopes for peace increased. Questions on other international matters treated specific events, chiefly. United States activities in Panama, the Dominican Republic, the Congo, and Europe were discussed. Reporters also questioned the affairs of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations, and activities of world powers such as the U.S.S.R., China, and France. Situations like the Pueblo incident and continued hostilities in the Middle East brought about many questions.

Fourth, some miscellaneous issues evoked questions from time to time. Included here were questions on partisan political matters and technical and procedural items of interest mainly to the press.

Finally, a profile of an average Johnson news conference would reveal at least four questions on the presidency, five questions on domestic affairs, six questions on foreign affairs (including four on Vietnam), and at least one question of a miscellaneous nature.

The next chapter explores some of the rhetorical aspects of the two determinants of the press conferences' content, the voluntaries and the questions.
The aim of this chapter is to present an evaluation of President Johnson's use of opening statements and announcements and the questions asked in the press conferences.

Briefly, the plan of this chapter is as follows. First, the voluntaries are described in terms of Johnson's purposes in using them, his methods of development, and his effectiveness with the device. Second, the questions are treated according to the correspondents' purposes, the characteristics of their questions, and the effectiveness of the questions.

**Johnson's Opening Statements**

What Johnson wanted to achieve with his press conference voluntaries, the techniques he used in developing the voluntaries, and his effectiveness in employing voluntaries provide bases for the evaluation presented in the first section of this chapter.

**Purposes of the Voluntaries**

Johnson's apparent aims in using the voluntary in a press conference were not unlike the general goals of the press conference itself, described in Chapter I, and Johnson's own press conference goals, mentioned in Chapter II. Historically speaking, the general goals of any president using this particular method of communication
have been to inform, to persuade, and to receive feedback. Moreover, Johnson's goals were pragmatic, purposive. Johnson wanted to influence public opinion with information and persuasion in his news conferences.

The general press conference goals, of disseminating information and persuading, fail to explain adequately why Johnson used volunteers so extensively in his conferences. More specifically, Johnson's purposes were (1) to inform, (2) to publicize, (3) to promote, (4) to defend, (5) to enhance his ethos, and (6) to control the press conference itself. While Johnson may have used a particular announcement or statement for more than one purpose in a given press conference, it is worth considering those purposes separately at this point.

To Inform. President Johnson not only used his announcement time to present new information, but to clarify other and previous communications with the press or the public. Examples of Johnson's presentation of new information appear in quite a few conferences. In such conferences Johnson might announce a new presidential action, as he did when he told of certain appointments and nominations. Johnson also used a few press conferences to explain other communications which were given with other formats. For example, before or at the same time as the White House released a "Special Message to Congress," Johnson might use a voluntary to explain aspects of the "Message." He did this on the day that an economic proposal was sent to Congress, in his August 3, 1967, news conference. In that situation the

1All references to Johnson's press conferences are to the transcripts published in the Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 10 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965-1970). Citations to other materials, such as speeches and press releases, refer to the same source. Direct quotations from the transcripts, unless elliptically quoted, are verbatim with the following exceptions. Footnote numbers and footnotes in the texts are deleted. Also omitted are headings and bracketed numbers, e.g. [8], which appear in order to show changes in topics within a given conference.
President wanted reporters to understand various phases of his programs and he used half the press conference to talk about the proposals. A similar aim of a few voluntaries was to clarify information presented at some time before a particular conference. For instance, the Panama and Canal Zone hostilities led to official statements from the White House on January 10, 14, and 16, 1964. On January 23, Johnson met with reporters and summarized events and statements on the subject. In the main, Johnson's press conference voluntaries revealed that attempts to explain were more common before or at the time of any Presidential communication than afterwards. Nevertheless, an important goal of many of the voluntaries was to inform reporters of Johnson's actions and decisions.

To Publicize. President Johnson used the voluntary to get immediate attention and interest for specific items related to his administration. Johnson sought publicity for new developments. He also used voluntaries to maintain interest in and bring attention to previously announced matters. As was seen in the analysis of the content of the voluntaries, the President was more likely to announce his decisions and other executive affairs than any other topics. Further, the announcement of staff changes was by far the most frequently used kind of opening statement. These announcements gained publicity for the President as well as for the particular persons being nominated, appointed, or relieved of service.

Johnson also used the press conference situation to build publicity over a period of time. "The Voting Rights Act of 1965" provides an interesting illustration. First, here is some background information. In Johnson's first "State of the Union Address," he argued
the need to provide legislation for "increased opportunities" in, among other areas, housing, employment, and voting. The topic was revived in campaign speaking during the summer of 1964. For example, on June 17 Johnson told the Communication Workers of America, "We have a program to give every American citizen an equal chance to hold a job, to vote ... whatever his color or race." Two days later Johnson got Senate passage of his 1964 "Civil Rights Bill." On accepting the Democratic nomination in August, Johnson again mentioned the voting issue, but in a minor way, as he had in his "State of the Union." In December of 1964, Johnson told the National Urban League that he was anxious to deal with the problem.

The hints of 1964 were asserted more overtly in 1965 as Johnson accelerated his efforts toward action on voting rights. The "equal opportunity" idea came up in the January 4, 1965, "State of the Union Address," with brief mention of voting rights as a specific issue. The voter registration drive in Alabama, and its consequences, spurred Johnson to announce in his February 4 news conference that the 1964 "Civil Rights Bill" would be used to find a legal solution. On March 9, Johnson released a statement that a special act was in preparation. Four days later, in his televised news conference, Johnson spent close to half of the conference discussing the difficulties in Alabama and his intention to submit a bill to Congress. On Monday, March 15, Johnson addressed the Congress, introducing the "Voting Rights Bill." In the next few days further aggravation in Alabama brought about a confrontation between Governor George Wallace and the President. On March 18, Johnson read to White House correspondents a telegram from Wallace to the President. Johnson followed the
reading with a statement of his own. On March 20, the President met reporters at the L.B.J. Ranch for a news conference and once again publicized a stimulus for requesting the voting rights measure. Johnson did not initiate press conference discussion on the bill itself as it proceeded through congress, although reporters did ask the President for his reaction to the progress of the bill during those four months. On August 6, Johnson signed the act. In his televised press conference of August 25, he made a lengthy opening statement to publicize the successful application and enforcement of the act in Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

To Promote. President Johnson wanted more than mere public attention and interest or publicity; he wanted favorable public opinion. In his quest for support from the press and from the people, Johnson frequently made statements in press conferences to promote the goals, plans, and successes of his administration. While it was more usual for him to speak on attainments of his efforts, L.B.J. sometimes used voluntaries to elicit favorable attitudes toward his goals and his plans to accomplish those goals. Although Johnson preferred not to go directly to the public or the press to discuss legislation of importance to his programs, he sometimes used the press conference to pave the way for the introduction of specific bills. To cite an example, on February 4, 1965, he began a broadcast news conference by explaining a new "Message to Congress," which became law as the "Food and Agriculture Act of 1965." The February 4 statement included remarks on the importance of the American farmer, on the value of food, and on the need to aid farmers and to protect "our unparalleled harvest of plenty." Johnson continued by outlining the basic proposals of the
special message and by saying that specific proposals would be announced in "the weeks and months ahead." Johnson tried to get favorable attention for his goals as well as his plans.

Perhaps the most significant promotional voluntary was that which detailed the successes of the "Great Society." The President often, apparently, was pleased to begin a press conference with good news. Sometimes the good news was a specific accomplishment; on other occasions, a general review of progress was presented. A rather odd instance of demonstrating success was found in two press conferences in 1964. On February 29 Johnson told reporters that the "A-11" jet airplane was being tested. He described the development of the craft as well as related, "important technical achievements." On April 11 Johnson announced that, "The world record for aircraft speed, currently held by the Soviets, has been repeatedly broken in secrecy by the United States aircraft A-11." L.B.J. then gave further details of the accomplishment.

Among the most frequent of Johnson's success stories were voluntaries on the economy. Most of these messages appeared in the first two years of L.B.J.'s tenure. But as late as March 9, 1967, in conjunction with the announcement of a request to Congress "to restore the investment credit and the use of accelerated depreciation for buildings," the President sought to show the nation, in a televised news conference, that his actions of the previous year had worked. In that conference Johnson presented a number of details and statistics to prove the efficacy of his economic programs.

Preempting prime time television was a favorite means of telling the American people of particularly dramatic accomplishments in the early years of the Johnson administration. But press conferences,
especially broadcast ones, also provided appropriate means from time to time. Perhaps one of Johnson's most important public statements was made at the May 3, 1968, conference, on Hanoi's agreement to meet for peace negotiations in Paris.

To Defend. The fourth specific goal of some of Johnson's volunteers was related to the promotional aim. At times Johnson used the press conference to defend his administration, especially when Johnson felt the heat of criticism for various policies and actions. Some examples follow.

Not long after his first few months in the White House, criticism of Johnson's press policies and relations appeared in the news media. Johnson responded in more than one of his press voluntaries. For instance, in the televised conference of March 20, 1965, he gave a lengthy review of his policies. (A quotation from that statement appears in Chapter Two.) On June 17 of that year Johnson began his conference with a brief statement on his long voluntaries, which also had come under attack, and promised to allow "20 minutes for questioning." That conference lasted eighty minutes and at least half of the conference was taken up by Johnson's opening remarks.

Another, and quite possibly more essential, area of sensitivity was Johnson's handling of the war in Southeast Asia. As the U.S. showed increased military and economic commitment to Vietnam, more and more critics spoke and acted against L.B.J.'s policies. The criticism did not escape Johnson's attention since he used a variety of forums, including the press conference, to defend his goals, policies, and actions. Instances of Johnson's presentation of his reactions to critics of the Vietnam war were more common in his first two years.
in office. For example, in LBJ's March 20, 1965, conference he stated that he had explained U.S. policy in Vietnam "47 times." Johnson repeated the policy statement once more in that voluntary.

Critical assertions by politicians, such as Barry Goldwater in 1964, also brought an occasional press conference voluntary in defense of Johnson's leadership.

To Enhance His Ethos. President Johnson sought to use some of his press conference remarks to demonstrate his own leadership abilities, including such personal qualities as integrity, decisiveness, forcefulness, sincerity, and sagacity. Johnson also sought to help the public image of various members of his staff. Johnson's general promotion of his administration, described above as his third aim, can also be seen as evidence of his desire to win positive public opinion for the Presidency.

Johnson tried to establish rapport with reporters in his conferences. At first, his eagerness to win over the White House press included serving coffee to correspondents in an informal setting in Johnson's office. Perhaps even the habit of surprising reporters by holding impromptu conferences was designed to win their favor. But Johnson also used his voluntaries to show his concern for their needs. It can be argued that Johnson was attempting this by providing useful and sometimes dramatic information in his conferences, especially in the conferences which were not broadcast "live," that he was trying to demonstrate his awareness of and willingness to cooperate with media representatives.

Johnson also tried to enhance the ethos of various individuals associated with his administration. When nominating or appointing
someone for a particular post, it was not unlike the President to present the person in a favorable light, especially, but not only, if the person was relatively unknown to the press and the public. For example, on July 13, 1965, Johnson announced five nominations in his news conference. He talked in some detail about his nominee to the post of Solicitor General, Thurgood Marshall, and about Mrs. Penelope Thunberg. The two were there and Johnson presented them to reporters and to the nation.

Further, Johnson often prepared opening statements to heighten the image of some of his current staff, including military leaders and cabinet members. This sort of aim was apparent in joint press conferences with men like Robert McNamara and General William Westmoreland. The same type of voluntary aim appeared in conferences held after meetings with presidential advisers or with important leaders.

In the case of some of his voluntaries on persons associated with his presidential leadership, Johnson may have been attempting to support his own image at the same time as he praised other persons.

The content of Johnson's voluntaries seems to reveal that the President was indeed interested in establishing, maintaining, and at times regaining a favorable image, not only of the Presidency, but of Johnson himself. Because the president must serve in various capacities and because the person who is president sometimes looks beyond his immediate term in office, it is not difficult to understand that one aim of Johnson's voluntaries was to enhance his ethos.

To Control the Press Conference Itself. Presidents can regulate their conferences by the frequency, timing, and length given to meetings
with reporters. Presidents can also influence the conference with such factors as location, degree of formality, the president's mood or tone, as well as other conditions. Johnson probably used all of those forces. He also, probably more than any other president, tried to shape his conferences by what he said at the beginning of the meetings. His intent apparently was to control the content, length, and direction, as well as the effects, of most of his conferences.

Several factors were considered in evaluating Johnson's aims in the use of opening statements and remarks in his conferences. Such factors included the "national interest," presidential authority and roles, the immediate and long range needs of the press conference participants, the availability of other ways of meeting the participants' needs, and, perhaps, the extent to which the participants shared or conflicted in their expectations of the conference.

To fault Johnson for using the voluntary to inform, publicize, promote, defend, and enhance the ethos of his administration would probably run counter to many accepted theories of democratic government in the United States. Such criticism probably would also violate most recognized philosophies of communication.

Moreover, in terms of Johnson's particular presidential leadership goals, the powers of his office, and related factors, Johnson's aims, alone, seem worthy.

Another question related to evaluating a president's voluntaries (and other aspects of his conferences) has to do with the use of voluntaries during election campaigns. If the president were campaigning for himself or for his party's candidates, or both, the critic could assert the existence of a political or selfish motivation behind the
use of press conference voluntaries. Various factors run counter to this viewpoint. First, when does a political "campaign" begin? Barry Goldwater was seeking his party's nomination probably even before Johnson took office. Goldwater entered primaries early in 1964 and campaigned until nominated. Knowing that a president is a candidate does not necessarily begin with a formal announcement of candidacy. Nor does the president become a candidate only after accepting his party's nomination. Johnson avoided formal announcement of his own candidacy as long as possible in 1964.

Furthermore, when Johnson spoke during election years, it was not always clear whether he was wearing his official hat or a campaign hat with "Vote Democratic" on it. For example, Johnson refuted criticisms of his administration made by Republican presidential candidate, Barry Goldwater, on the day of Goldwater's nomination. If it was chiefly for political gain that Johnson rebuffed Goldwater, then the critic might question Johnson's motives. However, the issue was a matter of national security, at least in the mind of the President, and one could just as easily argue that Johnson was merely explaining presidential policy in his rebuttal. Other aspects of Johnson's press conference voluntaries during political campaigns raised similar problems. For example, why did L.B.J. hold a news conference the day before his nomination? His only voluntary concerned an explanation for his being late to the conference and a statement that in two hours' time he planned to announce the nomination of his running mate. In his next conference, September 9, 1964, Johnson announced that a book on his "philosophy of government and . . . views on the issues" was to be published. (The profits were to "be turned over to charity."
Four days later, Johnson introduced a press conference with one of his reviews of the successes of the domestic economy. In that conference, Johnson began, "Confidence in our economic prosperity has been growing as indicators continue to point up. . . ."

One of the most widely repeated criticisms of Johnson's press conference aims resulted from a conflict of the desires of the two immediate participants, the President and the press. Johnson's primary aims conflicted, to some degree, with the main objective of reporters, as was noted in Chapter Two. Again, however, the leadership roles of the presidency, as Johnson saw them, probably justified pursuing his own aims, even over those of the press, on some occasions. Analysis does show that Johnson's sixth aim, control of the press conference, was important in his use of voluntaries. This aim may have denied reporters the opportunity to fulfill their own desires at times. Therefore, Johnson's sixth aim may have merited the criticisms it elicited.

The institution of the press conference is "extra-legal," or "extra-constitutional," and therefore is automatically under presidential control. However, it was not always necessary, nor was it always fair to reporters, that Johnson had the control of his conferences as one of his chief aims in using the voluntary. This criticism will be seen as more justified in the discussion of Johnson's methods of development.

A final evaluative question regarding Johnson's aims in the voluntary involves the question of a third and indirect participant in the press conference. Surely, Johnson saw his aims as meeting the needs of the "national interest." The question is, were the aims of promotion, defense, and ethos enhancement, as well as press conference control, really so important to the needs of the country (let alone the
world) as they apparently were to the President? While there is no way of knowing, the answer would not be an unequivocal "yes." The public at large probably would not have applauded all of Johnson's aims. A stronger basis for this speculation, once more, may be seen in the discussion regarding Johnson's pursuit of his press conference aims.

**Summary.** Six specific aims appear in Johnson's use of voluntaries in his press conferences. His prepared statements were given in order to inform, to publicize, to promote, and to defend the administration. Johnson attempted to enhance the ethos of the Presidency and of persons associated with his leadership. Johnson also aimed at controlling the press conference situation by using voluntaries. Further, a given voluntary might have more than one specific aim. Johnson sometimes would, for example, try to provide information, get publicity, and enhance his ethos with one specific announcement or statement.

Generally, then, the six aims of Johnson's press conference voluntaries warrant approval to the extent that they were generated by the national interest. More specifically, those aims which best served all the participants were probably the most valuable. When the needs and desires of the conference participants conflicted, the press complained, and some of those complaints may have been justifiable.

**Methods of Development in the Voluntaries**

How Johnson went about developing the ideas presented in his prepared remarks, to accomplish the responses he sought with the six specific aims just described, receive attention here. Johnson used materials traditionally associated with exposition, amplification, and persuasion. Other significant techniques were employed. They are
discussed in the next section, on Johnson's audience adaptation and
effectiveness. Given the fact that some voluntaries were designed to
achieve one aim and other voluntaries more than one aim, supporting
materials have been analyzed from the standpoint of the purposes.

For Informing. Some of the President's voluntaries appeared to
be primarily for passing along information, although almost anything
a president says in a press conference is likely to be publicized
and interpreted by journalists and others. Johnson's attempts to
present and explain information ranged from short announcements to
commentaries and documentaries.

Brief announcements occurred from time to time. These statements
usually regarded minor activities and plans of the president and
passing comments on such matters as press conference procedures. For
the most part, Johnson developed those announcements with statements
of fact, specific details, and little else. For example, on Septem­
ber 20, 1964, L.B.J. announced "three appointments for the Comsat
Board--Communications Satellite." He volunteered the names and cur­
rent jobs held by the three, but not much more. Johnson continued
in that conference by outlining an itinerary for the next two weeks.
The list of stops on the trips was specific for the most part, but
general at times. For instance, compare, "On Friday morning I will be
in El Paso to meet with President López Mateos," with his plans for
the following Monday: "I would like to go to Hartford, Conn., at noon,
and make stops in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont before returning
to Washington." For most of the stops, however, he included a brief
explanation of purpose, like this one: "On Thursday, the 8th, I will
be in Cleveland, Ohio, for a Democratic dinner, and there make a
Democratic campaign speech." The day after his "Johns Hopkins
Address" on Vietnam, L.B.J. mentioned (1) receipt of a letter from U Thant, (2) an assignment to an adviser, Eugene Black, (3) a meeting with the Secretary of Commerce, (4) a visit by United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, and (5) the presence and immediate plans of Black. The only important details were of Black's assignment, and these were brief, although Black was questioned for a few minutes.

Short statements of fact, or brief details, proved to be the exception rather than the rule when Johnson made informational announcements. Brief remarks occurred, usually, only when the President saw no need for expanding the points or, on occasion, when further information was (or was to be) provided in some other manner.

Longer opening statements for the purpose of explaining appeared. Included were remarks Johnson sometimes offered in conjunction with the introduction of legislative proposals to Congress. Budgetary requests occasionally went hand in hand with didactic remarks to reporters. An illustration, from the January 17, 1967, conference, demonstrates the type of materials frequently used with this type of voluntary. Although the meeting was shared with the Budget Director, Charles Schultze, Johnson did much of the briefing himself. The President prefaced his description of the "Budget Message" by saying that it was scheduled for submission to Congress the next week and that another briefing would be arranged at that time. Next, Johnson gave some "background" information related to changes from "last year's authorizations and appropriations." Included in the review were a number of details, especially statistics. Various aspects of the "Message" were developed topically. Johnson talked about general figures, "obligations for roads," and mortgage purchases by Congress.
He also compared and contrasted several figures with statistics from previous years. As Mr. Schultze explained other items of the requests, Johnson put in an explanatory remark here and there. The interjected remarks were to amplify and clarify what Schultze said. Johnson treated some items briefly and others at length.

Late that year, on August 3, Johnson sent his "Tax Message" to congress. At about noon that day L.B.J. met with correspondents in the Fish Room of the White House and devoted over half of his conference to explain the request which included the "surcharge" for "the Vietnam problem." The explanation was technical. L.B.J. presented, in economic terms, the reasons for the tax increase, the projected results of the request, an explanation of how the tax would be effected, and a review of the general budgetary situation at the time. In that conference, Johnson used a number of supporting materials. The press had been given copies of the tax request. Johnson attempted to review and explain the request with specific details, many statistics, comparisons and contrasts, specific examples, and the use of a chalkboard. Upon closing the lecture, the President said, "... That is all I know about it. I will answer any questions I can. Then, you will get better answers from Mr. Fowler." (Henry Fowler was Secretary of the Treasury.)

The two illustrations show that when Johnson wanted to inform reporters on technical matters in his press conferences, he was able to elaborate in detail with materials he thought appropriate for comprehension.

For Publicizing and Promoting. Most of Johnson's voluntaries went beyond the mere transfer of information. More commonly his
prepared remarks were to get publicity, or attention and interest, in the news media. Announcements for publicity differed slightly from those for promotion in methods of development. Statements designed to get immediate attention for new aspects of Johnson's administrative actions and voluntaries to reinforce, increase, or maintain attention for known programs played a major role in the press conferences. The fact that Johnson made the announcement himself, rather than issuing a written release or having an aide give out the data, often meant Johnson was pursuing these aims. Frequently the President announced specific plans, decisions, and activities. As has been seen, he especially favored announcing staff changes. Examples of promotional statements on the economy are noteworthy. Johnson's joint press conferences often contained similarly designed preliminary remarks. He liked to publicize and promote other aspects of presidential action, also.

Johnson's comments on the goals, successes, and programs of his administration were not limited to one type of press conference nor to one topic area. Some of the best examples of Johnson's attempts appeared in voluntaries which in content resemble remarks Johnson was prone to make in campaign speaking, in major addresses on domestic affairs, and in the preemptive televised announcements of the early part of his administration.

The general area of presidential decision making provides examples. Johnson often liked to talk about what he was doing and thinking and this was reflected in several of his announcements. For instance, on June 1, 1965, in a televised question and answer session, he reviewed some of the activities of the United States in the
Dominican Republic. This was his first official press conference since April 27. In the April conference Johnson had mentioned the evacuation of American citizens, saying, "... 1,000 Americans have already been taken aboard ships. ..." On April 28 the President announced to the nation that "400 Marines" had just entered the Dominican Republic. He also gave some brief data about the reasons for the intervention. Other "preempts" came two days later, April 28, and again on May 2. The next major public statement of his actions appeared in Johnson's first voluntary, June 1. After a short explanation of events, he said: "I am therefore, accordingly, ordering the immediate withdrawal of one battalion landing team of United States Marines, plus headquarters and supporting personnel. This will total approximately 2,000 people."

In the June 1 conference, L.B.J. declared that he was sending a request to Congress. He was asking for money for the "economic and social development of Southeast Asia." (During April and May Johnson had pushed a resolution through Congress for increased military spending in Vietnam; the request then was for 700 million dollars.)

