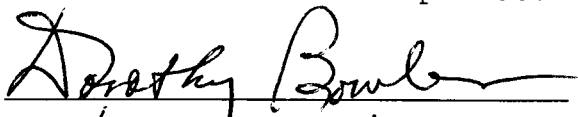


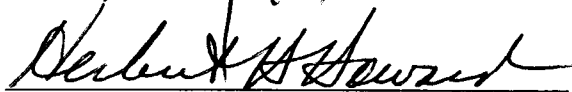
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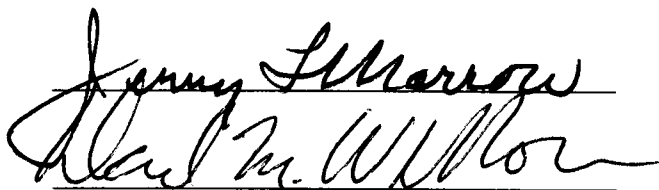
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by James Roscoe Edwards, Jr., entitled "Print Media Use and Perceived Credibility Among Senior Congressional Staff." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communications.


Michael W. Singletary, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:







Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor
and Dean of The Graduate School

PRINT MEDIA USE AND PERCEIVED CREDIBILITY
AMONG SENIOR CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

James Roscoe Edwards, Jr.

May 1992

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DEDICATION

Te Deo Gloria

and

For Daddy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the course of this dissertation, a number of people have contributed significantly to the completion of this undertaking. Professors Michael W. Singletary, Dorothy Bowles, Herbert H. Howard, Jerry Morrow, and David Welborn provided valuable guidance and direction through service on my committee. They each are outstanding scholars whose suggestions and constructive criticisms vastly improved the final product. And they kept me on course. I thank them deeply.

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ABSTRACT

Print media play a key role in bringing political and policy-related information to congressional staff. This study investigates print media use and perceived credibility among the three senior congressional staff positions: administrative assistant, legislative director and press secretary. It explores, first, the publications used most frequently by senior personal staff members for public affairs news and, second, the degree to which specific publications are perceived as credible. Media credibility is rated on four criteria: bias, completeness, accuracy and trustworthiness.

A questionnaire survey was hand-delivered in November and December 1991 to 535 top-level House and Senate staffers chosen in a systematic sample. The questionnaire was returned by mail in a self-addressed, stamped envelope. A second delivery was made to nonrespondents, resulting in a total response rate of 37.4 percent.

Several demographic and political factors were considered for their correlative value with respect to print media use and credibility. The three variables of primary interest here were political party affiliation, body of Congress in which one works, and staff position. Cross-

tabulations and t-tests were used for analytical purposes regarding publication preference, frequency of usage and credibility ratings as functions of the three key independent variables.

Political party was shown to correlate most strongly with the frequency of usage of particular publications, as well as with perceptions of publication credibility. Several significant correlations were found with respect to staff position. House of Congress in which one works had little correlative significance concerning print media usage or credibility.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On January 23, 1991, the Federal Register published a notice of proposed rulemaking from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Pursuant to the 1990 Immigration Act, HHS proposed a list of communicable diseases for which prospective immigrants would have to undergo medical examination and, if found infected, would be barred from proceeding with immigration to the United States.

The list in the published notice was a short one; it included only infectious tuberculosis, dropping several diseases already on a similar list compiled under current law. The longer list contained five sexually transmitted diseases and, most importantly, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which leads to acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

The position of HHS rulemakers was that HIV transmission related more to individual behavior and not nationality. Therefore, HHS did not believe HIV infection should be used to exclude aliens from becoming immigrants to the United States, that this and the other previously listed diseases did not pose a significant public health threat under the Act.

The proposed rule was not considered by HHS to be "major," saying officials did not believe it would have a significant impact on the economy or impose significant cost increases to take in immigrants infected with one of these diseases.

Not being a regular reader of the Federal Register, I was not immediately aware of this HHS proposal. As press secretary and legislative assistant to U.S. Rep. John J. Duncan, Jr. (R-Tenn.), I handled a number of issue areas, including health and judiciary. This proposed rulemaking crossed these two jurisdictions: HHS fell under health, while immigration was a judiciary issue.

Rep. Duncan was interested in containing federal spending and reducing the budget deficit. Related to this matter was an interest in reducing the federal government's exposure to high-dollar payouts (such as occurred with the savings-and-loan bailout) and curtailing the further expansion of government.

In fact, I had begun gathering ideas from free-market economists on how the national health care system could be infused with competition to reduce costs and increase efficiency, as opposed to federalizing and socializing the whole system into a huge government program like Canada's nationalized government health system.

The Washington Times reported on February 5 that the American Medical Association (AMA) opposed the HHS plan,

although the opposite was stated in the rulemaking notice. The AMA had reversed itself two months earlier after reassessing the potential impact of treatment costs--"\$40,000 or more per patient"--on the nation's health care system and, quite possibly, at taxpayer expense.

Rep. Duncan became more and more interested in this issue as battle lines began to take shape. The rules were to take effect on June 1. Others in Congress took action to retain the current list, most notably Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.), who served on the Energy and Commerce subcommittee on health, and Rep. Constance Morella (R-Md.). However, no legislation had been introduced to reverse the regulatory change, assuming it would go into effect.

By April, there still was no legislation. All actions to halt the rule continued along other avenues. Rep. Duncan told me to have a bill drafted and start getting House members lined up as co-sponsors. Having a legislative vehicle in place is beneficial because it gives members an opportunity to go on record on an issue. This can help generate support for one side of an issue as more members become co-sponsors. On April 24, Duncan introduced H.R. 2049, joined by 30 original co-sponsors, to retain HIV on the immigration exclusion list.

Throughout April and May, I kept in contact with other congressional staff and activists working on the issue. I

even made "friends" at HHS and CDC. However, the latter were not readily forthcoming with information regarding the status of this proposal. I had heard there was tension between HHS officials and Justice Department officials, and that even the White House was paying attention to the inter-departmental struggle.

Time was passing quickly, the effective date of the rule fast approaching. On Saturday, May 25, the Washington Post ran a story saying the proposal would be canceled. The first thing Monday morning, I called my contacts to verify the accuracy of the Post article. Almost everyone who was in a position to know said the article was basically right. However, the decision was actually to postpone action for two months, but that chances were good that the ban would be made permanent.

The Post published another article on May 30 following official confirmation of the decision to postpone the rule for at least 60 days. This latest newspaper story brought calls from staff contacts in the congressional offices of co-sponsors of Duncan's bill (by virtue of Duncan's leadership on this issue, I had acquired the status of "expert," having become an "insider" on HIV immigration matters). Of interest to those who deem print journalism superior to broadcast journalism, I also received calls from a couple of broadcast journalists that day after the story appeared in print,

asking me about the newspaper story's facts. The next day, the Federal Register published an interim rule indicating a 60-day freeze on the policy change.

While much public and press interest decreased after June 1, parties on both sides of the issue kept up behind-the-scenes contact and activity. The Post on August 2 published an article stating that the postponed change had been permanently dropped by HHS. Because of Duncan's lead role--and my staff work--on the HIV immigration issue, I had known for some weeks about the likelihood of the ban being made permanent. Again, legislative assistants in other congressional offices contacted me, saying they had seen the latest Post story and asking about its accuracy.

This case illustrates how print news media help to inform congressional staff concerning political and policy matters. The press helped to keep me informed, as well as my legislative colleagues who were not as involved in the issue. Other examples of the use of print media by congressional staff follow.

. . .

The famous Smithsonian Institution museums are a major tourist attraction in the nation's capital. The Smithsonian, an independent agency of the U.S. government, receives much of its operating funds through congressional appropriations. Therefore, officials of the institution must appear

periodically before various committees of the Congress to explain and justify budget and funding requests.

Funding the Smithsonian usually poses very little controversy. However, this agency, like any other federal agency, is subject to congressional oversight. In the spring of 1991, Congress called the Smithsonian on the carpet.

An exhibit displayed at the National Museum of American Art from March 15 through July 7, called "The West as America," created some furor directed at the Smithsonian Institution.