The development of Johnson's two major announcements in that conference was typical of other announcements. In the first, on the Dominican Republic, Johnson began by reviewing, briefly, the situation: a "serious" problem existed. Next, Johnson praised the Organization of American States for its actions. Then he related that his advisors had suggested the possibility of "further withdrawal," and that the Secretary General of the O.A.S. as well as the American ambassador to the Dominican Republic approved. Finally, L.B.J. announced his action, as quoted above.
The second major voluntary that day was on allocations of money for Vietnam. While the pattern was somewhat different, the development was similar. Johnson started by stating what he wanted. The statement was general, and read, "This afternoon I am sending to the Congress a very special message requesting an additional appropriation to help in the peaceful economic and social development of Southeast Asia. This is another forward step toward carrying out my proposal for a massive effort to improve the life of man in that conflict-torn corner of the world." Then followed a few more general statements of justification. Next, the President talked about the efforts of his advisor, Eugene Black, still in general terms. L.B.J. recounted various aspects of his goals in the country. There followed specific details, mostly statistics, regarding the social and economic conditions of the country's people. He said, for example, "The 16 million people of South Viet-Nam survive on an average income of $100 per year. . . ." He gave figures on literacy, medical conditions, and "life expectancy." He compared those conditions in Vietnam, statistically, with life in the United States. Johnson then compared the social and economic "enemies" in Vietnam with "the aggressor" in the war (presumably, the Viet Cong and North Vietnam). "These enemies, too, we are committed to help defeat," Johnson said, about the internal problems. He did not specifically talk much more about other "economic and social" conditions. Having presented the problem, Johnson led into some details about the spending of the funds he requested. The money was to go for "water and power resources," for "clinics and doctors," and for "materials for their homes and their factories." He commented that support from the American Medical Association to "recruit surgeons and specialists, approximately 50 of them," had been achieved already.
Johnson concluded the voluntary, saying, "Now this is just a part of the beginning. This appropriation today calls for only $89 million, but in the future I will call upon our people to make further sacrifices because this is a good program, and the starts that we are making are good starts. This is the only way that I know in which we can really win not only the military battle against aggression, but the wider war for the freedom and for progress of all men."

These and other voluntaries show that Johnson used a variety of supporting materials to develop his publicity and promotional announcements. He used specific details and statistics. He cited factual statements and statements of opinion. He included the opinions of advisors to the President and his own assertions. He also made reference to other authorities, comparisons, or analogies, and contrasts. Johnson reviewed situations with brief narrations of events leading to decisions and actions. Explanations sometimes used description, also.

The devices for development varied to suit the topics and the amount of time allowed for any one voluntary. The chief determinant of development, of course, was probably the President's attitude at the time a voluntary was prepared.

For Defending. Johnson's fourth kind of voluntary, in terms of his aims, was that which he used to defend his goals, plans, and actions. Statements of this nature were similar to the promotional ones, but were more akin to refutation in tone and development. That is, on occasion, Johnson responded to criticisms of his efforts, again with a variety of materials.

For the most part, the President defended his policies when the critical stimulus was directed toward Johnson in particular. The
development of his defensive voluntaries was usually indirect in approach. That is, he did not often attack specific sources of criticism or irritation. Johnson was frequently criticized by politicians, reporters, and others. Criticism of his press relations, for example, on such matters as "overexposure" of the President, led to the long defense of his press policies in the March 20, 1965 meeting with reporters. L.B.J. responded directly to some of Goldwater's assertions in a press conference voluntary on August 15, 1964.

Examples follow to demonstrate Johnson's development of the defensive statements he initiated.

On June 18 of 1966 Johnson addressed the press, in front of film cameras. He articulated a rather long statement defending U.S. activities in Vietnam. A brief narrative covering "the past few weeks" of fighting and of Johnson's observations of the situation led to the assertion that "the national interest requires that we persist in our present policy . . . to bring to bear the ground, naval, and air strength required to achieve our objective." Next, he justified not giving further details on possible future American involvement. He said that "national interest" meant not revealing such information "to those conducting aggression." He continued with a restatement of this country's goals. This negation appeared: "We are not fighting to remain in South Vietnam, not to hold bases there, not to control the affairs of that people." Again, he summarized the objectives in a positive way. Johnson said, "What are our prospects?" He answered his question with statements directed toward the nation, and the world, mentioning "political differences" of opinion. Johnson reaffirmed his general policy saying, "our course is resolute . . . our conviction
is firm" in "doing what is necessary in the Nation's interest and the cause of freedom." He asserted that the South Vietnamese were also just as "determined to fight" and to succeed with domestic improvements. Then Johnson cited and compared mortality figures which showed heavier casualties for the "aggressor." Johnson claimed success for the bombing program and briefly justified increased "air strength."

More comments on political and economic achievements in South Vietnam were given, with a reference to Johnson's special assistants for those affairs, William Porter and Robert Komer. Johnson advised that "steps . . . to control inflation" in Vietnam would be announced later in the day. Johnson then turned to the theme of national support in the United States, saying that the majority of the people were behind his policies. He supported the assertion of public backing by referring to recent primary elections in the United States. He implied that congressional candidates would probably not be successful if they took a stand against his war policies. Johnson concluded with an appeal for "an honorable peace at the earliest possible moment." The appeal was developed with a number of statements to demonstrate South Vietnam's desire for peace, quoting parts of "The Declaration of Honolulu" (of February 8, 1966). Johnson appealed for a revised analysis of the problem and expressed his belief that "the wave of the future" was away from "aggression."

The voluntary on Vietnam shows a development similar to other statements of the President's defense of his Vietnam programs. The supporting materials were not organized or worded in the style of direct refutation common to academic debate. Although the purpose of the voluntary was to defend a policy position which had been argued
publicly in the United States, Johnson referred only obliquely to his critics and to their counter proposals in this particular instance. The basic themes were reaffirmation of (1) the value of present policy, (2) progress toward success, and (3) hope.

The specific supporting materials were those often found in statements to amplify. Johnson constantly repeated "our objectives," as he had in other talks and official statements on Vietnam. He frequently restated and summarized his beliefs. He also argued from authority by quoting himself, quoting a passage from the Honolulu statement, and referring to the opinions of "those who have not shared our views" as against the reports of his advisors. In the conclusion he used epigrammatic statements ("There is honor for all in making peace. Let the killing stop.") allusive references to success in other countries ("Look at the new resolve in Indonesia. . . ."), and rhetorical questions (on the future: "is it aggression?"). Other supporting materials included comparison and contrast, statistics, factual details, and examples. But in the main Johnson employed general assertions of belief, most of which were merely restatements.

Later in 1966, as the Eighty-ninth Congress was coming to a close, Johnson's activities included a televised press conference on the afternoon of October 13. The President began the meeting with justification for a trip to Southeast Asia and to the "Manila Conference." This first voluntary was long. Johnson alluded to the possible helpfulness of his trek to Australia and New Zealand, saying that he had been there before as a representative of President Franklin Roosevelt. Johnson then defended the need for going on to Asia. He gave a general description of the needs of Asian countries. He mentioned progress in
the area. Referring to various facets of that progress, he said, "I want to see for myself as much of their achievement as is possible for me to see in the limited time that we have allotted." Next, he afforded that it was "a good time for the Manila Conference," because, after the Honolulu meeting, agreement was reached for a later one. Then Johnson praised efforts of "The Government of Vietnam" in improving economic and political conditions. He casually referred to previous doubts of his critics that "a free election" could be held. He did this to demonstrate the fulfillment of one of his aims which had run counter to the predictions of some. Johnson went into a comparison of voter turnout in off-year elections in the United States and the South Vietnamese election to show, again, the election's success. Further, Johnson described efforts and achievements in "education, health, agriculture, and . . . security. . . ." Johnson mentioned "defections from the enemy forces" and proceeded to discuss peace efforts on his part. Johnson blamed the "enemy" for refusing to negotiate and said he wished "those who make very special pleas for peace would" take their pleas to "those two governments" (not specified) instead of to him, because he already wanted peace. Another defense of Johnson's trip were the "pleas" of the leadership of South Korea, of the Philippines, and of Thailand" to come and meet with them." Furthermore, Johnson asserted that he did not want to leave while the current Congress was in session but that his going to New Zealand and Australia later in the month might interfere with elections in those two countries. He concluded the justification for the timing of his trip by saying, "I have been criticized some for accepting. I only wonder what would have been said about me if I had said no, I
...refuse to come and talk to our allies about our problems or our program."

As might be seen, this illustration reflects supporting materials similar to those used in the June 18, 1966 voluntary. Although the arguments varied somewhat, the same devices for defense appeared. Further, criticism seems to have motivated the voluntary. But specific critics were not mentioned by name nor were specific counter proposals to Johnson's policies specifically considered.

Thus, indirect rebuttal prevailed in both illustrations of voluntaries for defense. This subtle approach appears to be characteristic of many of Johnson's press conference voluntaries designed to reply to criticism of his leadership.

For Enhancing an Image. The ways in which L.B.J. developed announcements and opening statements for ethos enhancement are notable. The objects of his persuasion included the press, public opinion at home, and world opinion. "Target groups" depended upon the specific occasion and other factors such as the topic of the voluntary. As noted before, Johnson wanted to develop and demonstrate many aspects of his image, including his general leadership capabilities.

Early in his administration the President sought to win rapport with reporters. While his press relations waned during various periods of his presidency, many of Johnson's opening statements appeared to be basically for the purpose of winning over reporters' attitudes toward his person, as well as toward his administration of the Office. Further, the use of the voluntary to gain rapport with this audience was attempted with many devices, including the news value of his remarks and factors of timing, length, and frequency. How the content of his
opening remarks, in terms of exposition, amplification, and persuasion, was effected, merits observation.

Johnson almost always made some verbalized reference to the reporters and other media representatives as he opened the conference. Sometimes he would go beyond a greeting. He used humor, references to reporters' facilities or accommodations, procedural announcements to aid in their work, references to their needs and interest, compliments, and invitations to go for a walk with him. Even in his press conference statements on his press relations, the President was usually careful to word his remarks so as not to offend his immediate audience, especially the "regulars" of the White House press corps. Johnson occasionally referred to particular news stories or news agencies. Once in a while he would illustrate a point by using a hypothetical example involving a specific correspondent. Johnson wanted to make it known to reporters that he was interested in their work, that he could speak their language, and that he followed their activities.

Johnson opened a conference in his White House office on April 18, 1964, with a statement to correct "a very inaccurate account" of his foreign policy address for April 20. Johnson showed his awareness of press activities and stated the correction as if to protect reporters from "second-or-third-hand" information, as well as to protect his own interests.

In the May 6, 1964, South Lawn press conference the President's last voluntary went as follows: "... I have today accepted lifetime membership in the Vanderburgh Humane Society of Evansville, Ind." Newspapers and magazines had published pictures and articles on Johnson's treatment of his pet dogs. The voluntary may have been added for humor.
On August 18 of the same year Johnson offered a detailed list of his plans for the day and for the next few days. He told reporters that he was doing this for their benefit. He said he had thought of it earlier in the day and that Press Secretary George Reedy had agreed that "The suggestion that I made to him earlier might be helpful, if I carried it out." Once more, Johnson wanted to show his good will toward reporters by providing "information, guidance, and background."

Johnson's final voluntary on April 27, 1965, was a tribute to Edward R. Murrow, who had died. Johnson praised Murrow before reporters, subscribing to the latter's ideals as a "newsman and as a public official." Johnson told reporters and the viewing public, "We have all lost a friend."

Johnson also sought to build his ethos with the public at large in the U.S. and elsewhere. An analysis of his public statements as a whole would probably reveal this aim in much the same way that the present study shows attempts to achieve image enhancement in the voluntaries. Moreover, just as Johnson attempted to demonstrate his leadership in the televised preempts, he made forceful and dramatic statements in many of his press conferences' opening remarks. Some selected examples show a few of the types of materials L.B.J. used.

President Johnson seemed to show his decisiveness with announcements of appointees to executive positions in government. When Johnson gave specific details of a particular person's credentials and other background information, he seemed to be saying to the public that he had made the decision on the basis of careful thought and that by
having such a person in government his administration would be more effective. He wanted to show, further, that those he selected were among the best possible to choose from. Two relatively minor appointments announced in the April 18, 1964, conference illustrate his development. Johnson appointed Eugene Patterson to membership in the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Johnson said that the member being replaced was a past president of the American Bar Association "and Dean of Southern Methodist University Law School in Dallas," to show the importance of the position. Johnson then talked of Patterson's background, giving details such as his present position ("editor of the Atlanta Constitution"), where and when Patterson was born, and the man's academic work. L.B.J. described Patterson's "extensive newspaper career," his military achievements, including "the Silver Star and the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster," and his family. Next was Harold Russell's appointment as "chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped." Johnson mentioned that Russell replaced L.B.J.'s "old friend Mel Maas." Johnson promised to provide more data on Russell for reporters but gave a few details then. Those specifics included a description of the appointee's military accomplishments, the fact that the man had lost his hands in military service, and that he had been honored by the national Jaycees in 1950.

Johnson also probably wanted to demonstrate his skills with the statements on the effects of his economic programs. Those self-promotional success stories seemed to show Johnson to be a man to be trusted with the national purse, a man who was aware of and concerned for the taxpayer's problems, a man of frugality, moderation, and of
caution, a man who was an economist in his own right as well as one who listened to the advice of others on money matters. Johnson developed the impression of those skills with a variety of materials. Specific details were manifested mainly through statistics. Johnson often "barraged" his listeners with figures. Further, he compared and contrasted present and past economic conditions. Impressive examples of economic progress in government, business, and industry appear. Johnson related facts on employment, descriptions of the effects of his administration's ability to prevent strikes, and warnings to labor and industry about the potential dangers of strikes and price hikes. He sometimes used a narration of the events which led to a particular decision. He occasionally referred to and quoted his economic advisors to add weight to his own decisions. He explained the purpose of such monetary requests as tax increases and additional spending, to demonstrate that his view of "the national interest" had guided his thinking.

Johnson displayed his leadership in other ways with the volunteers. He used the press conference to pit his own ethos as President against those who confronted him, such as Barry Goldwater, Governor George Wallace, Bethlehem Steel, critics of the war, Republican and other opponents of his legislation, demonstrators, "the aggressor" in Vietnam, and various members of the news media who questioned his leadership. Sometimes, as with the defensive volunteers, Johnson's display of his own power and skill over his opponents was direct. On other occasions he referred to them more indirectly, probably assuming that his audiences knew the object of his attacks. Various developmental materials to carry out his aim appear and are
similar to those used in the defensive voluntaries. On occasion Johnson compared and contrasted his views with those of his antagonists. He described the actions and statements of the opposition briefly. He then used longer statements to support and amplify his own position.

Another type of voluntary for the development of ethos enhancement utilized the presence and remarks of others in the joint news conferences. For instance, Johnson showed that he shared authority in decision-making by having key figures in his administration appear and talk to reporters along with him. The statements made by such figures as General Westmoreland, Secretary of Defense McNamara, Budget Director Schultz, various governors, foreign dignitaries, and others seem to have been designed to show important support for the President's programs. These testimonials backed up previous and current goals, decisions, and successes of Johnson's administration.

For Controlling the Press Conference. The last aim of Johnson's voluntaries was to control or direct the press conference situation. How Johnson exerted this control is not revealed by many overt statements and supporting materials. The President was subtle in his manipulation. A few statements, however, do appear in some of the conferences, although Johnson rarely expanded upon such remarks.

Johnson's directives to reporters had to do with such matters as how long he would be available for questions, when and how Johnson wanted information released, how he would like his statement to be treated by the correspondents (for example, "off-the-record"), and even what he wanted reporters to write.
At his ranch, two days after Christmas in 1963, Johnson instructed reporters, after a series of announcements, as follows:

You will have these releases and you do not need to copy all of this material. I want to review them with you briefly in case you have some question. I will try to refer it or answer it.

... I do want to point out there is a mistake by Pierre Salinger's girls that he brought down here from the East Coast. They say "Office of the White House Secretary, LBJ Ranch, H-u-e, Texas." He didn't misspell Texas, but he did misspell Hye. I don't want any of you to follow the announcement literally. Correct all mistakes before using, please.

Another observation I want to make is that I gave Pierre that jacket he has on today because it is too large for me to wear—or too small.

With a touch of humor, Johnson tried to instruct reporters on a minor matter. He also wanted to say how he felt the writers should handle the voluntaries he read to them and how he wanted the conference questioning to proceed.

Johnson clearly indicated to reporters how much time he wanted for questions in the August 18, 1964, session. The conference started at 11:45 a.m., according to the "note" in the transcript. L.B.J. began by saying that he just had a few minutes before "a 12 o'clock meeting." He then spent two-thirds of the conference time giving data orally. Concluding his remarks, L.B.J. said he had not the time for "detailed questions," but that he would take a walk with them and with Iceland's Prime Minister Bjarni Benediktsson. The Prime Minister was arriving for the meeting Johnson had mentioned.

On New Year's Day, 1968, Johnson explained the ideas of an "Executive Order" he was having released. Johnson wanted to center the conference around those ideas. He told reporters why he had asked them out to the ranch that day: to brief them on the "Executive Order."
He concluded his review of the ideas with procedural remarks such as, "I will be glad to take some limited questions from you on this or other matters." He then told reporters that three of his assistants were present for a more "detailed backgrounding." Johnson continued, "While I don't want to cut off questioning, I am very anxious for this very important story to go out, and I am very anxious for you to have all the information you need in connection with it. I'll be glad to take a limited number of questions." Johnson then invited his three assistants, Walt Rostow, Joseph Califano, and Ernest Goldstein to join him. L.B.J. said, "... I will take questions on this or any other subject matter for a period of a very few minutes, and then I'll yield to them." He stayed during the briefing and interjected more comments not only in response to questions put to his advisers but to speed up getting the session finished. For example, at one point he said, "I wonder if you can wait until we talk to the Congress about that. . . ."

When President Johnson announced that Hanoi was agreeing to meet in Paris, he told the participants in a broadcast news conference that he did not want a lot of questioning on the announcement. He said, "I have never felt it was useful for public officials to confuse delicate negotiations by detailing personal views or suggestions or elaborating positions in advance. I know that all of you, therefore, will understand that I shall not discuss this question further at this conference." Furthermore, he changed the subject and introduced José Vivanco and Ambassador Raymond Telles, "Chairman of the Mexican-United States Border Commission between our two countries."

The illustrations of the President's statements to guide the flow of questioning show that supporting material was rather restricted.
Johnson sometimes amplified the announcements with repetition and restatement. He used statements of his own personal opinion and desire to develop the directive remarks. Johnson also used explanation, to some extent, to justify his guiding the conference.

Summary. Looked at generally, Johnson's news conference voluntaries were not exiguous in development. Moreover, Johnson used a variety of developmental materials to carry out the specific aims he had for the meetings. He employed the traditional forms of support normally associated with informing, amplifying, and persuading. He read releases and extemporized on his own thoughts. He provided news items which were frequently developed with background information. It is clear that Johnson often wanted his press corps to have detailed data, especially when the goal was to publicize and promote. When Johnson seemed to be talking not only to get comprehension but to win support for his administration, he was often expansive in his use of diverse materials. Some of those materials seem selected for the particular topic, occasion, and audience. Other times, especially when the goal was to amplify, the support is reminiscent of previous speeches and public statements on a particular theme. That is, many of the favorite arguments and proofs of previous communications came up in particular press conference voluntaries. How effective President Johnson was in developing his ideas is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

Situational Adjustment Techniques

Johnson's success is probably best measured in terms of his own strategy and goals in the press conference as well as with a view of the goals of the other participants. Johnson's apparent strategy was
to employ the voluntary to get to public opinion. The strategy generated six specific aims and subsequent development. But what seems more important, to some extent, than Johnson's typical and traditional supporting materials, are some specific techniques the man took to the situation in conjunction with the announcements. An explanation and assessment of these devices precede some general conclusions about the voluntaries.

The devices Johnson used in conjunction with the ideas and development are related to frequency, timing, length, issue avoidance, anticipation, interjection, and guest participation in the news conference voluntaries. All of these factors were under the President's control, as were most aspects of his press conferences. Johnson's manipulation of the seven factors seems calculated enough in many of the conferences to warrant a discussion of each.

Timing and Frequency. The timing of and frequency with which L.B.J. employed voluntaries paralleled, to a degree, the timing and frequency of the press conferences. He seemed to like the unscheduled, "surprise" conferences. The same element of spontaneity is noticeable in the scheduling of announcements.

Some regularity did exist. During the first two years, Johnson was predictable in the sense that fifty of the fifty-one conferences had at least one announcement of some kind. During the last three years, however, Johnson did not open approximately one in four of his conferences with voluntaries. What was not so predictable was the extent to which voluntaries would appear. Johnson's reply to a question in his second news conference, on the nature of his news conference plans, turned out to be a keynote. He said, "We don't want to
be too rigid. We always want to be flexible." The "we" probably meant that Johnson did not want a regular schedule. Further, he apparently wanted his questioners to agree that flexibility would serve their interests as well as his own aims.

President Johnson demonstrated variety in his timing and scheduling, not only with some diversity in the topics he brought up in a given conference but also with the length and nature of the development of those topics. In some conferences, all of the opening remarks related to one area of concern. In many, however, a variety of items showed up. The length of a given announcement as well as the length of the time devoted to announcements also varied. The general pattern was for Johnson to devote between a fourth and a third of his press conferences to his own statements. But the number of deviations from this norm is interesting. During his first three years in office Johnson often spent close to half of the allotted time to voluntaries. During the last two years that trend was reversed for the most part, as Johnson learned to abbreviate his opening remarks. So, for the specific amount of time the President might spend on a given announcement or in a particular topic area, the same sort of variance is seen as with the frequency with which specific topics, such as the economy or the war, appear over the years. That is, similar to the way that the topics of the domestic economic situation were frequently introduced in the early years of the Johnson administration, so, too, was the amount of time spent on that issue in a given voluntary more in those two years. Again, however, this was not always predictable. The governing factor, of course, was the President's will or mood.
Another aspect of Johnson's scheduling of events has to do with how he coordinated various other activities. The extent to which L.B.J. coordinated all of the communications of the executive branch is not known. It is evident, however, that Johnson exerted a good measure of control over official White House output. Johnson's voluntaries show that he wanted to be a direct participant in many of the activities of the press office. For example, Johnson often held his official conferences at times when the White House Press Secretary normally met reporters in the latter's twice-a-day conferences. Other activities seemed to lead to unscheduled voluntaries. For instance, Johnson called in reporters just before trips, just after cabinet meetings, before and after ceremonial functions such as receptions of dignitaries, and even in between his daily schedule of appearances at governors' conferences. Usually Johnson met reporters on an impromptu basis when he had something he wanted to tell them. Knowing that his daily activities were being "covered," L.B.J. guaranteed himself an audience, occasionally rewarding the White House press group, and others, with some sort of press conference.

While Johnson seems to have been guided by an expressed desire for "flexibility," by involvement with the work of the White House Press Office, and by his own daily and weekly activities in the scheduling and coordination of his voluntaries, another determining factor appears. Other external events also seem to have been a guiding force in Johnson's decisions on timing, scheduling, and length. National and international "crises," apparently relevant to the Presidency, generated a variety of decisions and communications. For the most part, Johnson went to the public or the press, or both, only after a
major decision had been made. How he communicated the decision varied. Johnson's having almost sixty separate television appearances in his first twenty-four months in office reveals one method. Although among Johnson's television appearances, major speeches, such as a "State of the Union," can be found, the dramatic preempts and broadcast news conference voluntaries also account for this type of communication. That is, if Johnson had something he deemed important to say to the public, he was not often hesitant in taking the matter to the press or the public, especially once the decision or action was done. Illustrations appear in Johnson's announcements of strike settlements, of his decisions to act in civil disturbances, and of his expressions of presidential will in difficult situations like that surrounding the death of Martin Luther King. Whether or not Johnson would preempt broadcast time or raise the issue in a news conference voluntary seemed to hinge on more than one factor.

**Length.** The logistic of length, as well as timing and frequency, may be a manifestation of Johnson's determination to approach some issues and avoid others. The topic might be an old one, as involvement in Vietnam came to be, or a current one such as rioting in Watts, California.

**Issue Avoidance.** Overall, Johnson avoided introductory statements on his personal life and on foreign affairs more than on other areas of discussion. Most voluntaries were, then, on presidential activities and domestic issues. Further, patterns of avoidance in topic areas evolved. The fact that Johnson held fewer conferences each year, except for 1966, and that he had fewer voluntaries each year, explain trends of increased avoidance on some topics, but not
all. Although L.B.J. was fairly consistent over the years in offering announcements of his nominations and appointments, he tended to shy away from introducing material on his own activities except for plans, decisions, and actions related to various meetings and conferences. An increased reluctance to discuss foreign affairs was another trend. In this connection, although Johnson introduced the topic of Vietnam more in 1965 than in any other year, the pattern was generally to avoid the topic; in 1967 he did not bring it up at all in press conferences. On domestic matters, the President gradually came to avoid most issues, save, perhaps, the area of legislation and the Congress, but especially the country's economy.

Aside from the general patterns of avoidance, specific, current issues were eschewed in voluntaries. Such issues were avoided in several ways. First, at times, as during the Dominican Republic upheaval, the President simply did not hold press conferences until he was ready to discuss the matter. Of course, Johnson avoided a few events and specific current issues completely in public statements on occasion. This was especially true during some periods of communication between the United States and Russia, and between the United States and foreign dignitaries who were attempting to bring about peace in Vietnam. Second, with some topics the President went directly to the public or used other forums to introduce such problems as the bombing of Vietnam. Third, when Johnson wanted to avoid bringing up a current event, he was prone either to have no introductory statements at all or to introduce unrelated issues, as he did at times when some of his major pieces of legislation were in trouble with congress.
The factor of issue avoidance is understood to some extent by a fifth determinant of Johnson's voluntaries, anticipation. As L.B.J.'s press secretaries have said, the President was well aware of what was on the minds of national news media representatives. He read, listened to, and watched, on a daily basis, what they were saying to the public. Moreover, the President and his staff apparently felt confident that they could guess which questions would come up in almost any conference. The extent to which and how the device of anticipation probably was used is worth consideration.

Anticipation. First, many of Johnson's opening statements did relate to quite specific events and issues of interest to the press. In some of these voluntaries Johnson told reporters, both directly and indirectly, that he knew what they wanted to find out. For instance, on January 23, 1964, L.B.J. met briefly with reporters in the Fish Room of the White House to talk about "our position on Panama and the Canal Zone." The only executive comments prior to that voluntary had been three White House news releases (January 10, 14, and 16), following Panama's severance of diplomatic relations. In the same conference, Johnson advised reporters that he knew that they also had asked about "an insurance policy" and about Bobby Baker's "gift of a stereo set." Johnson responded to those anticipated questions.

Another type of anticipation seen in the voluntaries was generated by questions which, going beyond specific events, had to do with trends. Reporters frequently asked the President for his opinions or "reactions" to a series of related events or issues. Some of the voluntaries reflect Johnson's awareness that this type of question
might come up. For example, the defensive voluntaries on L.B.J.'s press policies and on Vietnam manifested, to a degree, that the President not only was aware of growing or continued criticism, but also that correspondents were likely to bring up inquiry on such subjects. It may be that by answering questions before they were asked, Johnson felt the matter would be taken care of in a given press conference, or, perhaps, Johnson may have wanted to handle certain topics from the offensive, rather than from the defensive posture in which a given question might have seemed to place him.

Interjection. Johnson was somewhat unusual in that he occasionally presented his voluntaries in the middle or at the end of his conferences. Some conferences, in fact, have voluntaries at first, interspersed with questions, and at the close. Other combinations exist, also, although most of the time the voluntaries were placed in the traditional position. One reason for interjecting a voluntary may be that at times the President simply forgot to present the material early in the conference. It is also plausible that in some conferences L.B.J. added voluntaries because reporters failed to ask a particular question for which he had prepared and which he wanted to discuss. Perhaps, for example, a few of the "planted" questions did not get asked in some of his conferences. Interjecting announcements in the middle of a conference also might have been done to change the tone or subject of the questions which had been asked. Adding voluntaries at the end of the conference may have been useful in the same way. Final voluntaries might, if important enough, shift the emphasis reporters placed on the questions and answers to information which might be even more useful in preparing news stories on the
content of the press conference. Another factor which led to inserted remarks were the answers given by others in the joint conferences. At times such answers seemed to stimulate the President to defend or explain an administrative position. On such occasions the President seemed dissatisfied with the answers given by his guests. Other times, Johnson just seemed to want to talk a bit more and what he said does not seem to have been prepared at all. For example, Johnson reminisced for a minute or two in a conference at his ranch on his fifty-fourth birthday.

**Guest Participation.** A final important factor related to the voluntaries was the result of Johnson's having news conferences with guests. In these joint conferences, the guests were selected to serve the President's aims as well as the needs of newsmen, on occasion. Johnson held these conferences to inform, to show unity among Democrats, to show support for his programs and policies, to display shared responsibility and decision making, and to establish a situation in which the guests and the President might enhance each other's ethos. Because guests appeared in more than one in five of the conferences, how the guest figured, especially in the voluntaries, bears attention.

Sometimes the guests were simply present and did not speak during the President's conference. This was the case when Johnson announced his nomination of Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court, June 13, 1967. In this situation, and in others when the guests answered a few questions, the appearance of guests seems to have been more ceremonial than functional, as when Mrs. Johnson answered a few questions at a news conference on one of L.B.J.'s birthdays. On the other hand,
the presence of particular persons may have been useful in establishing a mood or tone in a given meeting.

Guest appearances seem more important in those conferences when the visitors spoke. Some conference guests seem to have been asked merely to inform. For example, the Budget Director helped Johnson brief reporters on detailed matters. With Johnson taking the lead in the conference, the Budget Director was able to support and expand upon what L.B.J. said. More than the transfer of information may have been sought. Added credence for the President as the nation's economic leader may have been an aim.

Another dramatic and unusual example of shared conference appears on November 3, 1966. Johnson walked into the Cabinet Room of the White House and announced that he was to have an operation. He introduced a team of his doctors to the reporters. Johnson then left the meeting, allowing Press Secretary Bill Moyers and three physicians to provide details in a voluntary by George Burkley, M.D. (and with over thirty-five questions and answers). Moyers gave information on the medical team's members. Burkley, Johnson's personal physician, followed with an opening statement. The doctor said, in closing his remarks, "There is no indication of any serious problem . . . and his general health continues to be excellent." It seems obvious here that Johnson wanted the press and the public to have more than his own word on the subject. Again, not only was specific information available, but the presence and remarks of others may have been calculated to make the general message appear highly important and credible.

Some of the shared conferences seemed designed to display national unity and support for Johnson's administration. Once more, it appears
that Johnson wanted to enhance the ethos of his leadership. Johnson held six official news conferences with governors. Three of these took place on March 12, 1966, the last day of the National Governor's Conference that year. The first of the three occurred at about noon, and Governor John Reed was asked by Johnson to make a few remarks. Reed was extremely complimentary and gracious. He said, for example, "...I know I speak for my fellow Governors when I say that we are relieved, we are encouraged for the prospects of closer liaison between Federal and State governments." An exchange of thanks between Johnson and Reed followed. About an hour later, following another meeting, nine other governors were called on by Johnson to tell the press of their reactions to the meeting. Again, an impressive "bipartisan" display of support for an aspect of Johnson's "Great Society" was effected through those statements. In the last news conference, about 5 p.m. that day, Johnson assembled another group of governors to meet the press. Governor Reed, the Chairman, talked at some length about the President's "generous" involvement in the affairs of the Conference and L.B.J.'s actions in behalf of the states. Not only that, the Governor then read a statement which quoted "a resolution that was adopted unanimously at the session this afternoon." The resolution had endorsed Johnson's Vietnam policies. Reed concluded with an expression of national support for Johnson's aims and programs in Southeast Asia. Reed asserted that the peace "demonstrations" in the United States did not represent the majority will. He said, "The American people are wholeheartedly behind the President," in the governors' view. Later in 1966 and again in 1967 Johnson held press conferences with other governors. For example, on December 21, 1966,
after a meeting of Democratic governors, Harold Hughes and the President each talked to news correspondents.

On April 8, 1965, Johnson initiated the practice of having various presidential advisors join him for news conferences on the Vietnam problem. April 8 was the day after L.B.J.'s speech at Johns Hopkins University, "Peace Without Conquest." The President had appointed Eugene Black to meet with U Thant to discuss ideas for ending the war. Black was present and stood for questions in the conference. Later, in 1966, Johnson shared two conferences with Robert McNamara, one with Averell Harriman, and another with the Prime Minister of Laos. In 1967 Henry Cabot Lodge talked to reporters with the President as the Guam meeting on Southeast Asia ended. On July 13, 1967, a press conference featured Robert McNamara, General Earle Wheeler, and General William Westmoreland. On May 30, 1968, General Westmoreland and Australia's Prime Minister met the press with Johnson.

The statements by these guests upheld Johnson's goals and policies in Vietnam. In turn, Johnson praised his guests for their abilities and for their efforts. But the main effect sought seems to have been to demonstrate unity among the advisors and reinforcement for the administration's position and practices. Along with the presence of such important persons as Harriman and Lodge were useful and persuasive messages made by those guests. Johnson's having others report directly to the press, rather than summarizing what he had been told, allowed the President to focus attention on those guests. Perhaps, further, L.B.J. thought that having someone else available to help explain such matters as troop increases and prolonged military activity might prove that these decisions and actions were not Johnson's alone.
By having these guests at press conferences, Johnson was also able to defer some of the questioning in the conference.

**Audience Adaptations.** The description of Johnson's specific aims, methods of development, and the special techniques employed in volunteers supplies bases for some evaluative remarks. This assessment takes into account the three basic conference participants, the President, the press, and the public.

It is not difficult to see why so many correspondents complained about Johnson's press policies. Johnson's voluntaries alone appear highly self-serving if one chiefly does not identify or equate "the national interest" with the interests of a particular president. Notwithstanding national needs and the goals of reporters, an evaluation in terms of Johnson's aims is possible, especially to the degree that presidential power is seen to be important. What is more important for this study, however, is the general criterion of audience adaptation. That is, how effective Johnson was in communicating with the press and the public provides, probably, a significant question for measuring the press conference voluntaries.

The public is an indirect participant in a presidential news conference. Public remoteness probably is increased when a conference is not broadcast. Therefore, the needs of the public's "representatives," the correspondents, should be specified. Saying that reporters attend press conferences "to get news" indicates a major goal. Yet that generalization is not sufficient for careful analysis. The press participates in the meetings to get material for immediate news stories and to enable themselves to write interpretative, speculative, and feature articles. Further, the competitive nature of
American journalism probably causes reporters to feel the need to "sell" their writing to their editors and publishers. In turn, editors and publishers want to reach various segments of the public and to sell newspapers, magazines, and broadcast programs. In the case of broadcast journalism, networks and stations are also dependent upon another economic factor, advertising, possibly more than the print media, since most news programs have commercial "sponsors." Broadcast media compete for public attention with news programs in order to sell advertising time because advertising defrays the production costs. Therefore, the broadcast media must meet public and private (business) interests to be successful. In this way journalism may be seen as an industry or business in which news is a commodity. To a degree, then, correspondents must serve themselves and the media they represent. They must get salable materials.

A secondary goal also related to a need for self preservation. The press not only preserves itself with what it gets in the press conference but with how it performs in maintaining the environment which provides for it. To some extent, correspondents must establish and maintain a relationship with the Chief Executive which will promote the fulfillment of their own needs. Also, they must protect the institution of the press conference by their demeanor if they find that institution efficacious from their own point of view.

Another function of reporters, also of secondary importance, perhaps, stems from the "fourth estate" theory. The theory posits that reporters represent the public. These representatives meet with the President to get information, to communicate public attitudes, and to exert a measure of control on the executive branch of
government. In the press conference, reporters observe, question, and talk. The questions and statements of reporters may be interpreted as public communication to the president, according to the theory.

Sufficient evidence is not available to demonstrate how correspondents, either individually or collectively, subscribe to the goals of maintaining the press conference as an institution and serving as a "fourth branch" of government. Reporters at Johnson's conferences probably were most interested in getting materials for their stories, although they probably had other goals, too.

Applications of this understanding of the purposes of the press in the conferences appear in the following conclusions and in the treatments of the questions and answers.

President Johnson's voluntaries show that he was aware of correspondents' desires, even if he did not always seem to appreciate them. In some ways the voluntaries met those needs quite well. On the other hand, the way Johnson handled the announcements in some conferences was not apparently for the benefit of his immediate audience.

To fulfill reporters' need for materials the President often provided new information. For example, correspondents seemed interested in presidential decisions and activities. Johnson responded to that interest by announcing a number of important nominations and appointments as well by presenting data which were not available elsewhere.

Aside from occasional vital and dramatic announcements, Johnson often supplied useful background information for reporters. For example, giving biographical details of appointees may have saved time for those newsmen facing immediate deadlines. L.B.J. often was
not reluctant to supply a sufficient array of details for the kind of writing many of his questioners did. And when he did not give out the details orally, he often had written "handouts" prepared, such as copies of messages to congress and other White House releases.

At times, the voluntaries seem planned to aid those journalists who were writing interpretative stories. For instance, the long explanations of tax and other economic, legislative requests may have been given to help media representatives comprehend and interpret the specific measures entailed in such requests. Even some of the lengthy commentaries on foreign policy, when they were not simply restatements, may be seen as useful materials for the interpretative type of communication.

The voluntaries appear less designed to provide for the speculative interests of correspondents. When a major decision was pending, if Johnson mentioned it at all, he was prone to say, "We will let you know as soon as we decide."

In many ways Johnson's announcements seem to have been more adapted to his own interests than to the needs of his press corps. The pursuit of his own aims as revealed by the topics, supporting materials, and other devices demonstrates little concern for the press at times. Johnson quite often used voluntaries to publicize and promote more than to inform. Many of the promotional statements seem inappropriate for the immediate audience. The voluntaries which seem mainly planned for ethos enhancement were probably wasted on reporters much of the time.

Johnson's supporting materials appear more useful for direct public addresses than for many of his press conference statements.
This is especially true of the restatements of policy relative to Vietnam, in which persuasion and amplification led to the use of proofs more appropriate for the general public than for the press. It is doubtful that Johnson's heavy use of repetition and restatement was of great value to correspondents. The difficulty lies not so much in the quality of the materials L.B.J. used but in the excessive attempts to achieve propaganda aims which prompted those materials. Johnson probably used the press conference format to give argumentative speeches too often, in terms of the goals of the press. In fact, in both broadcast and non-broadcast conferences, Johnson sometimes used reporters as a sort of captive audience to rehash policy, react to his critics, and convince the nation of the successes of his programs. The news conference gave the President a convenient speaking situation. But his occasional and time consuming talks on the national well-being may not have been of great interest to the press.

While it is natural that the president and the press do not always have common causes, Johnson's aims and the development of his ideas seem to leave much to be desired, at least from the standpoint of audience adjustment.

Even less adaptive were other techniques L.B.J. used in conjunction with his voluntaries. The frequency with which announcements appear probably presented no difficulties for most correspondents. The occasional surprise statements probably yielded good news materials for reporters, although the surprises may have deterred some questioners from asking questions on other subjects. Further, reporters could not easily predict if Johnson would have an important statement to make,
if he would have nothing to introduce, or if he would talk at length. Irregularities in the frequency and timing of voluntaries may have discouraged some reporters from careful preparation before a given conference, whether the conference was impromptu or not. On many occasions reporters had little opportunity to offer many questions which were not generated by the voluntaries. Thus, incentive for adequate preparation was lost to an extent. In fact, many reporters, especially among the White House "regulars," may have come to depend upon the President to provide topics for questions at times.

A related factor, also unpredictable to a degree, was the amount of time Johnson might usurp with his remarks. The length of the voluntary period was often excessive. In the majority of the conferences the President spent from a fourth to over half of the conference time with his own prepared statements, frequently leaving little time for questioning. While Johnson may have felt he was simply providing useful material for reporters to pass on to the nation, the correspondents may have been frustrated frequently in not having time enough to ask questions on other topics or to ask "follow-up" questions. Once more, Johnson's spending so much time on his own remarks may have led to a dependency for some correspondents. That is, a few reporters probably calculated that L.B.J. would often talk at some length, thus restricting the time available for inquiry. Therefore, some reporters may have been reluctant to do research and to make extensive preparation of questions. A press conference with a long period of announcements followed by many questions related to the voluntaries was not unusual. But this type of conference may not have been in the best interests of all of the media representatives present, especially those who had important questions on other topics.
Johnson's capabilities at anticipating questions cannot be criticized except when that anticipation affected what happened in the press conference. Many of Johnson's voluntaries seem designed to answer questions before they could be asked. This not only gave the President the initiative with a particular topic but frequently led him to expect that his opening remarks would be the only discussion necessary. Indeed, on occasion Johnson indicated that he wanted no questions on certain topics. Further, he often talked so long on a particular subject that more questions on the topic would have denied inquiry into other matters. If Johnson did know what questions would be asked, he might have waited for the questions so as to provide more of a question and answer atmosphere in his press conferences. Allowing reporters to ask even those questions which he anticipated might have stimulated better questioning simply because the questioners would have had the privilege of initiating inquiry as opposed to passively listening to the President.

A further measure of control Johnson exerted over the press conferences with his voluntaries was the interjection of announcements during the question period. Interspersed statements may have thrown correspondents off balance and may have unnecessarily postponed or eliminated a line of questioning, especially if the interjected remarks were stimulating enough to generate a new direction of inquiry.

The "planned spontaneity" of some of those announcements may have interrupted a flow of follow-up questions on vital topics. If the interjected remarks were important enough to make in a news conference, Johnson probably would have served reporters better by placing them in the traditional position, especially in those conferences which allowed
only a few minutes for questioning anyway. Further, it may have
seemed unfair to reporters that L.B.J. made some of his announce-
ments after the question period was finished. It is possible that
correspondents were denied the opportunity on some occasions to in-
quire about announcements made in Johnson's closing remarks.

The device of the shared news conferences presents another diffi-
culty. Even if they occasionally were warned that a particular guest
or guests would appear, correspondents probably did not know to what
extent they might be able to question a guest. The questioning of
guests also limited the time available for questioning the President.
The time Johnson spent introducing his visitors and what he had to
say about them was often superfluous. At times his own reactions to
guests' voluntaries turned some conferences into ceremonies of mutual
congratulation rather than opportunities to query important govern-
mental leaders. The voluntaries of guests, while often affording
newsmen with useful materials, were also sometimes propagandistic
in nature. That is, persons speaking at Johnson's conferences fre-
quently presented brief talks to support Johnson's administration.
Of course, supporting remarks were appropriate in the presence of the
Chief Executive. But statements which merely amplified known informa-
tion probably did little to meet the needs of many media men. Most of
those who met reporters with the President probably held or could
have held their own press conferences which might have been more advan-
tageous to the press as a whole on occasions.

One essential factor related to the press conference voluntaries
has to do with the importance of the material presented. This cri-
terion involves adaptations to the press and to the public. Many of
Johnson's opening statements just as easily could have been released by a White House press aide or some other public information person in another part of the government. That is, a number of Johnson's informational announcements were relatively minor in importance; there was no need for the President to make them. This seems true of some announcements about technological, military developments, about minor staff changes, and about routine activities of the President. In terms of public interest, the press conference was not necessarily the best possible channel of communicating much of the relatively unimportant matters which appear in the voluntaries. Even when it was in the "national interest" to provide certain information to the public, the press conference was only one of many available ways to reach the larger audience.

How Johnson's voluntaries met another need of newsmen merits some consideration. The extent to which the press felt they represented the public is not so important as the fact that the press conference situation does provide an opportunity for some such representation. Assuming that correspondents could ask questions reflecting public needs, attitudes, and interests, it is difficult to see at times how Johnson's voluntaries encouraged such representational inquiry. First, the more the President spoke, the less reporters could ask. What Johnson said often determined what reporters queried. Dramatic announcements could easily forestall questions on other important matters of public concern. Further, attempted exhaustion of a particular issue in a voluntary seems to have been calculated to inhibit inquiry on rather vital matters. On occasion, Johnson seemed to say, "Here is all you need on this matter. Let's go on to other items."
This appears true of policy statements, such as those on the war, in some of the conferences. Even the lengthy reports showing achievements in numerous facets of the domestic economy might make follow up questions seem unnecessary or unwarranted considering the importance of other matters and the time available to ask about a variety of national concerns. Johnson apparently attempted to avoid certain areas of questioning either by not mentioning a particular issue or by attempting to dismiss an issue with his introductory remarks. These tactics probably did little to stimulate reporters who wanted to channel public feedback to the White House.

An extension of the theory which holds that the press can serve as a "check" on the executive branch leads to another question. That is, to what extent did Johnson's use of voluntaries promote an environment in which the press could function as a control over the President? The question is worth brief consideration because some members of the press corps, or their editors and publishers, may have subscribed to the theory. Johnson probably did not. Johnson's introductory remarks indicate a view of reporters not only as competitors for news but also as his own agents. Johnson certainly did not appear to invite questions on national policy. The avoidance of statements about important decisions and negotiations which were in progress as well as the President's expressed wishes not to receive inquiry on such matters are probably manifestations of an attitude which ran counter to the "fourth estate" idea of some of the press. What Johnson did choose to say in his voluntaries and the amount of time apparently devoted to publicity and promotional aims gives the same impression. Beyond the content of the topics and the developmental materials as the devices
Johnson used to control the conferences with his voluntaries. Had L.B.J. thought of the press as extra governmental force to influence decision making in the White House, he might have exhibited less control over the conferences. Although President Johnson may have understood the desire of some of the press to influence government, his voluntaries do not reveal that he adapted to the need.

A final and even more difficult measure of the audience adaptations in Johnson's voluntaries draws in the larger, ultimate audience, the public. While L.B.J. certainly aimed to influence or win over the press, he also wanted to maintain his leadership with the aid of public support. Moreover he had a duty to serve the "national interest" in what he said at press conferences. Various components of the public, even as indirect participants, probably had some basic needs. The public goals were probably among these four. First, many citizens may have wanted recent information and opinions from the President on currently important affairs. That is, for many readers and listeners, the conference could provide information upon which to base intelligent opinions. Informed citizens may be able to relate better to their representatives in government. If public opinion is to influence government, it should be based upon knowledge and the President is in a position to determine the extent to which certain data reach the public. Second, many persons in the country may have felt a desire to affect Presidential decisions through the confrontation situation of the news conference. In other words, feedback to the president may be afforded through the questions reporters ask, to the extent that reporters are willing and able to reflect public opinions. Third, the press conference may allow the public to observe and evaluate an
aspect of presidential leadership. Some citizens may feel that seeing the president's interaction with reporters can help gauge the general effectiveness of his service as well as his abilities to handle specific issues. The fourth possible goal of citizens, not unrelated to the other goals, may have been to participate vicariously in press conferences. By identifying with the direct participants in the meetings, some persons may feel more a part of the affairs of state. The feeling of involvement may satisfy basic needs of people who are interested in the presidency or the press, or both.

What Johnson did to meet the needs of the public in his voluntaries is a perplexing problem because the president is privileged to use his view of "national interest" to determine what and how he communicates. It is difficult to question a president's judgment when a president argues that what he does or does not do, including what he chooses to say, is based upon the best interests of society. In retrospect, however, some comments can be made about Johnson's adaptations to his public audience in the press conference voluntaries.

In some ways, Johnson's aims appear to conflict with public needs. To some extent the public does need to be assured that its President is providing the leadership needed to accomplish the nation's goals. On the other hand, the press conference voluntary is not the only way of demonstrating effectiveness. The degree to which Johnson tried to achieve his promotional and publicity aims may have interfered with the public need for useful information. Naturally, Johnson rarely brought up matters which would reflect failure on the part of his leadership. But he also tended to present one-sided pictures of success. Johnson did not often initiate discussion on problems facing
the nation unless he wanted to express his own will. Perhaps Johnson so strongly identified his own aims and programs with what he felt the public wanted that he saw no need to go much beyond announcing decisions and achievements.

A more difficult complication is President Johnson's apparent avoidance of statements on the progress of decision making. He did not like to make public the alternatives he was weighing. Perhaps he did not want public discussion on his decisions until they were made. But his secrecy may be seen as a denial of the needs of many persons to know what was happening in a very powerful branch of government. Moreover, the reluctance to announce progress on decisions may have inhibited the feedback function of public opinion. It is difficult for a president to maintain strong leadership if he appears indecisive, but it may be even more difficult to lead if surprise decisions do not satisfy the public. Perhaps one area in which President Johnson may have communicated with more candor was the Vietnam problem, which came to dominate reporters' minds if not the attentions of most of the public. As noted, Johnson's statements on Vietnam, as well as on other foreign policy matters, tended to repeat arguments and proofs presented previously by the President. The press conference voluntaries show that L.B.J. did not often relate important, new, factual data to the public. He was more likely to argue and defend policy rather than explain details of American involvement in Southeast Asia. Making the news conference a forum to express his hopes for peace seems to have prohibited the presentation of a balanced report on the prospects of attaining that peace. Johnson sometimes gave the impression that the possibilities for peace
were good. And although he warned that the United States' commitment might be costly, his warnings were so general, and his expressions of hope and his pleas for continued support so earnest, that the public did not get much in the way of specific information on that particular subject. The press conference voluntary was not, probably, the place for detailed reports on Vietnam and other important and complicated matters, such as the economy. By the same measure neither was the voluntary the best place for passionate pleas for public support. Johnson met frequently enough with the press to provide useful and frank progress reports to the populace and such voluntaries might not have conflicted with the public need or "right to know" what was happening with regard to a major difficulty.