At the time, my legislative responsibilities included Rep. Duncan's Public Works and Transportation Committee assignment issues. I prepared briefing papers, opening statements, and questions for Duncan with respect to upcoming committee and subcommittee hearings and "markups" (meetings at which the subcommittee or committee considers amendments to pending legislation and determines whether to refer those bills to the full committee or, from full committee, to the full House's legislative calendar). Rep. Duncan served on several Public Works subcommittees, including the public buildings and grounds subcommittee.

On May 17, I read an editorial in the Wall Street Journal titled, "Pilgrims and Other Imperialists." The editorial decried the Smithsonian exhibit, which displayed outstanding American art depicting the settlement of the

American frontier and western expansion, along with the inevitable economic development that followed. The paintings were not the problem. The offensive matter was the accompanying commentary on the events depicted. Both printed pamphlets and mounted wall panels offered anti-traditional reinterpretations of the American westward expansion. This was the first I had heard about the exhibit.

Smithsonian officials had recently appeared before the public buildings and grounds subcommittee to ask for additional federal funds for the construction of some new facilities and the renovation of some current ones. Officials would return to the subcommittee for another appearance, and we wanted to put them on notice concerning the exhibition of "The West as America."

I knew that Rep. Duncan would want to hold the bureaucrats' feet to the fire on this matter. After all, Duncan would say, if they had money to waste on funding an exhibit that he thought would offend most American taxpayers, then there was no reason the public buildings and grounds subcommittee should not hold the Smithsonian accountable, possibly telling the Smithsonian to spend its own money on construction instead of asking for more federal dollars.

I showed Duncan the editorial and asked if he would like me to work with the subcommittee minority staff in drafting a

letter for the Republican subcommittee members to send to the Smithsonian. He asked me to go see the exhibit for myself.

The next day or so, Duncan said he thought he remembered hearing that the Washington Post had printed a story concerning a Senate hearing at which Republicans had questioned Smithsonian officials with respect to the exhibit. The Post story had appeared in the Style section on May 16, which I had not read that day. I tracked down a copy of the Post article for my file. Also, I asked the minority staffer for the subcommittee if she had seen either article and if she thought the ranking subcommittee member, Rep. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), would like to work with Duncan on this matter. She said probably so, but that we should investigate the exhibit ourselves.

In the next couple of weeks, Ruth Van Mark, who was the Republican subcommittee staffer, and I went to the National Museum of American Art to view "The West as America." As we had expected, the art itself was magnificent. However, the "politically correct" commentary was just as the newspaper accounts had indicated.

The Washington Post published a column by Charles Krauthammer on Friday, May 31, which discussed the exhibit. Krauthammer denounced the revisionist exhibit. We added the column to our files as additional ammunition to fire at the Smithsonian in the subcommittee's letter.

About that time, Rep. Duncan's legislative director took a leave of absence for the summer. I was called upon to fill in for him, which included taking on Banking Committee responsibilities. This increased workload came just as the Banking Committee--Duncan's primary committee assignment--was about to take up at full committee H.R. 6, massive banking reform legislation. I had to spend a lot of effort trying to understand the highly technical provisions of the bill, as well as what parties would be helped or hurt by each provision. Therefore, as the Banking Committee marked up the reform legislation in June, my Public Works efforts aimed at the Smithsonian slowed markedly.

However, with Ruth's help a letter was drafted, and by July all the Public Works subcommittee minority members had signed it. Drawing from the May 16 Post article, the May 17 Wall Street Journal editorial and the Krauthammer column, the letter included part of a reported quote by Daniel Boorstin, the former Librarian of Congress, who had written in the American Art Museum's guest book in reference to "The West as America." He said that it was "a perverse, historically inaccurate, destructive exhibit. No credit to the Smithsonian."

The Republican members asked Smithsonian Secretary Robert McC. Adams to make a close examination of the matter

and sought his assurance of no future exhibits of that nature.

I left Rep. Duncan's office before a response was received from Secretary Adams. No threats were made in the letter regarding future funding requests from the Smithsonian, but the fact that the public buildings and grounds subcommittee Republicans all signed the letter surely sent a clear signal to the administrators concerning congressional oversight authority and the accountability expected of federal funding recipients.

. . .

A darker example of congressional staff information gathering from the print media may have occurred during the opposition campaign witnessed by the entire country that was waged against Judge Clarence Thomas after he was nominated to the Supreme Court. Although the connection between the appearance of information in the press and its use in the character smear is circumstantial, this example illustrates how the print media may have brought information, which was then employed in the policy process, to the attention of Senate staff. (This example's appearance should in no way whatsoever be construed as validation, approval or sanction of such harmful use of information, mediated or otherwise.)

The Washington Times's "Inside the Beltway" noted on October 11, 1991, that the September 16 issue of U.S. News &

World Report, which appeared on newsstands on September 9, published an article about the nominee, Judge Thomas. The U.S. News story, the Times pointed out, included an unattributed allegation that Thomas had viewed pornographic movies while a student at Yale.

On September 10, the day after the U.S. News story with the pornography allegation hit the streets, Ohio Democratic Sen. Howard Metzenbaum's staff member, James Brudney, contacted former Yale law colleague Anita Hill. His call was reportedly made to coax her into making charges that the nominee had discussed the details of pornographic material with her when they worked together ten years before. Brudney apparently hoped to force Thomas to withdraw himself from consideration under the cloud of such charges. A Times report on October 15 said that Sen. Metzenbaum had confirmed that details of Hill's initial allegations against Thomas were first given to Brudney in mid-September.

Although it is unconfirmed whether the U.S. News story was the catalyst that sent Brudney down this avenue in his attempt to derail Thomas's Supreme Court nomination, the timing of the magazine article and Brudney's subsequent contact with Hill in pursuit of possible charges related to these allegations certainly cause one to take note of the probability of such a connection.

. . .

These three examples illustrate how the print media can bring information to the attention of congressional staff members and help keep them informed about political and policy matters. That information may even be incorporated in the policy process, as demonstrated by the foregoing examples.

Congressional staff serve an important role in assisting members of Congress in the execution of their official duties. The need for information--to assess public opinion, to learn what is happening in other sectors of government, to give insight into who is saying what about an issue--is high on Capitol Hill, and the amount of information and the variety of sources available, including periodicals, are staggering. While both members and staff seek political and policy information from these sources, much of the responsibility for surveillance falls upon staff. Such a need for information among staff comports with McLeod and Becker's (1981) assessment of media audience members as "active processors rather than passive receivers of media messages" (p. 71).

Congressional staff members perform much of the "legwork" for senators and representatives. They develop a feeling of power and importance because of the nature of their duties. Yates (1988) wrote of staffers:

Working high on the Hill is such a heady experience that assistants, aides, managers and secretaries begin to view themselves as in some ways more powerful than the members

they serve. They, after all, write the speeches, author the articles, formulate the positions, even help write their bosses' books. (p. 12)

President Reagan's speechwriter, Peggy Noonan (1990), observed this same view of many Washington staffers:

In Washington in the eighties you would meet people from the Hill and the agencies and as you got to know them you would realize there was this funny thing that was accepted by everyone in Washington: The staff is more important than the senator or the agency head. The staff is almost always considered superior to the principal--more intelligent, more informed, more thoughtful. . . . (p. 107)

Part of the reason for the sense of an important, informed staff is due to the nature of their work. They track certain issues and legislation; interact with powerful and knowledgeable people, such as lobbyists, business executives, and ambassadors; exert influence over bureaucrats, in their bosses' name; and have unbelievable resources available at their fingertips (Yates, 1988). Although often overworked and underpaid, congressional staff receive both tangible (meals, trips, baubles) and intangible (solid political credentials, personal contacts with power brokers) benefits.

Changes in technology have expanded the information resources available to Hill staff (Robinson, 1981; Chartrand, Bortnick, & Price, 1987), while changes in Congress as an institution have increased the number and importance of staff (Glassman, 1988).