The possible lack of adaptation to the public need for information during the formation of policies and decisions and on matters affecting national welfare relates to another area of aims which may have been in disaccord. The need for citizens to talk back to the White House may have been discouraged by the voluntaries in the same way that the President's initial statements seem to have inhibited reporters' asking questions which reflected national interests.

The voluntaries were adaptive, to a degree, to those citizens who wanted to observe and evaluate presidential leadership. The voluntaries were frequent and lengthy enough, but they did more to exhibit what the President wanted to say than his abilities to tackle unresolved difficulties. For those who already agreed with Johnson's policies, the voluntaries provided ample display of forcefulness and decisiveness. For those who questioned various policies, the propagandistic nature of many of L.B.J.'s announcements and his avoidance of
particular issues may have been unrewarding. Johnson's aims and efforts to defend his policies and actions probably left much to be desired for some. Johnson rarely attacked the specific proposals of his critics. He usually dismissed his detractors with reaffirmations of his own position. Failure to deal with specific points may have diminished the apparent importance of counter proposals to his programs but this tactic probably did not provide an adequate basis for understanding the President's defensive replies or for evaluating his abilities to give fair consideration to the ideas of his opposition.

Two aspects of L.B.J.'s opening statements contrasted with Kennedy's style. First, Johnson differed in the way he attempted to build his own image. Second, Johnson probably showed the public a stronger, more direct measure of attempted control over the press than had J.F.K. The contrasts may have kept some citizens from identifying with L.B.J. as a participant in the conferences. Although Johnson did not have to attempt emulation of any previous president's style, his own efforts may have been too abrupt a change to satisfy this particular public need. Johnson might have done more, however, to curtail the length and the somewhat obvious self-congratulatory nature of many of his announcements, especially in the televised conferences. In fact, some indirect participants in the conferences may have come to feel an identity with the press because of the frustrations felt and expressed by many correspondents in getting opportunities to question as well as in eliciting responsive replies. The public need to feel a part of the press conference situation is relatively minor, but not totally inconsequential considering the fact
that public identification with its national leadership may provide the president with the kind of support that is sometimes advantageous to effective action in dealing with congress, critics, and foreign powers.

Summary. Studying President Johnson's press conference voluntaries reveals some definite attempts at audience adaptations. Johnson apparently adjusted to his immediate audience, the press, by giving them important "news" on several occasions. He also appears to have tried to adapt to his ultimate audience, the public, with both information and persuasion.

President Johnson's own purposes and the manifestation of his aims in the content and related governing factors seems to run contrary to the needs of the press and the public in many ways. L.B.J.'s promotional zeal appears to have overtaken the chances of his satisfying some important wants of the other participants in his conference. This is not to say that he was unaware of those needs or that his goals were calculated to circumvent satisfying the press and the public. Johnson's use of opening statements does show, however, that he probably was not effective in audience adjustment as often as might have been desirable.

Aside from audience adjustment, external evidence of Johnson's overall effectiveness in achieving his own purposes in the voluntaries exists to a degree. Because L.B.J.'s aims in answering questions were essentially the same as those of his voluntaries, a general assessment of his effectiveness is better understood after considering other components of the press conference, the questions and answers.
The Quest

In most of President Johnson's news conferences press inquiry provided stimuli for much of what was said. Reporters' questions bear consideration not only as antecedents to answers but also from the standpoint of the press' goals and the characteristics of the queries. An evaluation of the questions is also presented, briefly, to enlarge an understanding of the context of Johnson's replies.

Understanding the purposes of the press is essential. To recapitulate what was said in preceding parts of this study, newsmen who attended the presidential press conference appear to have had one major aim: to get materials for publishing or broadcasting. While most correspondents may have been interested in writing reports of what the President said, others attended the conferences to write interpretative, speculative, feature, and editorial commentaries. To write their stories reporters had to get various kinds of replies from the President. Some writers desired specific pieces of information or factual data which evidently was not immediately available elsewhere. Other correspondents wanted opinions, reactions, and projections from the Chief Executive.

The press had two minor goals beyond getting news. One was derived from some correspondents' interests in playing a role in governmental affairs, including those who felt able to represent the public as well as those who wanted to influence the White House in other ways. Another aim of the press was to maintain a direct line with the President. This meant maintaining the institution of the news conference, too, because the press cannot always determine whether or when a president will meet with them, let alone under what conditions.
The questions in the news conferences were chiefly expressions of the needs of the press. Some queries did reflect consideration for public interests. Others seemed responsive to some of the President's purposes. The aims of all of the participants provide a standpoint from which to evaluate the effectiveness of the content and style of the press conference queries.

Among the qualities of the questions' content are timeliness, importance, situational appropriateness, and responsiveness. The meaning and application of each of these characteristics is found in the discussion which evaluates the content of the questions.

The style of the questions is assessed with regard to question types and in terms of the qualities of clarity, tone, conciseness, and appropriateness. This evaluation follows the treatment of aspects of question's content.

Content

A major measure of press conference inquiry is timeliness. A timely question might anticipate events, might come up during events, or might follow some occurrence. Of course, the sooner a question is asked (and answered), the more valuable it is to reporters who compete for news and have publishing or broadcast deadlines. Questions may be well timed, also, when they relate to less immediate, continuing phenomena.

Johnson's press corps apparently excelled in asking questions related to current events. Even though the President did not seem to like questions which anticipated his decisions or actions, reporters continued, over the years, to ask such questions.
President Johnson held his first official news conference at noon on his first day as occupant of the White House, December 7, 1963. The opening question was, "Will you be here today?" Other inquiries in that conference treated the possibility of L.B.J.'s planning to meet with Charles De Gaulle, future plans for holding press conferences, prospects for programs to reduce unemployment, and Johnson's plans for weekends and Christmas. Another reporter sought to find out what would be done with an F.B.I. report on John Kennedy's assassination. From the first conference through the last, interest in future events rarely waned.

Interrogatories during the progress of particular affairs were common, although the President, again, often showed a predilection to wait until an affair was ending before he responded in a press conference. For instance, a series of happenings in the Middle East during the summer of 1967 elicited a number of queries, especially during periods of involvement in the conflict, and during rumored or real presidential activity related to the problem.

Questions put to the President after events account for some of the news conference inquiries. After the fact questioning usually resulted from a hiatus in public statements or presidential press conferences during crucial times. For example, during the American military intervention in the Dominican Republic, and during the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin affair, reporters had to wait until after presidential action to ask. Such questions were opportune because they were raised as soon as possible.

The typical timeliness of correspondents' queries to the President probably shows that the reporters served themselves and the
public in seeking immediate responses on current issues. The questions which anticipated events may have been useful in demonstrating press and public interest in the future to the person who had much responsibility for those events. An example of such a question appears in Johnson's sixth press conference, February 1, 1964. A newsman asked, "Mr. President, you spoke of viewing these foreign problems in the perspective of history rather than today's headlines. Looking at the problem of Viet-Nam that way, how do you look, what do you see down the road? Is this a situation that can be settled in a military way? Do you rule out any neutralization such as General deGaulle suggests, or what is your general perspective on Viet-Nam?"

In some ways, perhaps, too much of the questioning was generated by the proximity of specific matters. Reporters did not regularly reflect or request retrospection or reflection while querying the President. Such questions might have raised discussion to more of a philosophical plane than is traditional for the conferences. On the other hand, continued requests for Johnson's analyses of critical matters may have promoted more effective, thoughtful, and important answers. A number of factors vitiated against the achievement of such an ideal. Reporters were not often rewarded for asking analytic questions. Johnson's rapport with the press in general was not great and he apparently did not see the potential value of those writers who can provide insightful interpretations of contemporary issues. The competitive striving for "hard" news to get quick publication and broadcast, the apparently intense interest in what the President was doing at the time, and the probable lack of emphasis on contemplative stories found in most American news publications and
broadcasts also may have suppressed the appearance of questions which do not, on the surface, appear to be timely. Other factors, such as the number of questioners present, the amount of time available, the apparent need for follow-up questions, the impromptu nature of so many of the press conferences, Johnson's predilection for propaganda, and even the abilities of many newsmen may have forestalled frequent appearance of less timely queries.

A quality of the questions related to timeliness is importance. By importance is meant the value of knowing what the questions apparently sought. From the standpoint of the chief aim of correspondents, enough of the questions do appear to seek responses from Johnson which would help. In many cases the same holds for public necessity and desire. Because Johnson was aggressive in many of his leadership roles, and because he wielded influence and power which affected the public daily, it was important for the press and the public to keep up with his policies and activities.

Highly significant questions on the war and on domestic difficulties appear in the question and answer sessions. During periods of civil violence, reporters asked about presidential plans to solve the problems. When Johnson talked about the economy, newsmen asked about the effects of specific programs on the "taxpayer" and on the inflation issue. As the military and economic involvement in Southeast Asia increased, so did the quality of questioning on that matter.

Overall, much of the questioning appears not to have been of more than immediate importance, however. Reporters usually asked about what was happening at the time and about the imminent effects
of events. What may be said about the short-sighted nature of some of the inquiry has already been treated with regard to the possible problems of having questions which were "timely" in an immediate sense. Newsman rarely asked about the long range consequences of many issues such as ecology, population, and international cooperation. And for many of the same reasons that apply to the diminution of questions seeking reflective or analytic responses, justification may be seen for the temporal quality of a lot of the inquiries.

Beyond the questions which seem important in various ways are those which seem rather limited in value. Many press conferences contain inquiry which appears to be almost inconsequential, especially in terms of the public's needs. Personal and political questions were often of short lived, if any, value. The continued probing on Johnson's political plans for 1964, for example, appears to be more useful to writers than to the national interest. Two conferences in July, 1964, illustrate this point. On July 24, in a televised conferences, over half of the questions were on politics, mostly on Johnson's campaign plans. Six days later, seventeen of the nineteen questions pressed Johnson on the same issue. This trend continued in the questioning at press conferences through August and September. A number of questions on miscellaneous matters, such as those of chief concern to the press, took away some time from more vital concerns. For example, on August 9, 1966, three successive questions were asked on Lynda Bird Johnson's "job hunting."

Another quality pertaining to questions may be called "situational appropriateness." This criterion asks if questions were best asked to the President and if they were best asked in presidential
news conferences. The bulk of the inquiry appears to have been quite appropriate. A factor which confounds general assessment, however, is knowing the availability and adequacy of other sources like the White House press office, cabinet members, and military leaders. Further, Johnson met the press unofficially, almost daily, and the results of those meetings are not generally known.

Most of the questions do seem designed just for Johnson, whether to get information or a "reaction." A few questions do not seem suited to a press conference, at least in terms of importance to the citizenry. Again inquiries on personal affairs of the President, on immediate needs of correspondents, and on politics might have been channeled elsewhere or later. Consider the following exchange in the June 13, 1967 meeting:

Q. Mr. President, yesterday Mrs. Johnson said you have been a protestor all of your life.
The President. She has reminded me of that a good many times before yesterday.
Q. You agree with the statement, then?
The President. Yes.

Finally, a general quality of the content, responsiveness, calls into question correspondent's tendencies and abilities in meeting the needs of the conference participants. How reporters responded to their own needs and those of the public has been discussed to some extent in the preceding treatment. The press also responded to presidential needs in some ways. For example, in many of the hastily called conferences reporters tended to follow Johnson's leads by asking a number of questions about his voluntaries. Such questions not only fulfilled correspondents' urges to get details but gave the President an opportunity to reinforce his messages. In other ways, however, the content of the questions appears less responsive to L.B.J.'s
favorite topics, especially as his most frequent areas of approach and avoidance contrast with what the press apparently wanted to know about. In some cases, what Johnson usually avoided bringing up himself, reporters were prone to ask. The reverse was true, too. Johnson's avoidance of announcements on personal matters was compensated for by newsmen's queries. His reluctance to introduce information was balanced in the question period. One of Johnson's favorite topics in his first year, the domestic economy, was one of little interest to reporters that year. This apparent state was maintained by a fairly equal amount of emphasis between voluntaries and questions on two topics, the presidency in general and domestic issues other than the economy. The fact that the press tended to pursue those issues which the President did not seem so interested in initiating was probably useful for all the participants. Keeping the President aware of the desires of the press by pressing issues which L.B.J. tended to eschew may also have helped the nation and reporters to find out vital information at times.

As a rule, the press acquitted itself well in Johnson's news conferences by responding to events and issues of potential importance and interest to American citizens. Newsmen were at their best, often, when they asked about specific current happenings. Moreover, they occasionally responded to trends of events and to significant, general issues. The press served the public by apparently being sensitive to a need for more information on certain topics. For example, after important statements by Johnson, such as a "State of the Union" address, writers were not hesitant to ask for a better understanding of particular statements.
In terms of content, then, the questions probably reflected the immediate needs of newsmen to report and interpret specific events. Next, newsmen were quick to respond to some of the President's manifest aims by following most of his announcements with inquiry. Further, the public was served by most of the news conference inquiry which probably reflected many aspects of public interest in and attitudes toward the country's leadership. The content of the questions, then, seems quite appropriate in terms of varying specific stimuli and pressures affecting the press during Johnson's administration.

**Types**

The style of the press conference questions is worth noting since various aspects of style may have had as much effect in the conferences as the content of the inquiry. The type of questions asked and the clarity, tone, conciseness, and appropriateness with which correspondents worded their interrogatives are scrutinized briefly.

Question types are possibly best looked at from the standpoint of the objectives of the questioner. The chief types of questions were four: data seeking, opinion seeking, reaction seeking and follow-up.

Questions for data included those which sought specific bits of information or general expositions of factual detail. Such questions probably represent the most common kind of questioning in the conferences. Concrete information, especially if it is as yet unheard of, can become valuable to writers. Since Johnson was a major news source so often during his administration, it is no wonder that more often than not questions wanting specific data appear in the conferences.
A second type of inquiry sought Johnson's opinions. More specifically, statements on policy, on prophecy, and on Johnson's analysis of situations were requested frequently by the press. Beyond knowing exactly what the President was doing, reporters wanted to know such things as Johnson's rationale for action, his philosophical viewpoint, the structure of his attitudes on issues, his vision of the future, and how he interpreted the course of various events. Such questions were less directive and more probative in nature. They tended to appear seasonally, especially at the first of the year, on Johnson's birthday, and at the end of the year. For instance on January 16, 1965, a writer asked, "Mr. President, on the eve of your inauguration could you sum up or characterize for us your view of the general world condition, or the leadership job that you see ahead for us?" Although that reporter may have sought the content of L.B.J.'s "Inaugural Address," it was not an uncommon request.

Johnson's fifty-fourth birthday (August 27, 1966) was the occasion for a conference at the "L.B.J. Ranch." In that meeting, although one question was, "Mrs. Johnson, what are you going to have for dinner tonight?" Other queries, to the President, were broader. One reporter asked Johnson to "lay down a basic philosophy for what might be called the next chapter ahead in world affairs." Another correspondent asked about the "prospect" for improved relations between the United States and Russia.

Questions to elicit the President's reactions were not uncommon. With such questions reporters wanted to gauge Johnson's feelings on various issues rather than to get specific data or statements of policy. Inquiry for expressive behavior dealt with criticisms and
topics which were sensitive to Johnson. In these queries newsmen expressed or alluded to critical evaluations of Johnson's performance and programs. Sometimes they gave arguments confronting the White House from other sources. Writers occasionally simply seemed to be talking to the President, expressing their own feelings, perhaps hoping to influence Johnson more than just to get a passing observation or reaction.

Reaction seeking questions were sometimes general, or open ended in nature. For example, the transcript of the July 28, 1965, broadcast conference shows Nancy Dickerson asking, "Mr. President, after the week of deliberations on Viet-Nam, how do you feel—in the context of your Office? We always hear it is the loneliest in the world."

An example of a more specific question appears in the same conference:

Mr. President, . . . last night one of the leading Governors of the Republicans said some rather strong things. Governor Hatfield of Oregon said that recent escalation of action in Viet-Nam is moving all the people of the world close to world war III, and we have no moral right to commit the world and especially our own people to world war III unilaterally or by the decision of a few experts.

This seems to imply rather strong criticism of present policies. Do you care to express any reaction?

A frequent bent of some correspondents seems to have been to elicit L.B.J.'s response to political issues. As the elections of 1966 came near a close, Johnson held a televised meeting with reporters, October 6. Several questions in that conference seemed to want the President's reactions to political issues. One reporter asked about Johnson's feelings about Democrats running for southern governorships "who are avowed segregationists." Another writer asked what Johnson thought about campaign issues from his point of view and in terms of the opposition party's positions. The next question wondered
about "the rather steady decline of the stock market in recent months." Another questioner pointed up Republican criticism of Johnson's "preoccupation with and spending for Vietnam." These and several other questions in the conference seemed obviously designed to get quick reactions from Johnson especially in his role as head of the Democratic Party.

Some reporters, especially in Johnson's first year of office, apparently wanted to spar with the President. Such bickering and baiting usually related to press and political matters. On February 1, 1964, Johnson assembled newsmen in the White House Theatre. One of the first questions asked was, "Mr. President, many of us are wondering why you would hold a news conference in a cramped little room such as this, limited to about 90 newsmen, when you have facilities available to accommodate all newsmen, such as the State Department?"

The embarrassment caused by the activities of two of Johnson's advisors, Bobby Baker and Walter Jenkins, produced some press conference inquiry. Correspondents asked about Bobby Baker in at least three conferences in 1964. February 1, 1964, a week after a question on Bobby Baker had appeared, another question was, "Mr. President, do you feel that Mr. Walter Jenkins should go up to the Capitol and testify under oath to clear up the conflicts that are appearing in the testimony?"

On April 11, 1964, a reporter wanted Johnson's reaction to the "Light Bulb Johnson" appellation. That question immediately led to some apparently useless banter concerning who invented the term. Another newsmen in that conference requested Johnson's opinion on negotiations for a cable television arrangement in Austin, Texas,
where L.B.J.'s family had financial interests in a broadcasting corporation.

A last type of question is the "follow-up." Over half of all the inquiry put to Johnson in an average official conference seems immediately derived from either his voluntaries or other questions asked, or both. That amounts to eight or nine of the sixteen to seventeen questions normally asked. Among the follow-ups, those related to previously asked questions were slightly more frequent that those stemming from announcements. On an annual basis, this kind of questioning is, in frequency, proportionately the same as all questioning. In quite a few individual press conferences, however, most if not all of the questions were generated by the President's opening remarks. In most question and answer sessions are at least a few follow-ups to voluntaries. Questions which may have been brought about by related, prior inquiry in a given conference are perhaps even more common. Furthermore, correspondents occasionally used the press conference to follow up on statements made by Johnson in other speaking situations.

Reporters asked follow-up questions for the same reasons that they asked the other types of questions, basically. Newsmen asked more follow-ups in order to get more material than evidently was provided in the voluntaries and the answers. On the whole, the follow-up inquiries appear quite appropriate by any measure. In some conferences, however, it appears that follow-up questions were asked for lack of impetus to bring up other and perhaps fresher issues.

President Johnson announced to reporters on March 2, 1967, that an exchange of letters with the Soviet Premier, Aleksei Kosygin,
might result in talks for "limiting the arms race in offensive and
defensive nuclear missiles." All but three of the conference's
seventeen questions were on that brief announcement. This was the
first public announcement of the correspondence, and the news seems
dramatic in light of the attempt to curb production of "defensive"
or "antimissile" weaponry. Writers searched for the meaning of the
forthcoming discussions, specific details leading up to the talks,
and data on arrangements for the meetings. They also asked about
immediate and potential effects of the proposed conference.

Later in 1967, on July 13, Johnson and several military advis­
sors met the press. Appropriately, all of the questions, which were
directed to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, General William West­
moreland, and the President, were on Vietnam.

In September of 1967 Johnson presented his "San Antonio formula"
for ending the war. The day after that policy statement, September 30,
newsmen asked only question related to Johnson's voluntaries on staff
changes in the Department of Justice. They did ask questions about
Vietnam with specific references to the speech of the night before.

At times, questioners seemed completely uninterested in Johnson's
announcements. For instance, on September 6, 1968, L.B.J. took a third
of the conference time to announce a number of items such as a meeting
with Senate leaders that morning. The transcript of the conference
reveals no questions generated by the voluntaries and only three ques­
tions following up on answers to previously asked queries.

In sum, a variety of factors seems to have determined the nature
and frequency of follow-ups. Included are Johnson's voluntaries, the
presence of guests at the conferences, the apparent importance of
external events at the time of a conference, and even the kind of conference held (impromptu, advance notice, televised) and where it was held. In any event, the follow-up questions generally appear responsive to the needs of the immediate participants in the news conferences.

Stylistic Qualities

An important quality of questioning is clarity. While the inquirer probably need not reveal or emphasize his own purposes in asking, he should word the question so that the respondent knows exactly what sort of response is sought. That is, the asker does not have to say what he is going to do with an answer, but he must make sure that the responder knows what kind of answer is requested. Johnson's apparently high interest and direct involvement with media representatives probably made it fairly easy for him to understand most inquiry. On the other hand, Johnson's habit of anticipating questions, his sensitivity to particular areas of questioning like the war and his personal life, his apparent dislike of questions on policy and pending decisions, his habits of secrecy and surprise, and his general attitudes toward the media and the press conference format probably did not insure that he would comprehend every question.

In the judgment of this critic, L.B.J.'s inquisitors performed well in asking clearly worded questions, generally speaking. This is not surprising since many of the correspondents assigned to the White House were probably experienced and knowledgeable. Competition for an opportunity to query the President may have added incentive for good inquiry. Lapses in any aspect of the quality of questioning was probably a function of general and specific preparation. Although it might
be expected that impromptu news conferences would yield less thoughtful asking, this was not always the case, nor is there evidence at present to show that general relationship. Some factors of the questions, however, did affect clarity. Reporters sometimes failed to indicate when they were changing topics when they addressed the President. They sometimes asked multiple questions which may have led to confusion. Further, some of the general queries were perhaps unnecessarily general, although framing such open ended questions as "How do you feel?" or "What are the prospects of a tax increase?" may have been deliberately general and not at all vague in terms of Johnson's perception.

If Johnson's responses to questions are an indicator of clarity, the questions appear to be very clear. L.B.J. rarely asked for interpretation of a query. The only time he asked about one, usually, was to discover a specific source quoted or alluded to in the statement of the question. Whether, in such a case, the particular newsmen wanted to reveal his source cannot be determined easily. Of course, Johnson could not well have afforded appearing not to understand many questions, especially those on important matters. By the same token, as noted before, newsmen could ill afford abstruseness.

Finally, reporters did not seem unmindful of the needs of other participants. The questions were probably clear to other correspondents in most cases. In the broadcast conferences, most newsmen seemed to take time to put their queries into a context which would be understandable for the public.

Perhaps a more important quality of the news conferences is the tone of the inquiries. The demeanor of reporters, as reflected in their
questions, probably affected the quality of the answers to a degree.
This applies to individual questions and to the general tone of
inquiry in a given conference, if not to the whole trend of inquiry
facing the President over the years. Of course, L.B.J.'s voluntaries,
his answers, environmental conditions, timing, and other factors influ-
enced the mood of the questions, also. Of chief importance, perhaps,
was the general feeling of friendliness, expressed by reporters, be-
cause imparting that feeling may improve rapport and therefore may
enhance the quality and responsiveness of the answers.

On paper, much of the inquiry in Johnson's news conferences seems
rather neutral, or not expressing any particular feelings toward the
speaker other than a common formality of address, "Mr. President . . ."
Some questions appeared quite friendly, even complimentary. Amicable
questions seem more common in conferences held on short notice, on
holidays and on special occasions such as Johnson's birthday, and in
conferences at the L.B.J. Ranch or in Austin. Hostile, unfriendly,
and sarcastically worded questions are more frequent in broadcast
conferences, but are not limited to that format. Further, a trend
toward more blunt and less hospitable inquiry appears after Johnson's
first few months in office. This trend continued, with a few excep-
tions, even after the President announced his intention to retire from
political life.

In a sort of "non-conference," on January 23, 1964, Johnson's
fourth official meeting with newsmen, the only question asked was,
" . . . how do you think things are going up on the Hill?" This was
on one of Johnson's favorite topics and the reply imparted good news.
Johnson had held the conference in answer to a request for a policy
statement on Panama and to reply to some stories being circulated about L.B.J.'s financial affairs. The question which was articulated may have eased tension momentarily.

One of several questions on the possibilities of Johnson and Goldwater debating in 1964 appears in a news conference of July 10. A correspondent said, "Mr. President, a couple of months ago your oratorical propensities were officially recognized by the National Forensic Society [National Forensic League]. Will this in any way influence your decision to debate your opponent in the upcoming election?" Instead of asking, "Why won't you debate Goldwater?" or even a less tactfully worded question, this particular inquiry may be seen as complimentary and encouraging in its wording. Similar questions came up on other conferences. For instance, on July 1, 1967, a writer told Johnson, "When we, the National Negro Publishers Association met with you in 1964, you said you were going to be President for all the people of the United States. That you have shown beyond a reasonable doubt. I wonder if your honesty, integrity, and humility will rub off on many of the Governors throughout the United States as the years go along." (Johnson had just concluded a meeting with a group of governors in St. Louis, Missouri.)

A rather helpful question appears in a conference at the Ranch, August 29, 1965. An announcement of an end to strikes by dock workers had been made by the President. One writer, who may have been cognizant of Johnson's desire to keep strikes at a minimum, asked, "Mr. President, what would the steel strike to do the national economy?" This allowed Johnson the opportunity to speak against the strike, and the argument of harm to the economy was supplied by the questioner.
About a year later, in the same location, among L.B.J.'s birthday gifts were some sociable questions like, "How do you feel on your birthday, Mr. President? How is your health? Have you gained or lost weight since the first of the year, and that sort of thing?"

At times, reporters were kind enough to ask leave to state a question, especially on particular topics. For example, two days before the November 8, 1966, elections, a newsman said, "Mr. President ... I hope you won't mind a question about the campaign," before asking Johnson's judgment on the "factor of the backlash." In the same question period other queries began, "Mr. President, sir ..." (Johnson cut in on one, saying, "That 'sir' kind of disarms me. Go ahead. I hope it's a friendly question." The reporter replied, "It is." And it was.)

Overtly hospitable questions were less common than those which seem less cordial in tone. Some of the questions designed to get Johnson's reactions, especially his response to criticism, often reflected in content and mood a degree of unfriendliness.

On July 31, 1967, a number of press conference questions confronted the President with ideas contrary to or critical of his own. Among those were Governor George Romney's complaint concerning federal troops during riots in Detroit, Michigan; a Gallup poll showing public dissatisfaction with Johnson's war policies; requests by several Democrats for Johnson to retire; a question on why no "advocates of black power" were appointed to the "Commission on Civil Disorders;" and references to the rioting in the United States as related to the costly attention being given to Vietnam at the same time.

Sometimes reporters were not subtle. The following exchange appears in the November 29, 1966, meeting:
Q. Did you send congratulations to Harold Holt [Australia's newly elected Prime Minister]?  
The President: We send wires to the heads of government and to Prime Ministers who have elections and are successful. We even send them to members of the opposition party, sometimes, in this country.  
Q. Well, in this case, this opposition leader says it is meddling in their elections.  
The President. We just send the wires.  

On December 31 of that year some hard-hitting questions were asked. One question was, "... do you think it was a mistake not to ask for a tax increase this year?" Another reporter brought up the bombing of "two light industries" in North Vietnam, saying, "I don't believe that these industries fall within the target objectives previously announced by the Defense Department. ..." A newsman brought up the question of money spent on Vietnam by the United States. A further question was, "Mr. President, there has been a great deal of talk lately about your image. Some writers discuss what they call a credibility gap. The Harris and Gallup polls have indicated performance ratings at the lowest point since you became President. And there has been some unrest in the Democratic Party among the Governors."

One factor of the style of the questions worthy of note is conciseness. This quality is mainly important in so far as it affects the amount of time available for questioning and the clarity of the individual questions. Since Johnson's voluntaries and answers did more to determine the time available, questions which might be considered verbose in any way probably had little effect on time. The average press conference question appears to have taken around fifteen or twenty seconds to present. Questions taking less time than that seem to appear somewhat more frequently than those going beyond a quarter of a minute.
Television question and answer sessions apparently had some longer questions than many of the non-broadcast and impromptu conferences. Long questions seem to have been a function of careful preparation, of caution, of a desire to be clear to all participants, and sometimes of a need to make statements to the President. The more carefully worded questions tended to be prepared with background information, or with rationales for asking certain questions. Often, questions were long without being wordy. For example, some writers would phrase more than one inquiry in one statement, perhaps because the President might not call upon most reporters more than once in a given conference.

Further, most of the questions do not seem too concise for comprehension, at least for Johnson's understanding. Nor did many of the inquiries seem so protracted as to obfuscate meaning. Given the rapid give and take in the conferences, as well as other influences such as the newsmen's probable awareness of the time limit, a possible desire of reporters to share the time available with each other, the urgency of some of the questioners to get a number of details or to explore a variety of topics, Johnson's proclivity to take up much time with his own materials, and the unpredictable timing and frequency of the conferences probably led most correspondents to be fairly succinct.

In general, then, Johnson's press corps, with some exceptions, seems to have been concise in the wording and length of their inquiries.

A final measure of style applied to the questions is appropriateness. The language of the questions appears felicitous. What was said about the clarity and conciseness of the queries applies to this
generalization. Johnson seldom asked, "What do you mean?" He seemed quite familiar with the terminology and occasional jargon employed by the press. Reporters often used terms most easily comprehended by those in the national government. They frequently employed acronyms like "S.E.A.T.O." (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) and "D.M.Z." (the "demilitarized zone" separating North and South Vietnam). Such terms as "The Kennedy Round" (of negotiations for international tariff considerations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) began before the Johnson administration. Again, reporters in the broadcast conferences appear to have been considerate of the public by asking questions with generally understandable language. In fact, the President was more apt to use technical terms at times than was the press.

A general evaluation of the style of the questions reveals good inquiry. Correspondents were usually clear, concise, and appropriate in their use of language. They used the kinds of questions best suited to their needs but did not appear to have violated the main needs of the public or the President with the types of questions they asked. Follow-up inquiry was especially good in many conferences. While possibly reflecting Johnson's own mood at times, the tone of the questions was generally polite, if not often very friendly. Not shying away from unpleasant subjects, the press appeared to be usually candid, frequently blunt, and sometimes even antagonistic in their queries. Reporters were probably respectful of the needs of all of the conferences' participants, for the most part.

How well President Johnson responded to the questions is the subject of the chapter which follows.
CHAPTER V

AN EVALUATION OF JOHNSON'S ANSWERS

This chapter explores President Johnson's abilities in answering the press conferences' questions. Investigation of President Johnson's responses to the 2,000 and more news conference inquiries reveals how Johnson interacted with the press as well as how he performed in meeting various demands of this speaking format. An outline of the President's goals, a study of his methods, and an assessment of the answers afford a fuller view of Johnson's presidential press conferences.

Johnson's Aims

Johnson's general press conference purposes and the specific goals of his voluntaries, it will be recalled, were to provide information, to publicize, to promote, and to defend his administration, to better his image, and to control the press conference.

Johnson's aims in answering the questions appear akin to the goals of the voluntaries. A few particular purposes, however, may be found in the answers.

To Control

The special purposes were, basically, matters of control. That is, the President wanted to regulate the flow of questioning, especially in terms of the content. On some occasions, often after an important announcement to open the conference, he seemed to want
questions on the particular voluntary and he apparently wanted to avoid other areas of inquiry. At times, the President apparently did not really want any questioning. For example, on August 18, 1964, a few minutes before a reception for a visiting diplomat, L.B.J. held a brief conference to announce some aspects of his plans for the week, some of his recent activities, and some data on unemployment. Johnson ended his remarks with an invitation for questions on "this schedule, or these points." His replies to the queries were brief. At one point, after a question related to his voluntary on employment, Johnson said, "I don't want to get into a general press conference. I just said that. This man [Iceland's Prime Minister] is on his way here..." in order to keep the inquiry on the topics of his other announcements. The next question was on whether the topic of "politics" had come up in L.B.J.'s recent meeting with state and city leaders. Johnson said, "Yes." Pursuing the question, a reporter asked, "Can you tell us about that?" Johnson replied that it was not the right occasion to discuss the matter. The President did answer a few other questions pertaining to his plans for the coming days. Other methods to keep reporters on one track are explained later in this chapter.

All references to Johnson's press conferences are to the transcripts published in the *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson*, 10 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965-1970). Citations to other materials, such as speeches and press releases, refer to the same source. Direct quotations from the transcripts, unless elliptically quoted, are verbatim with the following exceptions. Footnote numbers and footnotes in the texts are deleted. Also omitted are headings and bracketed numbers, e.g. [8] which appear in order to show changes in topics within a given conference.
Another special purpose was to control what newsmen did with his replies. Just as L.B.J. often met with the press on an off-the-record basis, he sometimes invoked that category of answering which previous presidents had employed. It is notable that instead of using the four categories of reply which Franklin Roosevelt, for example, employed in conferences, Johnson's habit was to answer for the "record" in his official press conferences and give other kinds of responses in other meetings with the media. The off-the-record reply, then was infrequent in the press conferences and was, further, more commonly used during his first two years in office.

On January 16, 1965, in a conference at the L.B.J. Ranch, Johnson spoke off the record three times. The first time was during a voluntary on White House personnel changes. Next, after some persistent inquiry as to his travel plans, Johnson decided to handle the difficulty privately for a few minutes. Toward the end of the meeting is the following give and take:

Q. Mr. President, on the eve of your inauguration could you sum up or characterize for us your view of the world condition, or the leadership job that you see ahead for us?

The President. I prefer to do that off the record for you. I don't want to create any more problems than we already have. If you want to do it on that basis I will be glad to.

Q. Could that be for our guidance?

The President. I assume it would guide you.

Q. I mean can we use it?

The President. No, you can say White House sources said or the President said or somebody close to the President said or anything. I will just give you my view off the record and if it has any influence on your view, well, all right. You can entertain your own.

The transcript indicates that Johnson concluded the conference on an off-the-record basis.
In general the President was just as purposive in his answers as he was in holding conferences and in his use of voluntaries. The specific aims of the answers were not unlike those of his announcements. Specific instances of answers which seem directed toward the fulfillment of each of those are presented here.

To Inform

One specific aim was to provide the press and the public with concrete information. Johnson wanted his audience to understand, remember, and attend to certain data. Answers to provide informative materials were most common in those conferences called so the President could brief the press on matters such as a forthcoming budget request. Johnson also liked to respond to questions probing his voluntaries, especially those on the presidency, when a writer wanted more details, or even background information.

The nomination of Clark Clifford for the post of Secretary of Defense generated a conference on January 19, 1968. After announcing the nomination, Johnson stayed for questions. The first question was for background information: "What were the factors that pointed to Mr. Clifford?" Johnson answered at length with biographical details, saying he had just that day made the decision, although Clark Clifford had been "under consideration" for months. Another writer wanted to know how long Clifford's "term" would be and if that had been arranged. L.B.J. replied that he and Clifford had not discussed the matter.

Later in 1968, on May 29, Johnson gave a commencement speech at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. In the conclusion of his talk, the President advocated granting eighteen-year-olds suffrage.
He laid out no plan nor did he imply any program to achieve that end. In his news conference the next day, a correspondent asked if Johnson did have a proposal in mind. Johnson replied, "Over the weekend, we will be working on a very special message to Congress. A constitutional amendment will be required. The President will send the message to Congress, I hope, next week, making his recommendation."

To Promote

More frequently President Johnson's replies appear to have been designed to publicize and promote his administration. L.B.J. was so eager to accomplish this aim that he occasionally had questions planted. He probably prepared some answers. In a few conferences, he even read replies.

For instance, on April 8, 1965, one query was, "Mr. President . . . what do you think of the House passing the medical bill?" Johnson began his reply, saying, "I just happen to have it here." He went on to praise the House and to urge the Senate to "convert this monumental bill to the final reality of an enacted law."

President Johnson frequently used his answers to promote pending or proposed legislation, whether the replies were prepared or impromptu.

A conference held on August 9, 1966, yielded a question on "rioting in the streets" and what the central government might do about that and other urban affairs. L.B.J. took the opportunity to list "a good many" efforts on his part to solve such problems. He put in plugs for the Teacher Corps, for a "rent supplements" program, and a "Demonstration Cities bill." He also mentioned that he was working on the coming year's budget with special consideration for the three specific programs.
President Johnson was not immune to promoting himself and his party. In a meeting with the press on April 4, 1964, a reporter asked if L.B.J. knew "of any instance where a President has failed of election in a prosperous period." Johnson took the cue to praise his party, predict prosperity, and promote the implication of his election.

Questions on the congressional elections of 1966 often came up in L.B.J.'s news conference. On August 24, of that year, for example, Johnson was asked to guess the chances of Republican gains in the elections. He replied at some length, urging the press to be wary of polls. He warned against paying attention to "people who try to create psychological situations and bandwagon approaches, and try to repeat a thing so many times that finally, folks begin to believe it." He concluded his answer with optimistic statements regarding the success of his own party.

Other instances of political propaganda appeared in press conferences held during Johnson's participation in meetings of governors. A question on cohesion among members of the Democratic Party came up following the close of the Democratic Governors Conference, July 1, 1967. L.B.J. answered by saying that "divergent opinions" were not necessarily harmful to Democrats. He concluded, "I think, generally speaking, the worst Democrat is better for the country than the best Republican."

To Defend

Extensive criticisms of many of President Johnson's programs came up throughout his administration. These criticisms appeared in all kinds of publication, in public speaking, and the news media. Especially vocal were detractors on the war issue. The complaints and
suggestions of critics often emerged in the questions put to the President in his news conferences. So, one of Johnson's goals frequently was to defend his leadership in responding to inquiry.

A two-part query on the war and on inflation came up in the May 21, 1966, question period. Johnson spent over five minutes in reply. He was apparently prepared for the query because he produced a chart comparing prices in the United States with prices in other countries. He went on to say that the White House was making efforts to curb inflation, and he predicted that economic conditions would improve. On the war issue, Johnson asserted that no one was more concerned about the need to find peace than was he. He reviewed in detail his administration's attempts to settle the war. The stimulus question had mentioned "recent polls that show considerable public dissatisfaction." L.B.J. ended his question by alluding to the question. He said that "those who approve of what we are doing are almost twice" the number of those who did not subscribe to his policies in Southeast Asia for one reason or another.

Aggressive inquisition on the war policies emerged in most of Johnson's news conferences in 1966 and 1967. In most cases L.B.J. had ready and lengthy defensive remarks apparently designed to refute the general nature of the criticism so often inherent in those questions. His replies usually tended to enumerate his own initiatives and blame the enemy for refusing to negotiate for an end to the hostilities.

To Improve An Image

Another specific aim of the answers was to improve the image of the President and his leadership. While few newsmen probably would
have asked questions just to satisfy this presidential aim, Johnson was not reluctant to turn an answer into an image building attempt. On almost any issue Johnson might present a happy picture of his successes, give lengthy details of various work in progress, or express optimism and hope for the prospects of his resolving a current conflict. He often showed sympathy for the needs of his countrymen. He displayed vigor, forcefulness, and action. He liked to associate his decisions with the ideas of persons admired by the public, such as Kennedy, Truman, and Eisenhower.

One of the most damaging attacks on President Johnson's image came about through press rumblings on his believability. So sensitive was Johnson to the "credibility gap" charge that he sometimes even referred to the term in answering questions. At times he seemed to want to disprove the charge directly. In the May 21, 1966, meeting, Johnson referred to two specific areas of sensitivity relating to his reputation. After a statement on the war, Johnson said, "... I think I have said about all that I can on that general subject today." He then opened the question period for "any other matters." After three inquiries, a reporter asked if Johnson had said that only questions on topics other than those on Vietnam were in order. Johnson replied, "I don't want to be charged with barring you from asking anything you want..." Later in the meeting, in response to a question on the cost of living, L.B.J. discussed probable government spending figures. Johnson warned that "It is difficult to predict." He continued, "I don't want to have our credibility questioned if we are off a half percent out of 100..." He expressed hope that his projections would be accurate, explaining the difficulties he faced in making them.
This view of President Johnson's specific purposes paves the way for an exploration of how Johnson answered the questions.

**Methods of Development**

In order to discuss Johnson's way of answering questions the following distinction is made. An "answer" is a direct and responsive reply with some ideational content. That is, those responses other than "answers" include a simple "yes" or "no," a "no comment," or some device to pass over a particular point without actually saying anything about the topic. Indeed, replies and responses which reflect an intent completely to avoid development are frequent and important in studying the conferences. At this point, however, only those responses which contain some sort of exposition, amplification, or proof receive attention.

The following generalizations may be made about the development of Johnson's answers. That Johnson's methods in developing his voluntaries seemed similar to the content of some of his speeches was noted in the preceding chapter. Many of his answers appeared, in content, like other kinds of utterances Johnson made.

Second, a variety of types or forms of development was found in the answers as a whole and in many specific replies.

Third, as with some of the voluntaries, specific types of development depended upon what the correspondent wanted, what Johnson's purpose was in replying, or the topic of the question. Once more, however, patterns of answers in terms of methods of development varied. An answer on a particular topic, stimulated by a particular kind of question, might show almost any type of development.
Fourth, the extent to which L.B.J. developed an idea varied. Predictably, he usually answered questions on his favorite topics (the presidency, legislation—especially successful projects, politics, and the state of the economy) with more than a general statement. In other words, when Johnson had good news, he liked to talk about it. On the other hand, Johnson was unpredictable when it came to other topics, especially Southeast Asia. Sometimes he would develop a reply on that problem at length; on other occasions he would dismiss the issue altogether. The specific nature or tone of the question apparently was not a determinant of the content of such inquiry, either.

Fifth, the general quality of the answers was very irregular. In some conferences it seemed that little was gained by the press, the public, and even the President. In others, plenty of the answers were useful enough to serve all participants adequately. In still other meetings a strange mixture of excellence and mediocrity existed.

Since President Johnson was often responsive in his answers and did show an interesting variety of methods of support, some illustrations of his answers which went beyond a few words merit consideration. Special attention is given to some of L.B.J.'s favorite methods of development.

Statistics

President Johnson's fondness for statistics has been noted in connection with his opening statements on the economy, including employment. The use of numbers appeared in replies on other topics as well. Johnson kept quantitative evidence on a number of his
activities and statements. On January 17, 1967, L.B.J. and Budget Director Charles L. Schultze briefed reporters on upcoming monetary legislation. The introductory explanation of a "tax surcharge" led to some inquiry. One reporter wanted more information on the monetary need for the taxation proposal. L.B.J. used a number of figures to explain and promote the proposal. To show how the "surcharge" and other aspects of his bills would affect the public, he said,

We will ask married people with two children who earn over $5,000 to make some modest contribution. I believe the schedule showed yesterday, if you have two children and make $10,000, you would pay $67 a year. That is about $5 a month with a $10,000 income.

With a $15,000 income, it is $10 or $20 a month. It is a very nominal amount.

As to a corporation, I had better not get into corporation figures, but I saw one schedule where I believe with $500,000 it is $14,000. So we think it is a very small part of what has already been rebated.

We think it is fiscally desirable so we don't have to pay interest on this amount of money, to try to raise at least a part of it, or $4 billion, or $5 billion, or $6 billion. We think we can do it.

We hope with social security we will pay out to the lower groups in the neighborhood of $4 billion plus. We would expect to take from those making above $10,000 and up a little over $4 billion. So it kind of balances off...

The answer appears to have used helpful details in the form of statistics. The material may have been concrete enough to explain or amplify what Johnson had said in his announcement and previous answers on the subject.

The President could also let loose with numerical data on other topics, whether the figures were requested or not. For instance, on March 20, 1965, in a broadcast conference, Johnson was asked about the number of "National Guardsmen" being called up and "how many police" were on hand in Alabama during a period of marching and violence in the state. The President replied with a half dozen
specific, exact, and approximate figures. To another question on the number of marchers and the nature of "Federal service available . . . for medical care or that sort of thing," he responded to the second part of the query. He said, "We have a 75-bed hospital with 5 doctors and 5 ambulances, 43 aircraft, helicopters (5-ambulatory patient, 2 litters with corpsmen) . . . in Selma. At Maxwell Field we have a 250-bed hospital, 50 doctors, 5 ambulances, 4 H-43 aircraft. . . ."
The data in both answers seem impressive, although Johnson failed to support an assertion that he had "reasonably accurate estimates" of the number of marchers to expect. An example of unsolicited statistical data appeared in the same conference. The stimulus reads, "Mr. President, do you feel that the debate in the Congress concerning Viet-Nam, and especially those who have been urging quick negotiations, has weakened your position or this country's position?" Johnson used the question to digress on the topic of freedom of speech and his ability to communicate freely on the war issue. He said, in part, "I have met with 520, I believe, Congressmen and Senators for over 2 hours for over 11 nights, and each one of them could ask any question he wanted to. The Secretary of State gave them a thorough briefing--the Secretary of Defense, the President, and the Vice President. And as I stated, you have raised the question with me 47 times. So maybe the Senators and Congressmen have some speeches left in order to be even with us." In this and in similar cases Johnson used figures to inform, amplify, and prove the points he was making.

**Testimony**

The President sometimes employed testimony or quotations in answering reporter's inquiries. This method is found in various
answers. In news conferences Johnson most frequently quoted his own statements, but he also invoked the words of others, such as previous government leaders and his contemporary advisors. Whether he specifically referred to his source or whether he quoted directly or indirectly varied.

The habit of quoting himself appeared early in Johnson's presidency. In his first televised meeting with the press, February 29, 1965, he repeated parts of a telephone conversation he had recently had with the President of Panama. In answer to a question on Vietnam, Johnson recalled some of the points he had made in a talk at the University of California at Los Angeles the week before this conference. Some of the exact wording of the California speech appeared in the February 29 press conference answer.

It is interesting that Johnson probably quoted himself on the issue of Vietnam more than on any other single issue in press conferences throughout much of his administration.

He apparently wanted consistency and was cautious in his replies. He also exhibited some concern for what other members of his administration said. In one conference, February 2, 1968, a reporter inquired about a statement by Clark Clifford. Clifford had been testifying before a senate committee which was considering his nomination for Secretary of Defense. Johnson answered the question, saying, "... Mr. Clifford said what I have said, what Mr. Rusk has said, what everybody has said, so far as the San Antonio formula is concerned. The country should know once and for all this morning that Mr. Clifford said just what I said at San Antonio."
Johnson's April 25, 1964, conference was with former President Harry Truman. A question in the meeting asked what L.B.J. said to the leadership of labor and management in a "railroad dispute." Johnson answered with three types of testimony. First, he indirectly repeated what, in general, he had told the disputants. Next, he quoted a statement which Sam Rayburn had once made on another topic. Finally, Johnson used a direct quotation from what he had said on the contract negotiation problem involving rail workers.

That Johnson used quotations from statements of Eisenhower and Kennedy in voluntaries was noted in the previous chapter. The same pattern, but to a lesser extent at times, appear in answers. In 1965, L.B.J. referred to or quoted remarks of former President Eisenhower in twelve of his press conferences. In eight of those meetings the references or direct quotations appeared in answers. Johnson's strategy was to add the authoritative weight of former presidents to his own policies, especially those on the war in Southeast Asia. On April 8, the day after a major speech at Johns Hopkins University, L.B.J. presented his new advisor on Vietnam, Eugene Black. After an answer by Black to a reporter's question, Johnson mentioned to reporters that he had talked with Eisenhower about selecting Black for the post. With reference to the former chief executive, Johnson said, "... I talked to him and he said that he had listened to the speech last evening with great interest. And he commended my approval of--my selection of Mr. Black and the general statement I made with regard to his work, and he sent his good wishes to Mr. Black. . . ."