Heritage Foundation president Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., himself a former staff member for Rep. Phil Crane (R-Ill.), stated in a published interview: "Congress has changed

dramatically in the past 20 years, with the biggest change being the immense increase in the power of congressional staff" (Meyerson, 1991, p. 16). One reason for the enhanced role of staff stems from a change Feulner noted about the way members conduct their congressional work. Instead of focusing on a single issue area and developing expertise, he said members now spread their attention across a wide array of subjects. Consequently, staff resources are stretched, but staffers also do more of the study and analysis many members used to do themselves.

Additionally, the power of staff has increased because of the expansion of the federal government into new areas of society and to a greater degree into all areas. As the administrative domain has widened, so has the oversight responsibility of Congress (Ornstein, 1981; Glassman, 1988; Riddick, 1988; Wettergreen, 1988).

In many quarters in Washington, the phrase, "personnel is policy," is heard (Dunlop, 1987; Noonan, 1990). This means, in short, that the people with whom decisionmakers surround themselves exert a major influence over the course of policy. It could translate in the congressional context into situations such as the following example: A conservative member who employs a more liberal legislative staffer responsible for abortion issues may not be informed of certain information from pro-life voters in the district, while the materials sent from pro-abortion groups may be

prominently presented to the member, and perhaps the pro-abortion influence in the district will be exaggerated by the staffer. The counsel given the member may be purposely inaccurate, or the staffer just may not "get around" to executing a pro-life directive from the member. Therefore, the amount of trust a member of Congress places in a staff member's counsel could determine the course of action taken on a given issue. This is especially true with respect to senior staffers.

In short, congressional staff perform a gatekeeping function in the information flow within Congress. Regarding the 1986 Tax Reform Act, Birnbaum and Murray (1987) wrote, "Aggressive staffers dominated much of the legislative process. They controlled the information, and that was what drove events" (p. 217). Staffers frequently broker information on Capitol Hill: They often decide what information to bring to the member's attention, in what form, how much and when. They act similarly in regulating information flow to and from other members' offices, committees, special interest groups, the news media and the executive branch.

Some Hill staffers have gone on to become members of Congress themselves. Glassman (1988) says congressional staff service is the best training for becoming a member. In fact, several prominent members took this route to Congress: House Speaker Tom Foley (D-Wash.), House Minority Leader

Robert Michel (R-Ill.), Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Maine), and the late President Lyndon Johnson (Glassman, 1988; Yates, 1988).

As congressional staff have gained power and influence, not only as potential future members, but in their own right, it is important to examine the mass publications they read, much as Weiss (1974) investigated the publications of choice among American leaders, including members of Congress. This present study focuses on the print media use of top congressional staff members. It also examines their ratings of periodicals in terms of perceived credibility. As the examples at the beginning of this chapter showed, materials in the press may play a part in the legislative process. Certainly, they play an informative role.

The print media continue to provide an otherwise unmet service on Capitol Hill in the staff search for political and policy-related information. Just as other people read newspapers and magazines, so congressional staff read periodicals for general information purposes, as well as to find facts and developments related to politics and public policy issues. The nature of publications lends itself to this surveillance function (Zerbinos, 1990). People scan and browse through print media, their attention being aroused by editorial and design cues. Congressional staff use print media in the same basic fashion. They employ published materials to remain informed about current events and

political developments (Graber, 1982). They assess public opinion from the news stories, columns, editorials, and letters to the editor in these sources (Nimmo, 1964).

Sheila Tate, who served as Bush-Quayle '88 campaign press secretary, recounted in a December 12, 1991, speech to Republican communications professionals how Mark Shields of the Washington Post has described the press and its influence:

People who read the New York Times know that they run the world. People who read the Washington Post think they run the world. People who read the Washington Times think that people who read the Washington Post run the world. People who read the Wall Street Journal think that people who own the world damn well ought to run it. And people who read USA Today don't care who runs the world as long as they get their weather map in five colors.

It is assumed that individual congressional staff members develop preferences for certain publications which they deem reliable (Graber, 1982). Further, it is assumed that staffers perceive some publications as more credible or reliable than others. In "an age of information glut" (Graber, 1988, p. 1)--especially the case in congressional offices--some publications are ignored, others skimmed, and some read religiously. However, it is not known which types of staffers rely upon which particular publications. Nor are the attributes of aides who perceive specific newspapers or magazines as being more credible than others known.

For most readers, reading a specific publication consistently is tantamount to finding it "credible." This

may be the case with congressional aides, as well. However, most material read may be viewed by congressional staff members as having different political agendas or biases. While many staffers may read one publication regularly (e.g., the Washington Post), credibility imputed to it by a conservative Republican reader may be very different from that imputed by a liberal Democratic reader. Some publications may be viewed as biased or lacking some other aspect of credibility, but are regularly read for a different reason.

The overall objective of this study is to further the understanding of print media usage by top congressional staff. Subordinate objectives include:

1. documenting the general frequency of major print media usage by congressional staff position;
2. assessing staff characteristics that assist in the identification of publication choice;
3. assessing the source of credibility attributed to alternative publications; and,
4. examining the level of attributed credibility of print media sources.

In the following chapters, more will be said about media use and credibility, and the details of this particular study. However, it is important that a solid grasp of the workways of Capitol Hill be held first. So, the second chapter explains the structure of the U.S. Congress; the

function of congressional staff, particularly senior staff; sources of information available on the Hill; and the role of information in the political process, especially material from the print media, as these facets relate to media use and credibility.

CHAPTER II

THE CONGRESS, ITS STAFF, AND INFORMATION ON CAPITOL HILL

The Congress has changed over the past few decades in important ways that have increased the number and importance of congressional staff and the role of and need for information in that body. As well, each body of the bicameral legislature differs from the other in ways that warrant mention. This chapter highlights those characteristics of Congress that will aid in understanding the significance of this study of congressional staff print media use and the perceived credibility of publications. It also examines the sources and role of information in the congressional context.

The U.S. Congress

The bodies of the Congress of the United States, comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate, differ in certain key respects. Each state is represented by two senators, regardless of the size of a state's geographic area or its population; however, a state's representation in the House varies, being apportioned according to population. This constitutional factor has virtually guaranteed that the House is larger than the Senate. Individual members of each

body, therefore, represent different constituencies: senators, entire states; representatives, congressional districts (Ornstein, 1981). Partly because it is larger, House rules limit legislative debate more than do Senate rules, although Senate rules have become much more restrictive in recent years (Barnhart, 1988; Hammond & Weyrich, 1988).

Additionally, the Constitution sets House member terms at two years, and Senate terms at six years. The longer terms for senators eases the pressure of having to seek re-election as frequently, whereas House members, who stand for re-election every other year, pay more attention to their constituents' and district's needs (Vogler & Waldman, 1985).

To a degree, senators are more eclectic in taking active roles in policy areas than are representatives (Vogler & Waldman, 1985). House members have expanded their areas of individual policy activity beyond gaining expertise in a single subject, such as agriculture or transportation (Ornstein, 1983; Meyerson, 1991); however, their focus remains more on serving their constituents and their home district when compared with senators (Vogler & Waldman, 1985). Vogler and Waldman (1985) said that senators can take advantage of the accompanying publicity, their larger staffs, longer terms, and the smaller body in which they serve to involve themselves in matters of broader import than simply

their constituents, as well as use their national exposure to launch a presidential candidacy easier than can House members.

A technological development in the House has been the implementation of a system for casting recorded votes electronically. Instead of a clerk calling the roll, members now have fifteen minutes to press a button on a recording device. Vogler and Waldman (1985) noted that the use of the electronic voting system for floor votes has increased the number of recorded votes taken in the House. Thus, Congress can work toward the passage of more legislation than it could when the roll was actually called. A heavier legislative schedule on the House floor means that, consequently, a greater variety of legislation is taken up by the full House. This development, in conjunction with the greater variety of subjects Congress now addresses, strains members in their ability to remain knowledgeable on all the legislation that makes it to the floor.

More recorded votes on a wider array of subjects of increasing complexity press members to look for voting cues for direction. Vogler and Waldman (1985) summarized the voting cues on which members of Congress depend for guidance that political scientists have discovered:

. . . [C]ommittee chairs and ranking members; other committee members, particularly "specialists" whose expertise, intelligence, judgment, and ideological compatibility are trusted; a committee majority; committee or personal staff; party leaders or a majority of one's

party; same-party members of one's state delegation; organized congressional groups such as the liberal Democratic Study Group and the conservative Republican Study Committee; a majority of the full chamber; and the president. Many studies have found party (in one form or another) to be the most important cue giver. However, a study done for the House Commission on Administrative Review concluded that personal staff was the single most frequently used source of voting cues. (p. 85)

This finding indicates that personal staff play an increasingly important role in Congress.

The past three decades have brought significant institutional changes to Congress. Younger, more liberal members enacted legislation and rules--especially after Watergate--designed to strengthen the powers of the legislative branch at the expense of the presidency and to shift power, not only to the Congress, but also within Congress.

Especially since President Lyndon B. Johnson launched the "Great Society," the federal government has burgeoned. The congressional quest for power, as well as its expansion of staff and committees and their jurisdictions, has increased the role of congressional oversight of the administrative bureaucracy (Ornstein, 1981; Wettergreen, 1988). Ornstein (1981) noted that Congress, following the lead of the swelling of the federal government, injected itself into the process with new vigor. Legislation and regulation now cover policy areas into which the government had never delved before and have reached new depths of complexity (Ornstein, 1981; Wettergreen, 1988). A never-

ending chase to solve, or at least get to the bottom of, national problems spun wider and wider as the federal bureaucratic entanglement and congressional oversight exploded. Ornstein (1981) wrote:

But it is in part precisely because Congress in the 1970s drafted the details of a huge volume of statutes that its activity in the oversight arena expanded concurrently. Congressional legislation has been complicated, often contradictory, and more than occasionally filled with gaps. The result frequently has been complicated, contradictory and gap-filled regulations issued by the executive--followed by outrage, oversight, and threats of legislative veto from Congress. (p. 381)

Congressional oversight and involvement in administrative particulars, at both the levels of committees and subcommittees and that of individual members, have burgeoned (Wettergreen, 1988). This change has empowered members of Congress individually, as well as Congress institutionally.

Another step in the transfer of power occurred in the operation of congressional committees. The young Democrats in Congress in the 1970s substantially stripped the seniority system by which power accrued to long-termers who chaired House committees (Davidson, 1981; Ornstein, 1983; Epstein, 1986; Barnhart, 1988). The seat of power changed from committees to subcommittees. Davidson (1981) enumerated key steps in the power shift:

In 1971 members were limited to chairing only one legislative subcommittee--a move that enlarged the ranks of seniority leaders and brought more junior members into leadership roles. In 1973 the so-called subcommittee bill of rights empowered majority-party caucuses within each standing committee (subject to Caucus regulations) to determine the subcommittees' membership, size,

jurisdiction, and budget--formerly prerogatives of the committee chairmen. Two years later, most committees were required to establish a minimum number of subcommittees. (p. 108)

Empowerment of a greater number of--and more junior--members, along with an increase in the number of subcommittees, contributed to Congress's becoming what Ornstein (1983) termed an "open system."

In the open system, a high proportion of members (a majority of the Senate and 40 percent or so of the House) have chairmanships of one sort or another, usually with freedom to range widely in the scope of their hearings or investigations and with ample staff resources to assist. All 535 members have ample personal staff resources, which afford them the freedom to be active in all legislative issues and still attend to the more mundane constituency servicing. Inside committees, the open system spreads power and initiatives from the once-autocratic chairmen out to subcommittee leaders and rank-and-file members. (pp. 203-204)

Concomitantly with the explosion of committees, subcommittees and staff, the jurisdictions of committees and subcommittees overlapped each other to almost unworkable lengths. Mellor (1988) offered an illustration:

In the late 1970s, four committees wrote defense legislation. Today, 24 committees and 40 subcommittees oversee defense. By actual measurement, current law and regulation on defense procurement fill 1,152 linear feet of law library shelf space. Thousands of pages are added during each legislative cycle with few, if any, being removed. (p. 110)

Allied with the growing congressional committee morass have been the logistical and temporal problems related to scheduling. Senators in the 96th Congress, for example, each served on an average of 10 committees and subcommittees; representatives, 5.5 assignments (Davidson, 1981). The

committees and subcommittees have trouble scheduling meetings which most members can attend. Davidson (1981) said that, in addition to staff assistants, only two or three members often attend hearings. It has simply become impossible for members of Congress to be everywhere they need to be, thus increasing their reliance on their staff.

Another shift of power to Congress at the expense of the executive branch culminated with passage of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974. Davis (1988) wrote: "The Budget Act was written to increase the spending power of Congress and to reduce the influence of the executive branch over fiscal matters" (pp. 158-159). The Act established House and Senate Budget Committees and set new ground rules for the federal budget process, requiring a congressional imprimatur over a president's decision not to spend some of the funds Congress has appropriated for a given program. As a result, more congressional attention now goes to budget and fiscal issues than ever before, and the Congress and the President continue to do battle over federal spending priorities and levels at "budget summits."

In addition, staff and technological resources for individual members have expanded over the same time period. Clerk-hire budgets and the number of personal staff allowed have risen dramatically, along with the provision of computers and software, facsimile machines, and franking (free mailing) privileges for every member (Malbin, 1981;

Ornstein, 1981; Ornstein, 1983; Barnhart, 1988). As a result, every member is now endowed with an amount of resources more than adequate to conduct all the necessary duties of a congressional office. Activities on which congressional resources are spent include such ventures as "to 'stroke' all constituents, to monitor the legislative activities in all committees and other forums, to maintain a steady stream of press releases and media contacts, and to get involved . . . in the full range of policy areas" (Ornstein, 1983, p. 196).

Malbin (1981) wrote that the growth of staff occurred primarily to distribute power within Congress. Members publicly justified the staff increases by claiming they needed alternative information sources to the executive branch and special interests (Malbin, 1981). Congressional staff ranks expanded on committees, on personal staffs, and in support agencies such as the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the General Accounting Office (GAO). Malbin concluded that Congress now has more information, but is not necessarily better informed.

As congressional power has extended to individual members, another important change has taken place regarding the role of the news media. Ornstein (1983) put it that, over the past couple of decades, "The press 'discovered' Washington" (p. 201). That is, news coverage of the federal government, including Congress, has increased. Ornstein

(1983) noted that from 1957 to 1981, the congressional press corps quadrupled in size. While there may be more reporters covering the Capitol Hill beat, national news coverage has not necessarily followed suit. Robinson (1981) said that 75 percent of all members reported never being covered by the national media at all. Most members are more concerned with getting favorable news coverage in their local media than by the national media. However, as representatives and senators take more visible roles in matters of national newsworthiness (or even just Washingtonian newsworthiness), they may become the subjects of more prominent reportage. Ornstein (1983) stated that in Congress the trend has moved toward seeking personal publicity, which could significantly assist one in policy success or the pursuit of higher office.

Ornstein (1981) confirmed the effects of these many changes in Congress. He verified the power shift to subcommittees from committees. Also, Ornstein noted the empowerment of rank-and-file members as a result of increased personal staff and resources. Not only have individual members become more powerful, but so have congressional staff. "As staffs have expanded and their ranks have filled with expertise, they too have increased in influence and importance" (Ornstein, 1981, p. 379).

Congressional Staff

As the federal government has thrust itself further and further into aspects of society, senators and representatives must be somewhat knowledgeable about an expansive range of subject matters. Ornstein and others have pointed out that staff expertise has risen with respect to areas of public policy. Lodge and Hamill (1986) wrote that expertise is acquired in politics, as in other matters, through practice and exposure, with sophistication exhibited by interest, knowledge and experience in certain issues. As members themselves are stretched further in more directions with various responsibilities and come under more constraints, staff have gained influence with the members for whom they work and importance in the legislative process (Davidson, 1981). Birnbaum and Murray (1987) noticed the rise in the number and influence of congressional staff during the legislative action which resulted in the 1986 Tax Reform Act. Davidson (1981) characterized one aspect of the staff role in this way: "To a large degree, subcommittee government is staff government" (p. 114).