The President also offered the testimony of others to support points he made in his answers. The 1968 "Report of the National
Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders" and Johnson's response to it was questioned by a newsman on March 22 of that year. In a lengthy answer Johnson explained what he and the executive branch had done with the report. To prove that his reactions to the recommendations of the committee, expressed in directives to cabinet officials, had been carried out, he read aloud one report from the Department of Commerce.

Narration

President Johnson used narration from time to time. He sometimes liked to give details on the progression of events leading up to certain decisions, actions, or statements. For example, in the last three conferences on March 12, 1966, held in connection with the National Governors' Conference, Johnson was asked about "the unanimous support given . . . by the Governors on . . . Vietnam policy." Johnson expressed his pleasure and recounted specific events, including the moving, seconding, and voting on the resolution which approved L.B.J.'s Vietnam war philosophy.

Comparison

The President sometimes used analogies or comparisons in developing his replies. In Johnson's conference of September 3, 1966, is the following exchange:

Q. Mr. President, is there any way that you can give us an idea of the specifics of what this action will take out of the economy in the way of dollars or percentages of increase?

The President. That would depend entirely on the individual. Some fellows that are building a big plant will go on building it anyway. Others will say, "Well, if I can postpone it a year I can get 7 percent, and I will wait."

We know only this: that we will not be providing a bonus to someone to build something we don't want built.
In the same conference, in answer to a query on the economy, Johnson employed a common comparison. He said, in part, "When the accelerator is down you want to get up to the limit of 60. You were going 40, and you got up to 60. It is now 70 and on the way to 80. So we said 'Let's take the foot off the accelerator until it gets back down to 60 and we will look at it there . . .'."

Anecdotes

Once in a while, L.B.J. employed a type of support which seemed characteristic of some of his informal speaking on certain occasions. Anecdotes, stories, and reminiscences of his own experiences (and those of others) appeared in answers from time to time.

After President Johnson's 1966 "Columbus Day Trip" he returned to Washington, D.C. and held a televised conference on October 13. Near the close of the question period L.B.J. was asked for his reflections. He expressed pleasure for what he had seen and heard during his travel. Johnson indicated that his reception in the places he had visited contrasted with the criticisms he had been reading back in the nation's capitol. He said, "I might be like Uncle Ezra, you know. The doctor told him he had to quit drinking if he would improve his hearing. When he went back, the doctor said, 'Well, are you still drinking?' He said, 'Yes.' The doctor said, 'I told you you would have to quit it to improve your hearing.' He said, 'Well, Doctor, I like what I drink so much better than what I hear that I just didn't take your prescription!'" L.B.J. ended the conference, saying, "... when I get out and see the people . . . I like what I see and hear so much better than what I read that it may reflect itself."
Conferences on occasions of personal importance, such as birthdays, sometimes led to reminiscing. On August 27, 1966, Johnson interacted with newsmen at his Texas ranch. He recounted "memories" of his childhood and early political life. At one point he recalled that David Dubinsky had influenced him in the 1930's. He expressed pride in his own accomplishments over the years. Later on, he said, "... when I get home and Mrs. Davis, who runs the ranch for us, tells me that her little Negro daughter is a runner-up in the Stonewall School, I get great satisfaction to see the progress that has been made." In the same "answer," which ran about twenty minutes, he went on to mention other experiences. For instance he talked about his recent trip to Denver and progress in providing housing for "Negroes." He mentioned conversations he had had with Senator Everett Dirksen and with a publisher in Denver. Still on the subject of minority housing, Johnson said, "My father supported Jim Ferguson for Governor in 1914. He was running for office on building more red schoolhouses, building better roads to our market places and to our cities, and having a tenant purchase program where a tenant could go and buy his home. ..." Johnson continued by citing experiences he had had with various political leaders such as Senators Jacob Javits and John Aiken, Attorneys General Robert Kennedy and Nicholas Katzenbach, and Presidents Eisenhower and Franklin Roosevelt.

Johnson also recounted recent experiences on occasion. In the brief conference of January 19, 1968, the announcement of Clark Clifford's nomination was made and a few questions came up. In response to one question on why Clifford was selected, Johnson wanted to show that he had just that day made the decision. Toward the end of his
reply, L.B.J. said, "I saw some squib that some speculative reporter wrote that indicated he might be under consideration for this assignment. I commented to him at a social affair one evening, 'I understand you are a candidate for the Secretary of Defense.' He flushed a little bit and said he was not a candidate; he was not."

Of course, Johnson used other types or methods of support in his answers. He used details, specific examples, explanations, literal comparisons and contrasts, and even visual supports from time to time.

But the development of his answers (when Johnson did develop points made in his replies) was enough like the development Johnson used in his press conference voluntaries that further attention to this aspect is probably not necessary here. What seems more interesting and important is a treatment of the responses from another viewpoint. Various techniques which are rather unlike traditional supporting materials or methods of development appeared so frequently in Johnson's replies that they merit separate consideration.

Johnson's Responsiveness

Lyndon Johnson responded to questions in different ways in terms of style and content. To varying degrees he was able to answer questions and thereby satisfy the needs of the public and the press. How and to what extent he avoided questions fluctuated, too. Many of Johnson's replies were more of the nature of comments to reporters rather than statements on the issues the correspondents raised in their inquiry. That is, in talking to reporters, many of his replies seem to have been designed either to control or to spar with the press.
The nature of Johnson's replies, then, may be discussed in terms of his attempts at (1) controlling and (2) fencing with reporters, and (3) approaching and (4) avoiding questions. Each of these four general types of replying is discussed below. Attention to more specific maneuvers associated with each type and examples are also given.

This approach to press conference answers permits a description as well as evaluation in terms of audience adaptation and with regard for the purposes of the press, the president, and the public.

Controlling

That Johnson wanted to exert control in his press conferences, including what he said in his voluntaries and answers, has been established. The President wanted to regulate the news conference in different ways. He determined scheduling and length. Voluntaries were used to control content and emphasis. L.B.J.'s answers frequently functioned to influence what newsmen asked, how they asked, and what they did with the answers. The two main forms of controlling responses may be called "anticipatory" and "directive." Anticipatory responses reflected the President's planning and preparation. Directive responses were those aimed at the reporters themselves rather than at content of the questions. Further explanation and illustration follow.

President Johnson's replies often reveal planning. He anticipated answering certain questions by preparing statements, reading remarks aloud, interjecting answers, interrupting, and cutting off questions.

Some of the answers seem to have been carefully prepared. The questions on Clark Clifford's nomination (January 19, 1968) elicited biographical details which were extremely specific in an answer which was rather long. The preparation probably was fruitful. It
has been seen how handily L.B.J. could recite statistics. He probably briefed himself so that he could provide these data in the flow of his answers. Preparation helped insure that certain information would get to the news media. Such preparation can be desirable for all conference participants. It can provide accurate information for the public and the press, and may even convey a good impression of the president.

At times planning was even more obvious. The President read parts of some of his replies and recited quotations. In one impromptu meeting with the press, February 27, 1967, L.B.J. read a long quotation by former War Secretary Henry Stimson and recited a statement by Lincoln in two separate answers on Vietnam. It appears that Johnson had planned these replies, even though the conference was without advance notice. The occasional reading and reciting of replies may have helped Johnson forward something he had prepared. Variety was added to the content. But whether all of what he read or recited was of value to the press or the public is in doubt.

Another type of anticipatory response was interjection. When Johnson was not asked a question for which he had prepared an answer, he sometimes simply interjected the statement. He did this on January 23, 1964, on the subject of his personal finances. He seemed to be saying that since he knew that the press was interested in the topic, but for some reason had not asked, he would go ahead and supply the reply. Once in a while, if Johnson did not seem to like the implication of a question he might cut in and make a statement. For instance, in a conference on June 17, 1965, one reporter began, "Mr. President, since you made a recent speech, you expressed
a willingness and acceptance of the fact that your foreign policy was very subject to public discussion and such open remarks as this--" Johnson interjected, "I have always believed that," as if to say the reporter was implying that L.B.J.'s "willingness" to grant "public discussion" was something new. A more formal kind of interjection has been considered in the previous chapter in which it was noted that sometimes Johnson put announcements and statements during or at the end of press conferences. Interjected voluntaries may have resulted from having no stimulus questions at times. Again, interjecting unrequested answers may have allowed Johnson to satisfy his own needs but not necessarily the needs of the press or public. What Johnson did interject does not seem important enough to warrant an interruption of a speaker or the flow of questioning. In fact, the device may have irritated reporters unnecessarily.

Anticipatory interruption appeared in several conferences for another reason. That is, the President occasionally interrupted a reporter because he apparently felt he knew what the reporter wanted to know and that there was little to be gained by hearing the completed inquiry. Whether he was anxious to tackle or reject the issue, or whether he felt sure he knew what the question would be, Johnson cut in and replied. An instance appears in the transcript for May 21, 1966, in which a correspondent asked about "diplomatic efforts" to reach peace. During the question, Johnson interrupted and said "... We are working on it every day. We will as long as I am President. I think that answers the only way I can now. I assume your next one will be to please tell what is going on." Apparently knowing what the follow-up question would be, he then answered that.
On occasion the interruption was used to stop or disallow an inquiry. In the July 30, 1964, meeting Helen Thomas began, "I just wanted to know if you thought elective office was sort of a--" Johnson stopped her, saying, "I don't think I want to get into that. You might place the wrong construction on something like that. I am doing my best to keep you all active." The topic had been the qualities L.B.J. expected in a vice presidential candidate. Johnson seemed not to want further discussion on the issue.

Most such interruptions appeared in non-broadcast conference, but not exclusively. For instance, on June 1, 1965, the following instance from a televised meeting occurred:

Q. Mr. President, I would like to ask you two questions about the Dominican rebellion, one dealing with its origin and one dealing with the possible future. Do you think that it would have been helpful if Juan Bosch had returned; and do you think he might have exercised a restraining influence on some of the left-wing extremists, or Communists, who are there? And secondly--

The President. I will answer your first one. I don't want to get into personalities. Go ahead.

The habit of interrupting newsmen was probably not a contribution to good give and take. The device may have aided Johnson in some way, but it also may have revealed excessive anxiety about controlling the questioning, if not the questioner. In fact, Johnson may have missed the intent of particular queries because his mind seemed set to expect a specific question and because he did not permit a correspondent to complete an idea expressed interrogatively.

The anticipatory devices of preparing, reading, interjecting, and interrupting were used to control the questioning and to permit the President to disseminate material he was eager to release in press conferences. Most of those devices probably did little to
meet the needs of the press and the public, although they have helped
Johnson on occasion.

A second type of control was more directive in nature. In a
number of conferences the President tried to influence the press
through less subtle means. He instructed, requested, and appealed
to newsmen on various matters in order to guide the questioning and
the reporting which followed the conferences.

Sometimes President Johnson was didactic in his answers directed
toward the press. That is, he told them what he wanted or expected
them to do.

The President responded to some questions by saying that report­
ers should go to other sources, apparently in order to avoid answering
in a press conference. On September 21, 1966, a newsmen wanted to know
"how much the war in Vietnam is costing and how much it has been cost­
ing from day to day," saying that Defense Secretary Robert McNamara
and other "U.S. Officials" had been unable to provide the data. John­
son told the reporter to read the appropriate congressional reports,
saying "... I would commend to you some homework. Go read the hear­
ings."

In a number of Johnson's impromptu conferences the President direc­
ted reporters to what kind of questions (in terms of topics) were de­
sirable. He might say, as he did August 18, 1964, "I don't want to
get into a general press conference."

In other conferences L.B.J. tried to explain to reporters how to
interpret his remarks to the public. For instance, on November 1, 1967,
a questioner wanted to know if his understanding of what L.B.J. had
said in a prior answer was "fair to say." Johnson replied, "No, I am
not saying that. If you don't know what I said, I hope you will read it. I didn't say that at all. My job, as I have said to my press friends so many times, is to prevent a fight, not to provoke one. You have a different responsibility. I respect your position on the matter. I recognize it and I feel it." (The "fight" Johnson referred to was implied by the questioner's interpretation which implied that the President was blaming congress for a slump in the stock market.)

Since the President does control most aspects of his news conferences, most of the instructive remarks seem harmless. Perhaps he might have been more tactful on occasion. To avoid confusion, he might have been more forceful in his announcement period on outlining what kind of questions were appropriate on occasions when he limited the scope of the questioning. Telling reporters how to report or interpret what he said may have been self-serving, but may also have been clarifying for the press.

Another approach to directing the press was less didactic and more suggestive in style. Johnson sometimes made requests of reporters. For example, instead of denying reporters the chance to ask questions on a particular topic, he might ask for postponement. L.B.J. did this on the topic of Vietnam in response to a question in the July 19, 1966, conference. He said, in part, "I would like to get in the war picture and Vietnam tomorrow, if I could." Indeed, he held a conference the next day and responded to several questions on the topic.

Perhaps a more important kind of request to reporters was one for clarification. An occurrence of this appeared in the September 2, 1967, meeting in which Johnson interjected a lengthy announcement on
a new authorization to ship wheat to India. One newsmen asked about the effect of the "closing of the Suez Canal" on the shipment. Johnson asked, "... I am not sure what you mean by 'interference.' Do you mean delay or something?" ("Delay" was meant.) This sort of request, while rare in appearance, could be very valuable to the President and to the press since the wording of answers on important matters like foreign affairs can easily be misconstrued or misunderstood.

In some of his conferences L.B.J. seemed to be appealing to the press. For example, he might invite reporters to continue a certain line of questioning, as he did on February 27, 1967, in an impromptu conference. He had been talking about Vietnam in response to a follow-up question. At the close of his response, Johnson said, "Do you want to follow through on that?" When the correspondent said "no," L.B.J. said, "I don't think we have to be limited in this conference. One of the things I think about an exchange of questions like this, if you ask a question you can follow through, which you don't always get to do on TV." The reporter then explained to the President that he did not want to "follow through" because Johnson's answer had sufficed. Other times the President seemed to appeal for a certain emphasis to be placed on his remarks as they were to be reported. In a conference on March 22, during the 1966 election campaigns, Johnson seemed eager to get across a point on his relations with congress. A reporter asked if L.B.J. would campaign and "explain" those attitudes. The President replied, "I am explaining my attitude now, and that is why I want you to help me. My attitude is good. . . ." He went on to develop the point.
A final, and rather minor, form of directive remark which showed up in some conferences was made to indicate a sequence of questioners when it appeared that some reporters were anxious to get in a question yet, perhaps, feared they would be denied the opportunity. On occasion Johnson would indicate that he understood the difficulty and promised to allow a given newsman or two a chance in a particular order. This was generally done in a brief, tactful remark and probably helped the press and the President.

Most of Johnson's directive controls were probably innocuous. The didactic statements in answers usually were not highly valuable. The best directives were probably those which requested clarification from the questioner. The unsubtle appeals for press aid, while probably spontaneous and honest, seem to have been unnecessary, at best.

Fencing

As Press Secretary George Christian noted (see Chapter Two), President Johnson enjoyed sparring with reporters. The press conference seemed to draw out a debating approach to the situation. Many of Johnson's press conference replies, whether eventually responsive to the topics brought up, seem to have been directed at the questioner. Johnson's fencing included interrupting, demanding sources, brow-beating, humoring, kidding and joking, being personal, arguing, counter questioning, correcting, and attacking questions or questioners. These devices came up more frequently in the non-broadcast meetings. They also appeared often and throughout Johnson's administration. Moreover, they were too frequent and probably did little to better L.B.J.'s press or public relations. Johnson sometimes appeared abrupt and sarcastic, sometimes caustic and relentless, if not rather defensive.
and insecure in his jousting. When he used tact and humor, however, the effect was probably honorific for all participants.

Fencing responses account for portions of particular replies or consist in all of what was said in answer to given questions. Below are examples of the various ways Johnson sparred with the press.

One method Johnson used was interrupting the questioner to find out the source(s) behind an idea. An illustration from the January 13, 1966, conference is typical, and went as follows.

Q. Mr. President, in connection with the appointments in the Housing and Urban Development Department, there have been reports that a task force headed by Dr. Wood recommended—

The President. What reports? I want to know who reports what so I can see if it is—

Q. There have been published reports in the newspapers.

The President. Whose?

Q. There have been published reports in newspapers.

The President. Who published it? That's what I want to know. I don't want to comment on something that—

Q. Well, I saw something in the Washington Post.

The President. All right, go ahead. The Washington Post. Now, what did the Washington Post say?

Q. That a task force headed by Professor Wood had recommended the transfer of the Community Action Program from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the new Department, and there have been subsequent reports that you have decided against this. Can you make any comment on that?

The President. I would say that so far as the report that I have made a decision on the matter, I would say it is more propaganda than accurate. I have made no decision. I have not been called upon to make any decision. We will, in the days ahead, consider a good many reorganization proposals, but the best authority for a Presidential decision is the President or the President's Press Secretary, and you can always get guidance on that, if you have the time or the disposition to obtain it.

Q. That's why I asked you.

The President. Well, you got it. [Laughter] That's why I told you!

A bit later in that meeting L.B.J. explained that he was "sensitive sometimes" when he ran across statements and decisions falsely attributed to him in the news media. So, often, when a reporter mentioned
a source in a general or vague way, Johnson was not reluctant to seek out the source.

Questioning sources gave Johnson, on occasion, an opportunity to avoid questions with an apparent lack of factual basis. For example, at noon on the Saturday before Johnson's announcement not to seek reelection, a newsman raised an inquiry based upon "a story a week ago" which predicted that L.B.J. would not announce his political plans "until the August convention in Chicago." Johnson got the questioner to admit that the source was a "dope story." The President said he would not discuss such reports.

Interrupting and probing correspondents for sources may have been useful to the President, considering his own goals. Again, however, more tact might have helped him get along with even hostile reporters. Since Johnson was not known to react too tactlessly in broadcast conferences, his image with the public probably was not directly affected. The interruptions may have inhibited those reporters who did not like to mention their sources. Such reporters may have felt reluctant to confront the President with certain kinds of information, perhaps important data, because of the possibility of being challenged.

Another fencing device was sarcasm. It usually appeared in the way Johnson responded, rather than as an answer alone. For instance, on April 25, 1968, a reporter asked L.B.J. to reveal what he had said to a group of congressional aides in a speech earlier in the day. The President replied that his meeting had been "off the record." Ending the reply, he said, "I didn't tell them anything you haven't already known for a long, long time—so don't feel sorry for yourselves."
Another instance came up in the February 11, 1966, conference. The press pushed Johnson for the title of Bill Moyers, asking exactly who should be considered "Press Secretary." After six questions to get Johnson's answer, L.B.J. finally said that Moyer's title was "Special Assistant to the President." He continued, "It has always been that. You can call him Press Secretary, though, if it gives you any thrill." Still pressing the issue was the next question, "Mr. President, I would like to know your preference." Johnson finally conceded that he had understood the problem and that he really did not "object" to naming Moyers "Press Secretary." Although the entire exchange took only three or four minutes, it was probably wasted time. Further, Johnson's phrase, such as "nursing the press," seems tactless.

Johnson's sarcasm more frequently prevailed in non-broadcast conferences. In any event, it probably added little to presidential relations with the press generally or with a good question and answer period in a specific meeting.

At times Johnson's sparring with the press resembled debating. In a number of conferences Johnson seemed to "turn the tables" on his questioner, attack the question or the questioner in some way, or label the question in order to dismiss it.

Sometimes President Johnson became defensive. In a broadcast conference on March 13, 1965, he was asked why he had waited almost a week to meet reporters and discuss problems in Selma, Alabama. Johnson answered that "nothing . . either required or justified" his meeting reporters sooner. He went on to point out that he "should have some leeway" in deciding when to have conferences. He said he
had had "46" of them already and that only he would decide on the
timing, location, and content of his conferences.

To answer some queries Johnson told reporters to decide for
themselves. On September 1, 1967, a correspondent asked L.B.J. to
respond to some remarks made by Governor George Romney. Johnson's
answer was, "I'll just let you judge that statement. You could be
more objective." In another meeting, August 9, 1966, a reporter
presented some seemingly contradictory figures on an economic issue.
Johnson retorted, "I would let you reconcile it," and then went on
to admit that he was unable to answer the question.

Two months after Johnson's March 31, 1968, peace proposal,
Robert Pierpoint asked Johnson about statements made by Nguyen Van
Thieu and Dean Rusk which "seemed to have changed the administra-
tion's position" on the proposal. Johnson began his reply by saying,
"Mr. Pierpoint. I would think the key word in your question is
'seem.' It does not seem that way to Secretary Rusk. As Mr. Chris-
tian informed you yesterday, it does not seem that way to the Presi-
dent." Johnson was apparently saying, why ask a question you already
know the answer to? But he talked for about five minutes on the general
topic, perhaps to prove that nothing had changed in his policy.

President Johnson held a conference, with several governors pre-
sent, on September 29, 1966, in which some rather testy replies ap-
peared. To one inquiry about a forthcoming conference on the war,
Johnson twice told reporters that they had already been briefed on
that topic. The second time Johnson said, "For the eighteenth time
I will repeat: Mr. Moyers will tell you as soon as I have made any
plans." To another question on "some confusion . . . about the Viet-
nam budget" L.B.J. said, "Yes. I learned about that about 25 years
ago. Bill White used to represent the Associated Press long before he got demoted by going to the New York Times. He used to come in my office and he was always confused. By the time I got him unconfused I found a big story on the front page involving me that took me a week to get myself unconfused." Johnson went on to say that he had already answered the question before. He made a long attack on "people's impressions" and on "speculation." The attack became almost vitriolic. At one point Johnson said, "In the meantime anybody that gets an impression, intimation, hunch, dream, or a little marijuana is going to mislead somebody because I don't know myself." Ending the reply, he said, "Is that true, Governors? Do any of you have any comment on it? If you have any impressions, give them here now."

A variation of requesting sources was attacking statements which supplied content for questions. An inquiry on the possibility of Robert McNamara's resignation came up on September 1, 1967. L.B.J. said, "That is the most ridiculous nonsensical report that I have seen, I think, since I have been President."

The President sometimes argued that questions were unanswerable because they were hypothetical, strictly speaking. On April 20, 1964, a newsman wanted to know what Johnson would do if a current railroad strike could not be settled by negotiation. Before the reporter could finish the question, Johnson cut in and said, "That is an 'iffy' question, and you know I don't want to admit it is about to fail to work or predict it wouldn't work..." Having labelled the question, Johnson then went on to say what he probably would do if the strike could not be settled without his intervention.
The President also corrected reporters on occasion. Twice in his November 1, 1967, meeting Johnson seemed to be attacking the press in his corrections. In a reply to a question on legislation which had not passed, L.B.J. said, "... Now, the press this morning called these measures 'must bills' and that is your credibility, not ours. You call them priority bills. I have gone through this for about 35 years. ..." In answer to a later question, he replied, "First, I want to correct you before you get a credibility charge. I didn't say anything about a stable economy. I spoke of a prosperous economy." Johnson continued by explaining the distinction.

Much of Johnson's fencing with reporters left a pejorative impression. In some conferences, however, Johnson seemed to have been more personable. Although the transcripts indicate that Johnson rarely addressed his inquisitor's by name, except in the televised conferences, he sometimes appears quite friendly with reporters. In some conferences he was even a bit playful, or humorous, in his replies.

In January of 1966 Senator Mike Mansfield, speaking for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, issued a report of a visit to Vietnam. The President devoted a good deal of his "State of the Union" speech to Vietnam on January 12, 1966. On January 13, a reporter asked, "Mr. President, do you think that your report to the Nation coincides with Mansfield's report on Vietnam?" Johnson responded, "No--it was somewhat later." Later in the same news conference was a question about "women in the military service." The questioner said that he had heard that some of these women were "distressed" because they were not being sent to Vietnam. In reply, L.B.J. said, "Well, there
is always a chance of anything taking place when our women are sufficiently distressed. . . ."