"Staffflation"--the inflation in the number of congressional staff--has occurred over the past 50 years. Glassman (1988) wrote that total congressional staff--personal and committee--stood at about 2,500 in 1947; by 1979, House staff numbered approximately 9,000 and Senate staff about 5,000; by 1988, the House had 11,000 staffers and

the Senate had 7,000. These figures were confirmed in a chart, based on information from Ornstein, Mann and Malbin's "Vital Statistics on Congress 1989-1990," which accompanied a Washington Times story on congressional reform (Garrett, 1991).

In the Senate, personal staff increases were provided in S.Res. 60 during the 94th Congress (Cummings, 1984). These legislative assistants (LAs) help senators in their committee duties, and their presence distributed more power to less senior senators and away from committee chairmen, as occurred in the House at about the same time.

The ratio of personal to committee staff is about three to one in both the House and Senate (Malbin, 1980; Carlile, 1981). While many personal staffers handle constituent-related duties (casework, requests, correspondence, etc.), staff increases over the past couple of decades have also meant that more personal staffers devote the majority of their efforts to tracking legislation and assisting members in legislative activism.

Despite the explosion in staff population, Freudenburg (1986) compared the daily workings of Congress with those of a small town. Members and staff alike trade on personal relationships and personal credibility. Malbin (1980) wrote, "Successful lobbyists in Washington today are people who know how to work with the staffs. They know which particular members of a personal or committee staff are most likely to

listen to them" (p. 62). Freudenburg (1986) noted the small size of key influential groups on the Hill; a friendliness akin to that of a small town; and the development of lore and legend from legislative battles, accomplishments and experiences from just being on Capitol Hill. This writer's observations and experience confirm the basics of Malbin's and Freudenburg's conclusions; while the Senate is a bit more formal than the House, the lesser number of senators and staff seem to allow the small-town forces to work in that body, generally speaking.

It is clear that congressional staff play an important role in the workings of today's Congress. Members must rely on staff now more than ever before, perhaps simply because there are more staffers and seemingly less time to devote to numerous demands. As Malbin (1980) put it:

The members cannot begin to control the workload that their staffs collectively help to generate. Yet, Congress could not function in today's world without the staff on which it has come to depend. (p. 4)

The staff serve as information resources for members because the officeholders can do only so much themselves. Vogler and Waldman (1985) wrote that individual members and their staffers generally tend to share ideological values, so the information provided from staff "helps gird the legislator for battle; it is a means of reinforcement rather than of enlightenment" (p. 114). As mentioned before, staff meet with constituents and lobbyists, attend subcommittee and

committee meetings, and attend to much of the detail work of projects in which the member is involved. It is no wonder, then, that so many have made note of congressional staffers' depth of knowledge and responsible position.

Who are these congressional staffers? What characteristics identify them? Ideologically, aides generally share the same perspective as the members for whom they work (Fox & Hammond, 1977; Vogler & Waldman, 1985). They have strong political party affiliations (Fox & Hammond, 1977). Personal staff often come from the member's home state, especially in the offices of more junior members (Fox & Hammond, 1977; Carlile, 1981). Staffers are often young, generally ranging in age from their twenties to forties, and tending toward the lower end of the scale (Fox & Hammond, 1977; Malbin, 1980; Hammond & Weyrich, 1988). House LAs are usually in their twenties, while Senate personal and all committee professionals tend to be in their thirties and forties (Fox & Hammond, 1977; Malbin, 1980). Fox and Hammond (1977) found females to be "underrepresented" in senior staff slots. Congressional staff are highly educated and ambitious, some aspiring to elected office themselves (Fox & Hammond, 1977; Malbin, 1980; Davidson & Oleszek, 1981; Hammond & Weyrich, 1988).

One fact about congressional staff is especially noteworthy. The young, bright, well educated staff of Congress embark on Capitol Hill with their eye on attaining

experience and a valued credential. Congressional staff tend to move up and off the Hill fairly quickly. Half the committee staffers Fox and Hammond (1977) sampled had worked in their position for four or fewer years. Shapiro and Touya (1990) found Washington House staffers to average 2.9 years in their current position and five years on the Hill in a congressional job. Similarly, Twenhafel (1991) said Senate staffers averaged 3.1 years in their current position and 5.7 years in Congress. Hammond and Weyrich in 1988 identified only 21 percent of Senate policymaking staff who had worked in that body in 1981, terming the Senate staff turnover rate "astronomical." However, Hammond and Weyrich (1988) found higher ranking moderate and liberal senators three times more likely than conservatives to employ a policymaking staffer who has worked in the Senate for more than 12 years. Congressional staff seem to frequently use Hill experience to advance their careers, either in politics or in the private sector (Malbin, 1980; Davidson & Oleszek, 1981; Hammond & Weyrich, 1988).

Congressional staff longevity is likely to be a function of many factors, depending on the nature of the situation in which an individual works and longer-term career objectives. Hammond and Weyrich (1988) listed some factors that determine staff longevity and their level of power in a congressional office:

. . . [T]he longevity of the member himself, the activism and seniority of the member, the tightness with which the member supervises the minutiae of his office's operation, the irascibility of the member, the quality of the staff, and the relative interest the staff places on personal wealth versus power. (p. 232)

For whatever reasons, staff turnover on Capitol Hill tends to be high (Shapiro & Touya, 1990; Twenhafel, 1991). People may come to Washington, work in a couple of congressional jobs, and move on. The responsibility and importance of Hill workers remains, but their expertise is often applied in other contexts after a fairly short tenure.

How do congressional offices operate? Every office arranges its staff differently, with varying degrees of hierarchy and staff responsibility (Carlile, 1981; Salisbury & Shepsle, 1981; Cummings, 1984). The distribution of responsibilities seems to depend upon the composition of the staff and the interests and abilities of individual staffers, as well as member preferences. Still, certain aspects of staff positions remain generally consistent across Capitol Hill. Carlile (1981) divided congressional office staff functions into eight categories: office management, mail, projects, casework, legislation, scheduling and personal services, press and public relations, and political functions. The Senate Republican Policy Committee listed the primary staff positions under four areas: legislative, press, administrative, and state office.

All staff duties, from writing news releases to drafting a floor speech to answering a constituent's inquiry about a

pending bill to contacting a federal agency on behalf of a constituent to obtaining a U.S. flag that has flown over the Capitol for a civic organization, are done in the name of the member in an effort to help meet all the demands on the member's time and attention (Scully, 1977; Salisbury & Shepsle, 1981; Cummings, 1984). House members currently may employ up to 18 personal staffers; senators' personal staffs usually have 20 to 40 people, depending on the home state's population (Carlile, 1981). Although every office may be organized differently, congressional staff serve an important role as an extension of senators and representatives and are a valuable resource to them.

This study is concerned with the top three staffers in congressional members' Washington offices because of the key roles they fulfill in accomplishing the duties incumbent upon members of Congress today. These staffers often give political and policy-related counsel to the member for whom they work. Usually overseeing the personal office is the administrative assistant (AA), who may be called the chief of staff (Carlile, 1981; Cummings, 1984; Senate Republican Policy Committee list). The legislative director (LD) is usually the person who coordinates a member's legislative activities (Carlile, 1981; Senate Republican Policy Committee list). The press secretary, sometimes called communications director, is responsible for the member's interaction with the news media and for coordination of publicity activities

(Carlile, 1981; Senate Republican Policy Committee list). These three staff members--AA, LD, and press secretary--generally make up the core of trusted advisors to members of Congress.

AAs administer the overall operations of a congressional office. They frequently have a long-time political relationship with the member for whom they work, and serve as chief political advisor (Cummings, 1984; Senate Republican Policy Committee list). They help their boss establish and strengthen political ties with desired groups that comprise the member's coalition of supporters in the home district or state. AAs see to it that all staff functions are being carried out satisfactorily. They may sometimes intervene in certain matters with the member if they deem something to be in the best political interest of the member (Cummings, 1984). Cummings (1984) reported that AAs usually handle congressional member endorsements of executive branch political appointees and may be contacted by reporters for the "inside scoop" on matters within the office.

In the House, the average age of AAs is 38 years old (Shapiro & Touya, 1990). Seventy percent are male, and 91 percent are white (Shapiro & Touya, 1990). House AAs average 4.5 years in their current position and 9.5 years working in Congress (Shapiro & Touya, 1990). Almost 44 percent hold bachelor's degrees as their highest degree, 27 percent have

master's degrees, and about 16 percent have law degrees (Shapiro & Touya, 1990).

Senate AAs average 42 years of age, 98 percent are white, and 76 percent are male (Twenhafel, 1991). More than 54 percent have earned bachelor's degrees as their highest degree, while nearly 16 percent have master's degrees and more than 19 percent have law degrees (Twenhafel, 1991). Senate AAs have served in their present position an average of 3.5 years, have worked nine years in Congress (six of those in the current Senate office), and on average have worked nine years outside of Congress (Twenhafel, 1991).

LDs manage the legislative staff and assist in developing the member's legislative program. They generally oversee a number of legislative assistants (LAs) who are responsible for specific issue areas. Carlile (1981) stated:

. . . [T]he basic staff legislative function can be summed up in one word: preparation. A Member of Congress needs to be prepared for the numerous legislative forums in which he operates, and it is the staff role to ensure that such preparation is adequate. (p. 24)

LDs coordinate the activities undertaken by all the legislative staffers (Senate Republican Policy Committee list).

Both LAs and LDs help draft legislation; inform their member of pending legislation; keep in contact with staffers on committees and in other offices, executive branch personnel and interest groups; and work to obtain co-sponsors for their boss's bills, as well as present to their bosses

others' legislation which their member may want to co-sponsor. They often answer constituent mail concerning legislation relating to their issues. They usually attend committee hearings and markups, and prepare statements and questions for their member in that forum. They give counsel on how to vote on certain legislation and may even cast proxy votes for the member in subcommittee and committee (Carlile, 1981; Cummings, 1984; Vogler & Waldman, 1985). Malbin (1980) counted personal staff legislative aides among the most influential staffers with respect to legislation. Malbin (1980) described "staff entrepreneurs," those who seek to advance their own reputation along with that of their member by discovering ideas for amendments, bills, or hearings with which the member can become identified. If bosses succeed in associating themselves with specific issues and answers, the staffers who have helped gain a reputation for themselves, as well. Hence legislative aides develop issue expertise, legislative prowess, are known on and off the Hill as "movers and shakers," and just may be offered a lucrative job with a lobbying firm, a special interest group, a law firm, or a "schedule C" (political) appointment in the administration. Chief among LAs on personal staffs, and sometimes even responsible for a member's committee staffers, is the LD.

House LDs average 32 years of age, 6.6 years in Congress, and 3.3 years in their present position (Shapiro & Touya, 1990). Ninety-four percent are white, and almost 57

percent are male (Shapiro & Touya, 1990). More than 57 percent have earned bachelor's degrees as their highest degree, 21 percent hold master's degrees, and 17 percent have law degrees (Shapiro & Touya, 1990).

Senate LDs average 38 years of age, 55 percent are male, and nearly 90 percent are white (Twenhafel, 1991). LDs in the Senate have at least a bachelor's degree (30.6 percent), and many hold graduate or professional degrees: 30.6 percent have master's degrees, 28.6 percent have earned law degrees, and 10.2 percent hold the doctorate (Twenhafel, 1991). Senate LDs have on the average worked 7.7 years in Congress, 5.3 in their current Senate office, and 2.9 in their current position; they average 7.6 years of work experience off Capitol Hill (Twenhafel, 1991).

Press secretaries provide liaison with the news media in Washington and at home and serve as a source of ideas. They must keep informed about happenings in the office, the boss's committees, the Congress, the administration, the courts, back home and across the country. They help members communicate with their constituents through the news media. This requires that press secretaries, frequently former news people themselves, maintain contact with news personnel, especially those in the district or state (Fox & Hammond, 1977; Carlile, 1981; Cummings, 1984; Senate Republican Policy Committee list). Besides writing, editing and distributing news releases and copies of statements, working with the

appointments secretary to arrange interviews or media appearances, and giving reporters background information, press secretaries often coordinate the periodic production of newsletters (Carlile, 1981; Cummings, 1984). They may ghost write columns, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor (Press Secretaries Manual, 1989). They kill rumors, confirm facts, give the member's side of an unfavorable story (Cummings, 1984). Press secretaries write speeches, produce radio and television programs recorded at congressional studio facilities, and send out radio actualities (Press Secretaries Manual, 1989). They arrange press conferences and often speak on behalf of the member to the media. Press secretaries, in short, must be knowledgeable of the news process, the legislative process, and all major activities of the member's office and committees. On the Senate side, press secretaries may have several press assistants; House press secretaries usually serve by themselves.

In the House, press secretaries are 29.5 years old on average, 98 percent are white, and nearly 64 percent are male (Shapiro & Touya, 1990). They have served 3.5 years in Congress on the average and 2.4 years in their present position (Shapiro & Touya, 1990). Eighty-one percent hold bachelor's degrees, while about 12 percent have master's degrees as their highest degree (Shapiro & Touya, 1990).

Senate press secretaries average 36 years of age, 70 percent are male, and almost 95 percent are white (Twenhafel, 1991). Nearly 68 percent of Senate press secretaries hold as their highest degree a bachelor's, while 23 percent have earned master's degrees (Twenhafel, 1991). Senate press secretaries average 2.8 years in their present position, 3.6 years in their current Senate office, 5.4 years in Congress, and 8.7 years working outside Congress (Twenhafel, 1991).

Thus, the role congressional staff fill may be acknowledged as an important one in today's Congress. The staff function has expanded along with the activities and size of Congress and its committees. The top three personal staffers--AAs, LDs, and press secretaries--each perform different, but no less vital, duties in members' offices. These staffers need information to fulfill their jobs and help make sure their boss successfully completes all incumbent obligations and responsibilities. Next, sources and the role of information on Capitol Hill, especially news and information from the print media, are examined.

Information in Congress

Though Freudenburg (1986) likened the daily operation of Congress to that of a small town, there is nothing small about the amount of information that inundates Congress. Former Representative Richard Bolling (1975) wrote:

Congress is flooded with more information than it can absorb. The daily mail delivers more reports, letters, studies, analyses than any staff, let alone the Member himself, can absorb. The sheer volume makes much of the information unusable. It is too bulky to store and it is not indexed for retrieval. (p. 492)

Vogler and Waldman (1985) termed the quantity of information available on the Hill "staggering" and concluded that the nature of the congressional information problem is that there is too much of it. This information glut includes mass and specialized publication sources.

Still, information is vital to the legislative process. "Gathering and processing information is perhaps the central activity in the operation of Congress" (Vogler & Waldman, 1985, p. 101). Bolling (1975) confirmed this need for information:

To function well, [members] must have information. Some go about this very objectively and in an organized, intellectual way. Others have informal ways of sensing, for example, how constituents and other Members feel. (p. 492)

Freudenburg (1986) also verified the central role of information in the legislative process:

There is no question that Congressional decisionmaking is anything but dispassionate, being profoundly affected by power and parochialism, but it also becomes quite clear, quite quickly, that information is often the most important single weapon in the battles that take place. Members and their staffs have very little patience for the kinds of detailed analyses that are found in most academic journals, but accurate capsule summaries take on a nearly phenomenal importance. Perhaps the most important single task of staffers--and of lobbyists--is to obtain information that is accurate, timely, and convincing. If the information will lead to unexpected embarrassment for one's opponents, so much the better. (p. 323)

Print media may provide data to congressional members--and to their staff, who often are charged with informing the members--in a form useable for their purposes. For instance, members frequently send around "Dear Colleague" letters (prepared by staff), which explain an amendment to be offered to a bill, solicit co-sponsorship of legislation, or promulgate relevant information to colleagues. The latter type of "Dear Colleagues" often have a clipping of a magazine or newspaper news story that brings to light a new perspective on an issue before Congress. Also, published news stories, editorials, op-ed pieces and columns are referred to, quoted from, or otherwise made part of the Congressional Record, including their being reprinted in full. Thus, information from the press is attended to and utilized on Capitol Hill in these ways.