The President's last press conference in the year 1967 showed some of Johnson's wit. At the beginning of the meeting L.B.J. had announced the appointment of Leonard Chapman to Commandant of the Marine Corps. Someone asked, "Mr. President, is he being nominated for four stars?" Here is Johnson's reply, including explanatory notes in the transcript: "The Commandant may carry that--I'm not sure. I don't know how to--[At this point, Deputy Press Secretary Robert H. Fleming handed the President a note.] He says not to touch the mike. Stand here. [Laughter.] Don't want any speculation to start. I have heard about these notes being passed before, so I want to clear that up right now." Another question was whether Johnson would "see Mr. Vance tomorrow." The reply was, "Yes, if he is here." The next question referred to Joseph Alsop's column that day. Alsop had reported the "fact" that Johnson's cabinet had "made a promise to . . . stay through the 1968 elections." Johnson began his answer, "I don't recall it," which again evoked laughter in the December 4 conference.

Generally, most of L.B.J.'s fencing with the press showed up in non-broadcast, impromptu conferences. His interruptions, demands for sources, corrections, debating, and sarcasm simply may have reflected his personality or mood. While the sparring may have been harmless, it also may have shown some unwarranted defensiveness. These tactics may have alienated some correspondents. Perhaps more tact, humor, and even a more personal approach in the informal meetings might have improved Johnson's rapport with the press and thereby increased his general effectiveness with media representatives.
The view of Johnson's controlling and fencing techniques gives partial insight into how he responded to questions, especially how he reacted to the press in the conferences. The next two sections treat Johnson's responsiveness to questions in terms of his abilities to supply the press and the public with useful facts and opinions.

Approaching

When Johnson wanted to answer a question, he was apparently quite effective at times. Although he frequently generalized, he usually went beyond a mere "yes" or "no" when he chose to fulfill reporters' needs. He also was quite effective in answers serving his own specific aims. Examples of answers which served those aims and the discussion of Johnson's methods of development revealed much of how the President went about providing answers which were, to varying degrees, positively responsive to the questions. The present discussion reviews and extends what was said in connection with L.B.J.'s purposes and supporting materials.

While a good many of correspondents' questions were phrased so that, technically speaking, a "yes" or "no" would have been a legitimate response, President Johnson frequently went beyond that kind of reply in order to explain or justify. Johnson's more responsive answers may be characterized as "backgrounding," repeating, expanding, exhausting, generalizing, arguing, and appealing. These terms point to what Johnson did in his answers. Explanations and illustrations of each technique appear in what follows.

"Backgrounding" refers in part to the answer categories which prior presidents, such as Franklin Roosevelt, used. Johnson rarely invoked the "background," "deep background," or "off-the-record"
answers in his official news conferences. The few times he did were in 1964 and early in 1965. Because he and his staff met reporters for "backgrounding" sessions rather frequently, it may have seemed unnecessary to classify the responses in the official press conferences. Not employing the traditional answer types may have prevented confusion, awkward shifting from category to category, and a sense of uncomfortable delay between question and answer.

Since it is not specifically known what Johnson said in his "deep background" or "off-the-record" replies, evaluation is not appropriate here. On the other hand, a number of Johnson's answers were of the background style. Such replies provided the press with details on the President's activities and programs and may have helped reporters prepare materials for news stories. Like Johnson's voluntaries which briefed correspondents, narration, itineraries, and explanations appear.

Frequently, President Johnson responded to questions with a repetition or restatement of something he had said to another group or in another situation on the same topic. Whether as part of an answer or as all of what he said, repetition and restatement were used most commonly in reply to questions on policy, questions looking for previously unannounced data, and questions which repeated or followed up previous inquiries. This method of reply probably added little to public information and in most cases did not aid the press in getting news. Johnson apparently used the device for rhetorical effect only.

On July 24, 1964, Johnson began a press conference with opening statements, including remarks on American policy in Southeast Asia. The voluntary was rather general. It included this statement: "Other
friends suggest that this problem must be moved to a conference table.
..." but that "The North" did not seem able to "honor existing agree-
ments." A newsman asked Johnson to respond to a proposition by Charles
de Gaulle which suggested that the United States and France, Communist
China and the Soviet Union "all . . . get out of Indochina and leave
them to settle their own problems themselves. . . " L.B.J. simply
repeated the point he had made in his voluntary about "those who are
ignoring the agreements reached at the conference table."

Again, on March 2, 1967, a reporter queried Johnson on policy in
Vietnam. The answer began with a repetition of previous arguments
Johnson had made. For example, Johnson said that North Vietnamese
"violation of two solemn agreements" (1954 and 1962 "Geneva Declara-
tions") had caused American intervention and that "they" had made
no effort to settle the war because of continued "aggression." The
points Johnson made were not at all new and seemed only to reinforce
what L.B.J. had said many times before.

Beyond mere repetition in answers was the technique of expanding
a point. That is, Johnson frequently wanted to go further than a "yes"
or a "no."

President Johnson sometimes felt the need to explain or justify
his actions. For instance, on September 30, 1967, he was asked if he
planned to request congress for "specific cuts in programs." In a
lengthy reply L.B.J. explained that he had not asked for cuts because
he was waiting for congressional action on various bills. The answer
shifted the responsibility for action to congress and seemed to justi-
fy his waiting to trim the appropriations. A simple "no" might have
been unresponsive without the exposition. Further, Johnson's reply
might have helped the press and the public understand how the President interacted with congress in budgetary matters.

Sometimes the expansion of a reply was used to amplify or heighten what was said. For instance, on January 13, 1966, the day after L.B.J.'s "State of the Union," a newsman queried the President on the "reaction" to the speech. The response was "very good," according to Johnson. He went on to show why he felt the response was favorable, mentioning "50-odd applause," "messages," and "wires."

Generally speaking, most of Johnson's attempts to expand what he said were apparently useful. While this type of answer probably did not provide exciting "news," it supplied reporters with materials for stories and sometimes helped explain Johnson's reasoning.

A less useful device is called "exhausting." In this type of response Johnson seemed to seize an issue and talk at length without really providing new insights. He seemed to be trying to cover as many aspects of an issue as possible, to answer all major objections to a policy, or to review all salient arguments he could make. He was, in effect, giving a speech on a broader topic than what the stimulus question had brought up. It is possible that by this Johnson felt he could end discussion or questioning on a particular subject. Or, perhaps, he wanted to demonstrate his ability to speak on the issue. By speaking for five or six minutes, he was limiting the time available for other topics, just as he had done with some of his extensive voluntaries on Vietnam and the economy. In fact, those two issues were commonly the subjects of bombardment in some of L.B.J.'s replies. Further, the content and style of such replies were very similar to that of the voluntaries which had similar aims behind them.
Less preparation and polish appeared in some of the protracted answers than in the laborious voluntaries. Johnson was evidently able to speak at length, either extemporaneously or on an impromptu basis, on certain themes. Indeed, he had done so on the economy and on the war so often that little preparation was probably necessary for his short speeches which existed in the form of answers. This device of exhausting a topic appeared just as often in Johnson's televised conferences as in his less formal meetings. In the broadcast meetings, however, employing this device probably was not effective except in terms of Johnson's own purposes. The types of reply seem to have been inappropriate for press conferences because the aim was usually propagandistic (and probably obviously so to the press), usually too time consuming, and usually not very responsive to the basic needs of the press and the public. The exhaustive replies may have alienated the press and bored the public because they were long and often little more than restatements of other Presidential communications. The President sometimes moderated the length of these replies, but the "over kill" effect seemed to predominate anyway.

President Johnson's May 3, 1968, broadcast conference illustrates how he sometimes employed the device. In that meeting the opening statements took only about two minutes. The length of Johnson's replies allowed only eleven questions. None of the questions were longer than the average of fifteen to thirty seconds a piece. In answer to one query regarding the possibility of a tax increase's passing congress, L.B.J. began with a point on budgetary "needs" for the tax. He then reviewed his economic policies and practices, describing some of his requests in 1966 and 1967. Next came a detailed discussion of
current works in the congressional committees responsible for the tax bill. Johnson used the opportunity to chastise legislators for "this continued procrastination" and to argue, again, the need for the tax. The reply took about six or seven minutes to deliver. With this rather typical type of response the news conference became a public forum for presidential persuasion.

Another instance occurred in the June 1, 1965, news conference. Johnson announced the removal of Marines from the Dominican Republic. Many of the questions had to do with the situation in that country. The last questioner inquired about Juan Bosch's role in the conflict and about the future of government in the Dominican Republic. Johnson had already reviewed some of the activities involving the United States in other replies and in his voluntary on the topic. Nevertheless, he took the opportunity provided by the last query to spell out again, in more detail, events of the crisis. The answer seemed to be a defense of United States involvement. L.B.J. said, for example, "Our citizens were under the beds and in the closets and trying to dodge the gunfire." Narration was colored with emotion. Interspersed was praise for the military and diplomatic personnel. Johnson neither discussed Bosch nor did he speculate on the country's future. He merely dramatized and justified American involvement. The justification may have been called for, not by the question, but by criticisms. Johnson's explanation was suasive in nature and did not relate to foreign policy rationale, except for Johnson's hint that "Communists . . . were active" in the hostilities. Further, the answer's content seems to have provided little new information. Ending the conference with this long response also postponed further or
other inquiry, which might have proven valuable. Once more the President's needs seem to have been met at the expense of the press, if not the public as well.

Generalizing was a technique related to repeating and exhausting. That is, repetitive responses and exhaustive replies sometimes totally or largely were made up of generalizations, summaries, or broad statements of opinion. The President answered in generalities in many replies. He did not go beyond broad statements and supply specific development. Johnson could generalize briefly or at length. Moreover, such answers were often expressions of policy or philosophy.

Answers which were partially or wholly general were probably antithetical in terms of reporter's interest. As for the larger audience, this type of reply probably added little knowledge. For those who were unaware of Johnson's policies, however, some of these replies may have provided capsulized summaries, especially when the President's policies or philosophies emerged. Like repeating, the device apparently was used for emphasis or to provide a semblance of response when more concrete data was not at hand.

A few days before a visit to the United States by India's Premier, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Johnson met reporters. In this press conference, on March 23, 1966, a correspondent asked about what Johnson and Mrs. Gandhi planned to discuss. Here is the answer:

Q. Mr. President, can you say anything at all about what you may be discussing with Prime Minister Gandhi?

The President. . . .I am looking forward with a great deal of pleasure to seeing the Prime Minister again. We have met on several occasions. Mrs. Johnson and I spent some time with her when we were in her country in 1961. I had lunch with her Ambassador today, and spent a good while visiting with him about the agenda.

We will be talking about our relations and what the American people can do, working with the people of India,
to promote peace and prosperity. I want to hear about her ideas and any suggestions she may have as to what we can do that we are not doing in these fields.

We will, of course, talk about some of the things that were on the agenda last year when a visit was postponed, and again when I planned to see Prime Minister Shastri and was prevented from doing so by his death. We will take up where we left off there. We look forward to a very pleasant and very productive visit.

The "agenda" was probably no surprise to anyone. Neither did it contribute much in the way of news or valuable information.

On February 1, 1964, Johnson was asked about the future of South Vietnam. In a brief reply L.B.J. reiterated an argument that "Communist aggression" prevented "neutralization;" he concluded, "... I think the course that we are following is the most advisable one for freedom at this point." Johnson had not made a major policy statement on Vietnam this early in his administration, although he had made the argument in previous statements. This was the first time in an official press conference that a request for a policy statement had come up. The answer appears to show that Johnson had not yet formulated much of a "perspective," as the reporter put it. His answer, then, merely summarized an attitude he had expressed previously, for example, in his "New Year's Message to the Chairman of the Military Revolutionary Council in South Viet-Nam," (released to the press on January 1, 1964). It is doubtful, however, that the reply helped either the public or the press to better understand American aid to Vietnam, let alone what lay ahead.

That Johnson used the press conference for propaganda has been seen. A number of times he used his answers for arguing. He accused or blamed others for problems or apparent failures. This technique helped fulfill his goal of defending his administration. But Johnson
also argued to attack his political enemies. Caustic retorts to such politicians as Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and to those Republicans who opposed his Great Society programs were made in several press conference answers, especially in 1964 and in 1966. Although reporters frequently "baited" Johnson with the criticisms of his detractors, the President seemed unable, especially in election years, to curb what was probably a natural or instinctive response. Such reactions may have served L.B.J. well. He could vent his feelings and, at times, place the blame for passage of legislation on his opponents. He may have been able to win public support for his own candidacy or for his party. Further, he often gave reporters material which probably allowed the heightening of a conflict.

This type of response seems, at times, to have been undignified and inappropriate. In April of 1964, Richard Nixon gave talks criticizing L.B.J. Nixon had returned from a trip to the Far East. In a press conference on April 13, a reporter asked if Nixon's remarks in one speech were "based on erroneous information about Viet-Nam." Johnson replied in part, "I don't know what it was based on. I haven't talked to Mr. Nixon. I assume that he spent a good deal of his time out there looking after Pepsi Cola's interest. I don't know how much real information he got. But at least, that is what he said he was doing." L.B.J. went on to say that he would like to talk with his opponents. He said, "I would like to have a relationship with the Republican nominee similar to the relationship I had with President Eisenhower, during the 8 years I was leader . . ." Johnson ended the reply with an appeal for bipartisan efforts in foreign affairs. Had Johnson avoided the attack on Nixon, the answer might have appeared more palatable. Moreover, attempting to quiet criticism of foreign policy may
not have been in the best interests of the public. It is understandable that Johnson wanted "unity," even in a political campaign, but attacking opponents in an attempt at unity may not have helped anyone but Johnson.

A final technique of Johnson's strategy is called "appealing." Johnson used emotional appeals to get support for his policies in his speech making, in his press conference voluntaries, and often in his answers to the press. In these answers, he approached topics for rhetorical purposes, circumventing the probable desires of newsmen. These appeals, once more, seem misplaced. It is doubtful that correspondents wanted public speeches in answer to their inquiries. Nevertheless, Johnson took the opportunity a number of times to use the occasion for long, passionate pleas. Given the many other channels of communication available to a president, the use of this technique in the news conference probably hampered Johnson's effectiveness, especially with the press corps.

On March 9, 1967, Johnson used his first "live and in color" broadcast conference to respond to a criticism made by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., on Johnson's peace efforts. L.B.J. talked about "the other side" which "continues to kill our men, to lob their mortars into our air bases, to seize South Vietnam by force." Johnson continued,

But I do not think it is fair to ask an American Commander in Chief to say to your men, "Ground your planes, tie your hands behind you, sit there and watch division after division come across the DMZ, and don't hit them until they get within a mile or two of you."

I don't think that is fair to American Marines or American soldiers.
We have talked before while acts of war continued. We did that in Korea. We had the blockade on in Berlin while we had conferences.
So we are willing to talk unconditionally, or we are willing to talk conditionally. All we ask is equity and fairness, and that the other side do likewise. We don't think you ought to ask the American boys to do one thing while other folks do nothing.

Generally speaking, backgrounding, repeating, expanding, exhausting, generalizing, arguing, and appealing were President Johnson's chief devices for approaching questions. For the most part the responses appear to have been more designed to meet L.B.J.'s aims than to serve the press and the public. Often the use of the techniques led to answers which do not seem to have been appropriate for the presidential press conference.

Avoiding

Whether an answer approached or avoided a question involves degrees. The preceding section shows how Johnson seems to have responded in approaching issues. As many, if not more of Johnson's responses may be said to have avoided rather than approached issues. Some of the devices he used for dodging are explained in this part of the chapter.

President Johnson's answers proved that he was adept at avoiding issues. His abilities and the extent to which he passed over ideas is interesting and significant. L.B.J.'s frequent, apparent unresponsiveness was not surprising considering his attitudes toward the press, his press conference goals, and his practices of control, secrecy and surprise. From the standpoint of reporters, what Johnson said in his answers probably had less news value than what he said in opening statements and announcements. While questions often got "reactions," getting new information or significant replies was even more difficult.

Johnson employed a wide variety of devices to avoid answers. These devices may be grouped into three categories. Basically,
Johnson refused to answer, referred a question to another source, or circumvented an issue.

First, the President had a number of ways of refusing to answer questions. He eschewed the "no comment" wording, although if asked whether he would discuss a particular issue, he sometimes simply said "no." Other devices included stalling for time, discouraging a type or area of inquiry, rejecting or cutting off a specific question, denying an ability to answer, and withdrawing or generally retreating from questions.

One refusal technique was to stall for time. That is, Johnson was able to evade by telling a reporter that the question was premature. For instance, requests for names of nominees, before officially announced, were usually met with the reply, "When we know, we will let you know." This was commonly used and Johnson rarely went beyond that. He did not discuss who might be under consideration or when the press could expect the answer. Johnson also stalled on issues asking for speculation or prophecy. He did, however, often express hope and optimism for a happy outcome on those issues.

Johnson was frequently asked about his campaign plans. In 1964, he was asked whether he would debate the Republican nominee on several occasions. The question came up in L.B.J's second press conference, December 18, 1963. Johnson said that when he was nominated, he would decide whether to debate. He was thus able to table the issue for eight months.

On the question of progress in arranging peace talks, which came up in the October 24, 1968, meeting, Johnson put reporters off. He said that the October 16 statement by his press secretary was the latest
word. Next he told of how much he wanted peace and said he was
doing all he could toward that end. He then said, "We do not want
to make news until there is news. And we realize that many times
diplomacy can be more effective in private than to have all your
discussions, recommendations, and prophesies carried in the press."
He repeated that nothing had changed and said, "When there is anything
to report, you will be informed."

Another refusal technique was to discourage certain kinds of
questions. Sometimes the device worked. Other times, reporters per­sisted. Johnson liked to discourage guessing.

In a conference held December 21, 1966, a reporter said, "... how do you feel about the speculation that you may not run again in 1968?" Johnson replied, "I feel about that like I do most speculation. I have other things to do." After two other inquiries, on other af­fairs, the question came up again. Johnson answered, "... I have expressed myself on speculation. ..." The next question was, "I wonder if you could make it more direct. Do you intend now to run in 1968?" L.B.J. rephrased his reply, too. He said, "I will cross that bridge when I get to it. This is not 1968." There followed a question on whether the appearance of Attorney General Ramsey Clark meant Johnson planned to say anything about Clark. Johnson said, "Not at all. When I have an announcement, as I said, you will be the first to know it." No more questions on Clark's presence occurred, nor did L.B.J. say why his Attorney General was there.

Certain kinds of questions on Vietnam, especially those asking
for specific answers, were frequently rebuffed. For instance, on
June 18, 1966, this question came up: "Mr. President, would you please
explain for us why it's wrong for us to bomb the capital in North Vietnam, and who has ordered this theory into policy?" Johnson dodged, saying, "I don't think I would want to comment on the tactics or strategy at this point."

In a question and answer session on July 18, 1967, a reporter said, "Can I ask you about Chancellor Kiesinger, Mr. President?" (Johnson had just announced that Kiesinger would visit the United States in August). Johnson said, "Yes." The reporter asked, "Did you write a letter to him?" L.B.J. responded, "I don't discuss correspondence."

Another technique, rejecting, was also used. That is, Johnson cut off or dismissed particular questions, sometimes without explanation. Johnson did this in his January 27, 1964, meeting. A reporter asked, "Do you agree with Wright Patman--" Interrupting, Johnson said, "I have not discussed Mr. Patman's ideas with him or anyone else." Then L.B.J. told reporters that this was a "formal press conference" and that he wanted to help them. Nothing was "secret" except "some things which may fall within the national interest which must be kept secret." Next he told the press, "I will see you next week." A reporter asked where. Johnson said he didn't know and that saying he would meet them was "good enough." Another reporter asked, "Will it be on Saturday Mr. President?" L.B.J. made no reply at all, according to the transcript.

On July 9, 1965, a correspondent asked Johnson, "to what extent" he was getting news about a British peace attempt "and what opportunity . . . for a peace talk" might exist. Johnson responded, "We are informed about it."
Another evasive device to refuse answering was denying adequate knowledge or specific information to answer. The argument might go, "How can I answer if I haven't seen the report you are talking about?"

For instance, Johnson was asked to comment on an article from "a French magazine." The article apparently reported a communication of Ho Chi Minh to Russian leaders which involved the possibility of United States aid to China. Johnson passed over the question, saying only, "I haven't read the Paris magazines."

One last kind of refusal was total withdrawal from a question or issue area. The effect was a "no comment" response. The reply was usually a brief "no." That is, he did not explain or justify his refusal to answer. In a few conferences Johnson appears to have been almost totally unresponsive.

On October 13, 1966, Johnson met reporters in New York City (in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel) and introduced Prince Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of Laos. After the opening statements, the first question was met with "No. Any other questions?" Seven more questions followed, all answered by "no." In only two of the eight negative responses did Johnson go beyond the "no."

Johnson announced Chief Justice Earl Warren's resignation in his June 26, 1968, conference. Johnson heard nineteen questions on different subjects. To most he was unresponsive and had no comment.

Perhaps less unresponsive was the second general technique, called "referring." The use of this device was probably for evasion at times. L.B.J. generally referred the press to previous or current statements or to other sources. Among others, he told reporters to take their questions to attorneys general, to government leaders and agencies,
and to persons or organizations mentioned as the sources behind certain questions.

It was seen that President Johnson often repeated or restated old ideas or materials in his answers. On occasion, however, he just referred questioners to previous statements. Usually the device was in a brief recommendation. Other times, the referral was developed with a summary of what had been said. Johnson referred questions to previous speeches, to prior press releases, to previous press conference statements and answers, to handouts such as biographies available at the time (or at the end) of the conference, and to volunteers or answers just presented in a conference.

Channeling questions to others was somewhat less common than suggesting that a reporter go back to a prior statement.

Just over a week before L.B.J. was nominated by his party in 1964, Johnson held a press conference (on August 18). Reporters were naturally inquisitive about his plans. One asked if he would discuss his "plans for next week." Johnson told the newsman to ask Jack Valenti, L.B.J.'s aide. Johnson also said, "With regard to the convention, I expect to go up later Thursday evening--I don't know what time--if I go at all." A moment later a reporter said, "Mr. President, did I understand that you might not go to Atlantic City at all?" Johnson said, "No." The reporter replied, "I misunderstood." L.B.J. said, "Evidently. I didn't say I would, or wouldn't." Whether Mr. Valenti knew Johnson's plans, when apparently the President did not know, is problematic. Johnson might have offered to provide the information at a later and specific time.
In his meeting with reporters on June 18, 1966, the following exchange occurred:

Q. Mr. President, can you give us your thinking, sir, on the propriety of a United States Senator going abroad and making critical comments about the internal policy of another nation?

The President. I think that it would be a better policy to let the Senators judge the propriety of their own actions. It is not for the executive branch to be passing upon statements of Senators.

There are a great many statements made by the Senate that an Executive will approve of, and some maybe that he will disapprove of. But I don't think as a general policy, it is wise for us to set up any censorship down here. I just have to leave it up to their judgment.

The answer further illustrates a referral which allowed Johnson to dodge a question.

A third general avoidance strategy was circumvention. That is, President Johnson avoided direct comment but talked, anyway. When he did this, he often shifted to another topic, substituted an answer on the general topic for a response to a specific inquiry, ignored the question and interjected an announcement, digressed, equivocated, groped for an answer, repeated or restated answers, rationalized, transferred blame for failures, appealed to laughter, used semantics to evade, and "forgot." Not all of these eleven devices warrant discussion here because some were similar to devices mentioned in connection with the other three response strategies. Below are illustrations of a few of the devices used to circumvent issues.