However, an important distinction has been made between two main classes of information: political and policy (Sabatier & Whiteman, 1985; Vogler & Waldman, 1985). Political information is that which pertains to the potential impact of a legislative decision on one's constituency, which policymakers and interest groups favor and oppose a pending policy alternative, and the likely effect of a given decision with respect to that alternative on one's political future. Policy information is more technical in nature, including specific legislative content; the depth and breadth of the

problem a policy alternative is designed to address; other possible approaches to remedy the problem; and the likely effect of the legislation on society, such as the costs vs. benefits involved. For example, a banking bill may address the issue of deposit insurance. Policy information would be the current level of insurance, the amount of uninsured funds, the costs incurred due to recent defaults, and the locations where and circumstances under which the defaults occurred. Political information would be the position of the president's administration on the proposal; the positions of big bank, small bank and credit union interest groups; and the opinions of constituents and influentials in the home state or district. The print media may bring some of both kinds of information to a member's or staffer's attention.

Scholars have examined the search for and flow of information in legislatures, especially policy information (Porter, 1974; Zwier, 1979; Bradley, 1980; Sabatier & Whiteman, 1985). Various sources, such as committee members, lobbyists, staff and the news media, provide legislators with information which helps guide their policy decisions. Differences in sources and methods of gathering information have been found for specialist legislators (senior members of the committee of jurisdiction for a particular measure) and non-specialists regarding their legislative decision making (Zwier, 1979; Sabatier & Whiteman, 1985). It seems that

legislators use a variety of information source types which are accessible and convenient to complement each other (Bradley, 1980).

The staff role has been recognized as important, although it has been compounded by the legislator's expertise level and the variety of information sources available (Zwier, 1979; Sabatier & Whiteman, 1985). House members and senators may rely on their staff to different degrees in terms of their legislative decision making, with representatives relying more on their colleagues on the House floor and senators on their staffers (Wolman & Wolman, 1977); however, this issue is not settled and may depend on whether a legislator is a specialist or non-specialist (Zwier, 1979).

In any case, Congress has numerous information sources available to it. There are internal sources, institutional sources, computer resources, informal sources, lobbyists and the mass media.

Internal information sources include committee output and tend to focus on policy information. The business of Congress takes place primarily in its committees and subcommittees, where members--and their staff--gain expertise in policy areas and become specialists. Committee reports, studies and hearings provide members and staff with valuable information about pending legislation and important issues before a committee of Congress. In fact, 57 percent of

senators and representatives told Weiss (1974) that these were the sources of the most useful information. However, it was unspecified whether or not this reference was to policy or political information. Weiss (1974) pointed out that media reporting can often be based on congressional hearings and the like.

Institutional information sources are those that are part of Congress, but not its committees. Auxiliary agencies supplement the work of committee and personal staffs (Salisbury & Shepsle, 1981). The Library of Congress has a branch of nonpartisan researchers known as the Congressional Research Service (CRS). Another adjunct resource is the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) which focuses on budget and spending analysis. The General Accounting Office (GAO) serves primarily as an investigative arm of Congress. The Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) reports on the impact of new technology and on various aspects of technological applications. These agencies issue reports and other policy-related output for Congress's use.

Congress entered the information age in the 1960s with the adoption of computers (Chartrand, Bortnick & Price, 1987). Today, both bodies of Congress have computers, and the applications of this technology have expanded to involve many aspects of their daily work. Computer systems, such as the House Information Systems (HIS), bring a host of

information to the fingertips of congressional workers. Databases such as LEGIS and SCORPIO provide legislative bill tracking information (Robinson, 1981; Chartrand, Bortnick & Price, 1987). Other on-line systems provide complete texts of legislation, the Congressional Record, government statistics, federal grant and budget information, the Hotline wire service, and Associated Press (AP) and Reuters newswires. Administrative services also come into House offices via computer, including scheduling services, casework tracking, a bulletin board and computerized mail (Vogler & Waldman, 1985; Chartrand, Bortnick & Price, 1987). Republican and Democratic offices can receive computerized information from their respective party whip, press and policy notices, and even job listings.

Computer information searches in Congress are likely to be more directed, as they generally are in other forums where computer usage entails less browsing and more direction (Zerbinos, 1990). For example, a staffer looking for a specific bill may log onto LEGIS and search for the legislation using the sponsor's name, the popular title of the act or some similar referent. A press secretary may log onto the AP state newswire to learn the latest development concerning an event in the home state or to see whether a press release sent by facsimile machine from that office received wire coverage. These examples indicate computerized

information searches in the congressional context that are directed more toward finding specific information than simply browsing, as one would do with a newspaper or magazine.

Another source of information available to Congress is informal in nature. Informal sources are networks comprised of personal contacts on the Hill and elsewhere in Washington. Salisbury and Shepsle (1981) referred to former staffers who work in other Capitol Hill offices or around town as "alumni networks." Former staff members may work for trade associations, unions, law firms or in the executive branch; they may provide information to their former boss from time to time.

Of course, an important information source to elected legislators in Congress is contact with constituents. Members personally meet with constituents in a variety of forums when they go home to their state or district. Additionally, many constituents keep members informed of their positions on a range of issues which may or may not be pending congressional action. Constituents communicate with their senators and representatives by way of mailed correspondence, telephone calls and, now, facsimile transmissions. Congressional staff spend much time drafting letters responding to these constituent communications (Carlile, 1981).

An outside information source available to Congress is special interest groups, namely the lobbyists who work for them. Lobbyists can be an important source of information to legislators, especially to specialist legislators and their staffs (Zwier, 1979; Sabatier & Whiteman, 1985). Nimmo and Ungs (1979) wrote, "Lobbyists work for enactment, alteration, or defeat of policies by personal contact with governing officials" (p. 287).

Lobbyists normally prefer to communicate directly with senators and representatives, but must also rely on the appropriate congressional staffers. Porter (1974) found that lobbyists view as the most effective technique for influencing legislators personally presenting the case for a policy, along with research data to support their position. Nimmo (1978; Nimmo & Ungs, 1979) noted that lobbyists usually contact legislators who share the views of the organizations they represent for such presentations.

To these friendly officials lobbyists provide relatively straightforward and necessary services--calling problems to the official's attention, clarifying the stands of particular interests, responding to inquiries, gathering factual data (self-serving, to be sure), supporting officials against opponents, protecting policy makers from exorbitant claims of other lobbyists, and keeping communication lines open through informal efforts that include campaign contributions, entertainment, and social gatherings. Some aspects of lobbying are less direct. There are techniques such as contacting officials through their constituents and friends, publicizing the voting records of recalcitrant legislators, organizing letter writing and telegram campaigns, and conducting public relations programs. (Nimmo, 1978, p. 409)

Lobbyists also testify before congressional committees at hearings. They may seek to communicate their organization or client's message through the news media (Bagdikian, 1984; Turk, 1986). Turk (1986) wrote of public relations practitioners, with whom lobbyists may work or be themselves: "They attempt to influence the media's agenda, so that they may in turn influence the public opinion upon which their organizations depend for survival" (p. 4). Lobbyists frequently leave information kits or booklets with members and staff, often including a photocopy of news articles, editorials or op-ed pieces favorable to their position. Thus, special interest groups employ a number of techniques to communicate with legislators in Congress, ranging from personal contact to cultivating news media coverage.

Television serves Congress as an available information source. Both House and Senate offices are wired with cable television service, which provides C-SPAN coverage of congressional floor and selected committee action, as well as Cable News Network (CNN) and other programming. The primary purpose of cable TV in the offices is to allow the viewing of floor activity on C-SPAN.

Finally, the print media provide information to Congress. Members and staff alike rely on the news media, especially print media, for news and information--both political and policy-related--much as the general public does

(Fox & Hammond, 1977; Miller, 1978; Ornstein, 1983; Linsky, 1986). Officials use the mass media to gauge public opinion (Nimmo, 1978; Zukin, 1981), to learn what is happening within and beyond the Washington Beltway (Nimmo, 1978; Graber, 1982; Linsky, 1986), to obtain information about their policy areas (Fox & Hammond, 1977; Linsky, 1986), and to connect with other sectors, both public and private (Weiss, 1974).