Johnson sometimes shifted from a point in a question to a personality or to another issue in response to questions. For instance, on November 4, 1966, (close to election day), a newsman asked about a misunderstanding of the policy set forth in the Manila Conference on the war in Southeast Asia. The reporter mentioned that Richard Nixon's
interpretation would mean that the intention of a withdrawal plan proposed at the meeting "would leave South Vietnam to the mercy of the Vietcong." Johnson, rather than explaining the proposal, began his reply with an attack on Nixon, whom L.B.J. called "a chronic complainer." Johnson later said, "you can read the communiqué." He then went into a defense of the motives of the participants in the Conference, especially the United States. He talked about why the communiqué "shouldn't be confused." He closed the long answer by saying, "... When the aggression, infiltration, and violence ceases, not a nation there wants to keep occupying troops in South Vietnam." And to reshift emphasis, he said, "Mr. Nixon doesn't serve his country well by trying to leave that kind of impression in the hope that he can pick up a precinct or two, or a ward or two."

Johnson also substituted general replies to questions requesting specific or other information. A common response was to ignore the specific issue and express hope. For instance, in his August 3, 1967, conference, L.B.J. was asked for a progress report on a nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Johnson said, "progress" had been made and he expressed optimism. In a similar question on the progress of the Paris peace negotiations, asked in L.B.J.'s October 24, 1968, meeting, Johnson's response was to express hope and to assert that efforts toward peace were continuing daily.

Good examples of other substitutions of interjections and of digressions came up in informal press conferences. Johnson's birthday press conference in 1966, for instance, illustrates how the devices could be used. L.B.J. was asked how he felt and if he had "any special problems." He avoided "problems" and reminisced for approximately
twenty minutes. Although the length of the reply was not typical, the style of the digression was.

Equivocation was also used. One example was the answer on his convention plans in 1964, described above. In another session with the press corps, August 24, 1967, a newsman asked Johnson to predict the outcome of congressional elections. In his reply, L.B.J. referred to a report in the Christian Science Monitor showing "an average gain of 41 seats in off-year elections since 1890." Johnson talked about the general possibilities of gains or losses and then said, "... I don't expect to see any unusual changes from what you would expect normally in an election this year." He went on to downgrade current predictions by Republicans and closed, saying that the indications he had showed no certainty of "change above the expected change in an off-year election." A correspondent then asked if the "41 seats," would then be acceptable as a "norm" in L.B.J.'s prediction. The President replied, "No. No, I don't know of any norm..." Johnson did not want to be held to a prediction although he apparently had not minded talking "around" the idea.

On some occasions Johnson seemed to be "thinking out loud" or groping for an answer while talking. Sometimes this occurred with fairly simple requests. In one instance, Saturday, April 4, 1964, he seemed to be teasing. One question was, "Mr. President, are you going anywhere today?" L.B.J. responded, "Not that I know of. I have no immediate plans. But I would not want to preclude getting out, if I got through with the matters at hand and got my desk clear. I would like to take a little walk. I might go out. I do not want to schedule anything." (The next question was: "But how far, sir?" Johnson said,
"as far as I could, away from here.") Johnson's reply seems of little usefulness. Further, a simple "I don't know, but I have no plans," might have been more responsive.

One circumvention technique was transferring blame. When particular problems were presented to the President in questions, he was quick to lay blame. For the inability of his administration to bring about peace in Vietnam he blamed the "enemy." For domestic difficulties he censured congress or accused critics in the press or in the Republican party for creating or adding to existing problems. For instance, Johnson was questioned about a veto during his August 25, 1965, broadcast conference. Johnson argued that because his "best legal advisers" and the Attorney General had determined that the act in question was "repugnant to the Constitution," L.B.J. had no other choice. The implication, of course, was that the Congress was at fault rather than the President.

Another technique to dodge a question was to appeal to laughter. One illustration appears in the President's September 8, 1966, press session, as follows:

Q. Mr. President, you have used the phrase which has been repeated over and over again in regard to Vietnam, which has become a measure of your determination in the Vietnam war. You have used it in this message by saying: "This administration is prepared to recommend whatever action is necessary to maintain stable growth," et cetera.

Does this represent a similar degree of determination on the domestic stability issue?

The President. Ask your question again. I know what I said but I am not clear what you said. What question are you asking? [Laughter]

Q. You have used the phrase "whatever is necessary" to carry on the war in Vietnam over and over again. It has become a measure of your determination to see the Vietnam war through to the necessary conclusion.

Now you have used that same phrase "whatever is necessary" to keep domestic stability in this message with respect to keeping the domestic economy stable.
My question was simply: Does this represent a similar degree of determination on the whole economy?

The President. When I say "whatever is necessary," I mean whatever is necessary. I mean it whether it is applied to Vietnam or to the domestic situation or to answering your question. [Laughter]

Although Johnson's poking fun may have been justified, considering the wording of the question, he apparently did not want to spell out possible means of promoting economic stability.

In the conference just cited is an example of using the phrasing of a question to avoid an answer. In this particular case, a reporter asked, "Mr. President are you sorry, the way some economists say you should be, that you did not raise taxes last spring?" L.B.J. said, "I am not aware of any economists who have said that to me." This represents a twisting of the intent and phrasing of the question, or "semantic evasion." Another example occurred in the President's July 31, 1967, meeting. One question was, "Mr. President, it was reported on Saturday that Marshal Tito received a personal message from you. I wonder if you would say anything about that."

Rather than not commenting, Johnson said, "Yes. We are in communication from time to time with the leaders of other nations. We have communicated with President Tito on occasion." Indeed, Johnson said something. But he probably did not offer what the newsman wanted.

The circumventional techniques were varied and clever. They were used extensively throughout President Johnson's years in office. Tactics of evasion probably fulfilled the President's aims only, except when "the national interest" was a justifiable excuse for avoiding reply, or when questions were of so little import that no real response was demanded. The press probably knew what Johnson was doing, if not why. Correspondents often ignored circumventional
responses and repeated specific queries. From time to time Johnson was asked why he avoided answering on particular topics, or if the public would not better be served by a more responsive reply. Johnson's ready argument was that he would accept the responsibility of determining what was in the national interest, which was his function as the President of the United States.

**Audience Adaptation**

The extent to which Johnson's responsiveness to his audiences is reflected by the means of controlling and fencing with the press, and approaching or avoiding issues reveals a lack of effectiveness from the standpoint of audience adaptation. This seems true of the use of announcements, as well. In terms of Johnson's goals, the aims of the press, and public needs, Johnson distorted, to a degree, the functions of the presidential press conference with his replies. He was not the first or only chief executive to use the particular devices studied in this chapter. Neither were his goals and methods of development necessarily unique. President Johnson apparently often gave useful answers in a manner that would benefit the public and the press. On balance, however, it seems that even more often Johnson's answers were too calculated to meet his own purposes, especially his aims of publicity, promotion, defense, ethos enhancement, and control over the press. Many of Johnson's news conferences and a general view of his answers leave an impression that this president was not very effective in adapting to his immediate and eventual or distant audiences, the press and the public. This does not mean that vigorous attempts to win public opinion for the sake of productive leadership and power are inappropriate in presidential press relations. Because
the White House has so many other avenues to accomplish that aim. Johnson probably went too far to achieve his own ends in answers at his press conferences.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Impetus for this study came from two basic voids. First and most important was the lack of serious attention given to the presidential press conference by rhetorical critics. Second, Lyndon Johnson's news conferences have not been studied carefully by speech critics.

The Presidential Press Conference

The president of the United States is not required by law or by the Constitution to communicate with the press. The presidential news conference is an institution which evolved with the growth of news media and with changing styles of presidential leadership. The chief executives of the nation have determined the nature and extent of their press relationships. More specifically, they have decided how, when, and why to meet newsmen in person.

Among controls which a president exercises over the press conference are timing, frequency, location, content, and even who may attend. Recently, presidents have chosen whether the conference is broadcast to the public. Moreover they have determined which questions to answer, which correspondents might inquire, and whether and to what extent the press could use the president's answers.

The functions of the news conference involve the goals or needs of the participants. Among presidential aims are informing, persuading,
and especially influencing public opinion. For the representatives of the media, the conference provides the commodity of "news." The press also functions as a vehicle of feedback by asking questions which express public concern and interest. Another, related theory sees the press as a "fourth branch" of government because of its influence on the decisions and actions of a president. The conference may also serve the public's needs to monitor its leaders, to gain understanding of presidential policy and action, and to learn more of contemporary White House affairs.

The presidential press conference is unlike the question period of the British House of Commons. Among several important differences is the extra-legal nature of the news conference. The participants and the formats differ considerably.

Presidential press relations before the administration of Woodrow Wilson led to the establishment of the modern news conference.

Prior to the Civil War, most American presidents relied heavily on partisan, political publications for persuasion. Until Jackson's election, most presidents had little direct contact with reporters. Andrew Jackson was probably the first president to use the press directly and aggressively. The presidents between Jackson and Lincoln were undistinguished in their press relations.

Abraham Lincoln had considerable journalistic experience before reaching the White House. He, like Jackson, learned the intricacies and potential of what was emerging as a powerful arbiter of public opinion in America. Lincoln succeeded at establishing productive contacts with reporters, editors, and publishers. He read newspapers avidly. He contributed articles and copies of his speeches to papers
to further his effectiveness. Lincoln was accessible to newsmen and sometimes granted interviews.

After Lincoln, the next president who was enterprising in using the press was Grover Cleveland. But most of the time Cleveland relegated to his staff the task of dealing directly with newsmen.

Theodore Roosevelt became one of the most able chief executives in rallying support in the news media. He provided the first White House press facility, wrote articles, prepared releases, and met with selected correspondents in informal exchanges.

William Howard Taft had held fruitful weekly news conferences as Secretary of War but did not fare well with the press when he attained the higher office.

The evolution of the modern presidential news conference began with Woodrow Wilson. President Wilson is credited with having established the presidential press conference, because, among other reasons, he set his meetings on a regular basis and refined formal regulations which provided patterns for later presidents. Because of his personality and questions of national security, Wilson's conferences deteriorated and were finally discontinued in 1917.

Warren Harding reinstated the institution, invoked a rule requiring written queries, and met regularly with reporters until the end of his administration when his press relations waned.

Calvin Coolidge was cunning in his handling of the media. He met correspondents twice weekly but responded mainly on an off-the-record basis. He used the conference to make announcements and to build rapport with his questioners. He disallowed quotation, but for his political aims he encouraged reporters to embellish and dramatize the relatively unimportant information in his answers.
Herbert Hoover, like Taft, had begun good press relations as a cabinet officer. However, the White House press corps posed such a challenge that Hoover was ineffectual and finally quit seeing them directly.

Franklin Roosevelt was a sharp contrast to previous presidents. F.D.R. took the press practices of his term as Governor of New York to his White House office. His lively, frequent exchanges were evidence of an accomplished speaker and leader. He met correspondents two times each week for informal, oral questions and answers. F.D.R. used four reply categories of which one, indirect quotation, seems to have been his own invention. Roosevelt was quite effective in promoting his administration through his news conferences, as he was in other communications. More than any previous chief executive, Roosevelt realized the full potential of the presidential news conference.

Harry Truman followed a number of F.D.R.'s practices with a good measure of success. He faced the press corps once a week and responded to the increasing size of that body by moving his meetings to an auditorium. In 1951, he allowed the release of recorded excerpts for radio broadcast. This was an innovation.

Dwight Eisenhower also contributed to the presidential press conference. After his once weekly meetings his staff issued edited transcripts to newsmen. Eisenhower allowed television films of his conferences to be broadcast. He was the first to permit a live broadcast of a press conference. Eisenhower was somewhat aloof and formal, and was unimpressive in ways. He probably did not achieve the success that F.D.R. and Truman had in press meetings.

John Kennedy jolted the public and the press with live, televised conferences. Kennedy established good rapport with his inquisitors
and came across well on television. His meetings apparently were effective in maintaining a favorable public image and in sustaining support for his leadership. J.F.K. carefully prepared for his press meetings. After brief opening statements, he faced about four hundred correspondents and deftly handled about two dozen questions in the thirty-minute sessions. Later, he sometimes watched a taped replay with aides to assess his own skill.

Lyndon Johnson took reporters back to the Roosevelt era with his frequent, informal, and impromptu meetings. His approach was experimental, especially during his first two years as president. He tried a variety of formats, including broadcast meetings, walking conferences, and appearances with important guests. He seemed most happy with "surprise" conferences held in his office. L.B.J.'s relations with reporters were mercurial. Johnson became the butt of much criticism and even personal attack in newspaper and magazine reports. Nevertheless, he continued to meet the press and vigorously attempted to exploit the industry and the news conference to fulfill his leadership aims.

Richard Nixon, too, has experimented with ways to communicate with newsmen. But Nixon generally has avoided direct contact with reporters and has held few news conferences. He prefers direct, broadcast communication with the public, letting his aids deal with questions from media representatives. Nixon's failure to face reporters has been criticized and has postponed refinement of the presidential press conference as a means of leadership and communication.
Lyndon Johnson and the Press

President Johnson's early interest in oratory, debate, politics, and journalism may have influenced his presidential press relations. He was active at participating in those fields as a college student. For a while, he taught and coached debate.

Many years in government at the national level gave L.B.J. the opportunity to observe successful leaders as well as the chance to develop his own press relations. As Johnson rose to power in the Senate, he established a style of handling the press which was characterized by a domineering manner. He preferred informal and impromptu get togethers with small groups of newsmen. Senator Johnson never distinguished himself as a public speaker, although he gained in prominence within the Democratic Party. His press relations during the years before he became president were not spectacular. He was secretive and unduly sensitive to criticism.

In developing his approach to the press conference, Johnson may have emulated F.D.R. Further, he may have been influenced by a desire not to be compared with Kennedy. There is some evidence that Johnson distrusted the "eastern establishment" press which apparently had had so much rapport with Kennedy.

Johnson's attitudes toward the press were complex. He seemed to be fascinated with the news media. L.B.J. read several newspapers and monitored broadcasts daily and with much interest. He was highly conscious of the value of publicity and instructed his staff to make calculated efforts at getting press attention to the achievements of his administration. Johnson got along well with some individual newsmen and cultivated relationships with others. He expected loyalty and service. He even attempted to trade favors with some writers.
President Johnson had many dislikes. He was bothered by reporters’ mistakes, personal criticisms, speculative and interpretative writing, exaggerations, and "leaks" which he had not originated.

Although Johnson probably had no formal press conference philosophy, his practices led to some habitual ways of approaching the speaking situation. He was pragmatic and purposive. He preferred informality with reporters and direct communication with the populace. Broadcast conferences were uneasy events. Further, he liked to surprise the press with meetings and with occasional dramatic statements. The secretiveness of his senate days carried over to the presidency. L.B.J. wanted control over the reporters who covered him and over the format for communicating with the press. He also exhibited an almost impulsive need to experiment with different kinds of meetings with media representatives.

President Johnson met the press just about every day and in an interesting variety of ways. He met with small groups for briefing and off-the-record sessions. He granted private and televised interviews. His official conferences varied in location, planning, formality, length, and timing. He was unpredictable in ways. He was also well prepared for his conferences even if the press corps was not.

**Johnson's Press Conference Content**

President Johnson's opening statements and the reporter's questions were the main constituents of the content in the conferences. Johnson made extensive use of announcements in his official news conferences. He discussed executive affairs, domestic issues, foreign relations, and personal matters.
Johnson's favorite area of announcement was executive affairs. L.B.J. often used the press conference to announce changes in the personnel of the executive branch. He also talked about the results of recent meetings. He described itineraries, reviewed daily and weekly plans and activities, announced decisions, and issued statements of policy. At times, Johnson invited cabinet and military officials, governors, and visiting dignitaries to make statements to the press.

The President also made announcements on domestic issues. During his first two years in office he was prone to dwell at length on the prosperous state of the economy. Sometimes he used voluntaries to promote his legislation. Current events directly stimulating his action were touched upon.

Foreign affairs also came up, but not frequently. Johnson gave statements on the war in Vietnam from time to time. He occasionally spoke on current relations and agreements between the United States and other countries. American involvement in the affairs of Panama, the Dominican Republic, and the Middle East were discussed periodically.

In a few conferences Johnson initiated discussion on personal matters, especially his health.

The specific issues raised by reporters' questions involved similar topic areas. Newsmen were interested in Johnson's public and private life, in current domestic events, in politics, and in foreign affairs.

Correspondents queried Johnson on the subject of Vietnam more than any other topic. In fact, the general area of foreign affairs was most popular with the press.
While Johnson was often questioned on his official activities, reporters seemed just as curious about his political life.

Relatively speaking, the press asked few questions on the nation's economy and on legislation. They did, however, frequently inquire about specific contemporary events in the United States.

A profile of an average press conference might show four questions on the presidency, five questions on domestic matters, six queries on foreign relations (with four on Vietnam alone), and at least one miscellaneous inquiry.

Johnson's Opening Statements

President Johnson used his announcements for six specific purposes. He wanted to explain, to get publicity, to promote the achievements of his administration, to defend his leadership from external criticism, to improve his image with the public and the press, and to control the press and the news conference. Most of his goals and most of what he said in his voluntaries were for persuasion, to mold public opinion, and to gain support for his policies and programs.

Johnson used a variety of traditional methods of development and supporting materials in his opening statements. His materials were similar to the development of ideas used in his formal addresses. Further, he generally used appropriate means to carry out his aims. He commonly employed statistics, details, narration, and testimony. He used repetition and restatement for amplification.

L.B.J. had an assortment of special devices to meet the conference format. His techniques related to frequency, length, timing, issue
avoidance, anticipation, interjection, and guest participation in the opening statements.

Johnson controlled the content of his conferences with the devices of scheduling and length. He generally avoided issues reflecting failures of his administration. His approach was to present good news as often as possible and not to mention bad news. Johnson attempted to anticipate reporters' questions. Sometimes he interjected announcements in the question period or at the close of his conferences. He also asked guests appearing with him to make comments to correspondents. He was so expansive in using voluntaries that often a fourth to one half of an entire conference was taken up by long preliminary remarks.

Johnson's aims, methods of development, special techniques, and extensive use of voluntaries showed more regard for his own needs than for the needs of the press. Johnson used reporters as a captive audience for short orations, long promotional remarks, and defensive attempts to answer his critics. Much of the material he presented was not newsworthy because it was repetitive of older or prior statements. On the other hand, Johnson sometimes made dramatic announcements and gave informative explanations of interest and value to the press and the public.

Reporters' Questions

The content of the questions was timely, important, appropriate to the situation, and responsive to the needs of the public and the President. Reporters may have been too interested in current domestic affairs at times, but as a whole, the inquiry was highly appropriate.
Four types of questions predominated. Queries were used to obtain data, to elicit opinions, to evoke reactions, and to supplement other questions or follow up voluntaries. At least half of the inquiry was of the supplementary or follow up variety. In general, the types of questions were well suited to the conferences.

The stylistic qualities of the questions included clarity, tone, conciseness, and appropriateness.

The questions seemed generally clear, for only occasionally did the President ask for restatement. Usually, he responded without any apparent hesitation due to misunderstanding or not understanding a query.

The tone of the questions, at least on paper, was mostly neutral. A number of questions were hostile and hard hitting, just as many of the questions were rather friendly. The press was invariably polite and generally respectful of the presidency.

In terms of conciseness, the average question took about fifteen seconds to deliver. In the broadcast conferences questions were somewhat longer. Further, the queries were seldom verbose. In some instances, multiple questions were asked at one time by a newsman. On rare occasions, correspondents presented rather lengthy background statements before actually asking their questions.

Generally, inquiry was appropriately worded and was free of technical terms or jargon unfamiliar to the President.

Questions in the broadcast conferences were more polished and better suited to both the President and the public than the questioning at the impromptu conferences. This was probably due to the factor of preparation. As a whole, the questioning was excellent.
Johnson's Answers

President Johnson's replies, as was true of his voluntaries, aimed at explaining, publicising, promoting, defending, and enhancing the image of his administration. The goal of regulating the conference was especially important because L.B.J. hoped to control the flow of inquiry as well as the reporting of what he said in the press meetings.

Johnson's aims in his answers were generally for persuasion.

The same methods of development used in the voluntaries appeared in Johnson's answers. Further, when L.B.J. was responsive to questions, he used a variety of appropriate support. His development was probably best when he answered queries on his favorite topics. Whether Johnson would amplify and develop a generalization or a mere "yes" or "no," was not predictable. Again, when Johnson had good news to report, he tended to become expansive and could be quite effective in developing replies. Notably, he used statistics, testimony, narration, comparison, and anecdotes.

In some of Johnson's answers he tried to control and fence with newsmen. Other replies approached or avoided issues to varying degrees. Specific techniques were employed to accomplish each of the basic types of replies.

In attempting to control reporters, Johnson used some devices to anticipate and others to direct the press. In anticipation of some questions, Johnson had prepared answers. He even read some responses. He also interjected replies if the question he anticipated was not asked. Johnson interrupted reporters at times apparently because he felt he knew what the rest of the question would be. He probably
overused these devices at times, especially when he denied reporters the opportunity to finish inquiries and to the degree that his expectations may have deterred his careful listening.

Johnson used directive answers to talk to the press rather than talk on an issue. He instructed the press at times as to what he expected and what they might expect of him. He also made requests. Some answers, but not many, were appropriately aimed at clarification. In general, however, Johnson's didactic approach was probably unwarranted.

In fencing with correspondents, Johnson employed a number of techniques. L.B.J. interrupted and demanded sources. He replied with sarcasm. He attacked questions and questioners. Johnson corrected and debated with the press corps. Sometimes he relied on humor directed toward newsmen. Most of Johnson's fencing maneuvers were in the informal conferences so that the public seldom saw this side of the President's press relations. But even in the informal meetings his lack of tact and the hard, debate-like nature in sparring probably did little to improve his rapport with reporters.

President Johnson approached issues with the techniques of back­grounding, repeating, expanding, exhausting, generalizing, arguing, and appealing. Most of these techniques are not unlike traditional types of development. They reveal in a different light the ways that President Johnson could deal with issues with varying degrees of effectiveness. It is interesting that Johnson frequently used a question as an opportunity to give brief talks approximately four to eight minutes long. Exhaustive replies usurped valuable time for other questions. These talks probably bored the press and even the public.
His lengthy answers were usually no more than redundant summaries of previous statements or were emotionalized petitions for support which did not seem appropriate as answers in the press conference setting. L.B.J. sometimes sought to use the news conference for political advantage and to blame political opponents for slowing his "Great Society" programs.

While Johnson often gave useful and effective replies, his ways of approaching issues were so obviously calculated to promote rather than explain that correspondents may have become weary, if not wary.

In terms of providing news, Johnson wanted to be the initiator. So he presented most of what was really useful to the press and the public in his voluntaries, not in his replies. Correspondents consequently were often placed in a role of providing the stimulus to incessant, and somewhat invaluable, rhetorical response. Since Johnson had many other avenues available for promoting his aims, his approaches to issues were too often out of place in the press conferences.

Johnson used a more extensively variegated style to avoid issues. He employed three strategies to dodge problems raised by queries: refusal to answer, referring the question, and circumventing the specific idea of the question.

In most cases, L.B.J. carefully worded his reluctance to reply. More specifically, he stalled for time, discouraged topic areas, rejected particular issues, denied adequate knowledge to answer, and completely withdrew from questions. A second strategy was used to dodge inquiry. Johnson referred questions to other sources or to previous statements from the White House. The most common and frequently
used strategy was circumvention. For example, he would shift topics, substitute answers on a general topic for replies to a specific issue, digress, equivocate, grope, transfer blame, appeal to laughter, and twist a question's intent or wording.

Because President Johnson used devices to avoid issues so extensively, his general ability in the press conference seems unresponsive to the needs of the press and the public. In terms of audience adaptation, he adjusted his replies as well as his opening statements and other factors of his press conference style to accomplish his own ends with less apparent regard for those who interacted with him.

In Lyndon Johnson's first press conference he expressed a will to be "flexible" in his relations and meetings with the press. He achieved that aim only in a technical sense. Had he been more understanding of and responsive to the needs of the press, he might have been more successful in his dealings with newsmen, and, in turn, he might have been more responsive to and effective with his primary source of power, the people.

Suggestions

This study has demonstrated that press conferences can be evaluated from a rhetorical perspective. Other studies might easily do the same.

News conferences are held by so many government officials, nationally, and locally, and in such countries as Canada, Germany, and Venezuela, that a ripe body of speech materials representing an effective means of communication exists.
Knowing the extent to which and how other leaders of public opinion use this speaking situation could add breadth to current knowledge on how man best communicates.
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