Print media play a part in the information mix of the legislative process. Linsky (1986) found members of Congress very likely to believe the impact of the press on policy to be substantial. Turk (1986) termed the mass media a participant, albeit unofficial, in organizational behavior as related to the role of bringing information before the public. Various players in the policymaking process--not the least of which include members of Congress and their staffs--use publications as key information sources. Linsky (1986) found 57.5 percent of congressional leaders relied very much on media for policy and political information, even in their own policy areas. Fox and Hammond (1977) wrote:

Print media are important sources of information for Congressional staffs. . . . For some offices, newspapers and magazines are the primary sources of information. (p. 115)

With respect to international news and foreign policy, Paletz and Entman (1981) said:

The media-elite relationship works both ways. Except for those who serve on foreign affairs committees, most

members of Congress (and their staffs) rely on a few specialized and prestige media, especially the Washington Post and the New York Times, for most of their information about the state of the world. (p. 232)

Paletz and Entman (1981) agreed that newspapers have a powerful impact on congressional perceptions. Indeed, Wilhoit and Drew (1991) found that government officials are among an important secondary audience that editorial writers hope to reach.

It may be said that legislators read newspapers and other publications in surveillance of their environment (Dunn, 1969; Abrams & Hawkins, 1984). A key reason why rank-and-file members and their staffs need the national press so much for this surveillance may have been uncovered by Robinson (1981). He found about 75 percent of members of Congress reported never receiving personal coverage in the national media. Few members or press secretaries indicated to Robinson that they had been treated unfairly by specific news sources; only seven percent of respondents regarded the Washington Post and the New York Times to be mostly unfair in their reporting on those members. Respondents in Robinson's (1981) study generally regarded the local media, which did cover them much more often, to report fairly. Therefore, a lack of major news coverage of many House and Senate members would indicate a need for rank-and-file members and staffs to

learn what developments are taking place around Capitol Hill and throughout Washington.

It may be seen that as Congress has changed, its need for information has increased. While the ranks of congressional staff have swelled over the past few decades and as technological advances have been adopted by Congress, the press has retained its position as one of the most important information sources for members and staff alike.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW OF MEDIA USE AND CREDIBILITY

Media use and credibility have attracted much attention from communications scholars. As media have changed and new technologies have increased the choices available to media consumers, the use and perceived credibility of the mass media have become even more important. Much research has rightly focused on a general audience and across types of media; however, this study concentrates on the print media preferences of a specialized population which has received little attention: congressional staff. This chapter examines the literature regarding media use and credibility, and discusses the theoretical basis for this study.

Modern Americans, and especially today's congressional offices, have more information alternatives than could have been imagined just fifty years ago. Graber (1988) said that ". . . people pay attention to only a small amount of the available information" (p. 2). She continued:

[M]odern Americans are confronted by a seemingly unmanageable flood tide of information. We live in an age of information glut. The average metropolitan paper, served up with breakfast on a daily basis, contains between 50 and 100 pages of fairly fine print. This is more than enough to cause information indigestion for anyone trying to read it all. Add to this some 25 to 50 stories served up at dinner and bedtime through national and local television newscasts, plus assorted bulletins on radio throughout the day, not to mention news magazines and journals, and you have tremendous information overload. (p. 1)

With a single newspaper delivering nearly 20,000 news stories in a year on more than 33,000 topics (Graber, 1988), the general condition of "information overload" and the premise that the audience ignores most of the available material may be acknowledged.

In general, most people rely on the mass media for both information about and interpretation of issues (Graber, 1980). Media consumers apply time- and effort-saving cognitive devices known as "schemas" to incoming information, including political information (Lodge & Hamill, 1986; Graber, 1988; Mason & Nass, 1989). Lodge and Hamill (1986) explained the process:

Confronted with a blizzard of facts, figures, and images from which political impressions are formed and judgments made, the individual must of necessity impose some perspective on the world to make it comprehensible. An effective cognitive framework allows the citizen selectively to attend to some stimuli and disregard others, to group together otherwise disparate bits and bytes of information, to store in memory a representation of this information, and then to retrieve it when making decisions. (pp. 505-506)

Zukin (1981) summarized the concept by saying that existing attitudes act as "informational gatekeepers" as more and more data continually flow and as people confront the information. New information is dealt with in terms of existing attitudes and beliefs--the predispositions held which constitute schemas (Zukin, 1981; Lodge & Hamill, 1986; Mason & Nass, 1989). The same process is assumed to take place among congressional staff as they filter information on the job.

Likewise, this information processing procedure occurs when political material is involved. Graber (1988) explained:

The findings presented in this study confirm that political communication is very much a transactional process. Mass media messages are not imprinted on the minds of audiences in the precise manner in which they are offered. Rather, audiences condense the offerings in their own ways, select aspects of interest, and integrate them into their own thinking. When one encounters similar perceptions among audiences and when these perceptions resemble the images provided by the media, two factors are chiefly responsible: (1) similarity in socialization and (2) lack of relevant schemata to mold incoming news. Consequently, schemata reflect media offerings closely in some areas and hardly at all in others. (p. 258)

Lodge and Hamill (1986) found that "partisan schematics"--those people having well developed, sophisticated cognitive processors of political information--could accurately designate policy statements as Democratic or Republican, despite the message source's party label. However, these researchers concluded that partisan schematics impose more ideological order on a source's statements than actually exists. Thus, congressional staffers, who are likely to possess sophisticated political schema, probably do not accept media-delivered political and policy information at face value, but interpret the information in light of existing attitudes and presuppositions, just as other sophisticated readers do. That is, staffers may apply political schemas to the point of distorting incoming information. Such a practice may affect the perceived credibility of media sources upon which they rely.

Beyond the development and application of cognitive short-cuts in information processing, the type of medium through which facts and data come affects the process, as well. Indeed, Gandy, Matabane and Omachonu (1987) said:

What people learn from exposure to public affairs content in a particular medium may be conditioned in part by the individual's expectations about the nature and quality of the content to be supplied by that medium. (p. 647)

Bogart (1981) found respondents to favor newspapers as the "best" source--over television, radio, and magazines--to learn about nearly three of every five news topics. Television won on the few "top interest stories."

With respect to international news, Hendrickson (1989) found that a significant difference exists between newspaper and television coverage. Hendrickson reported that newspaper reliance results in more comprehensive knowledge and a better understanding of international affairs among readers, in contrast to television-reliant viewers.

Berkowitz and Pritchard (1989) examined political knowledge and various communication resources, including the news media, interpersonal communication and campaign-generated information. They found newspapers to be the only communication resource "consistently related to political knowledge" (p. 701). Additionally, they surmised, "Newspapers probably offer their audiences a greater quantity of factual information about local politics than do

interpersonal communications or other mass media" (p. 701).

Of course, various types of media overlap in coverage of news topics, and media audiences gather information on the same subjects from exposure to more than one media source. It is difficult to discern the effects of each medium (Graber, 1980). Still, several differences exist between print and broadcast media which affect their agenda-setting ability. McCombs and Shaw (1972) initially found a reflection of a "composite of the mass media coverage" (p. 181) among audience members.

Later research showed that newspapers seem to lead the way in agenda setting, providing the broad agenda, while television gets its agenda from newspapers, focuses public attention and rearranges the items on the agenda (McCombs, 1976, 1977; Press determines, 1977; Weaver, Graber, McCombs & Eyal, 1981). Other researchers found support for television agenda setting. Such was the case for dramatic topics, such as when a news report interrupts regular programming (McClure & Patterson, 1976) or following a television investigative report (Leff, Protess & Brooks, 1986). Behr and Iyengar (1985) stated that the lead news story on television impacts the public agenda most powerfully. A combination of media coverage has been shown to match the public agenda (Kaid, Hale & Williams, 1977; Toggerson, 1981). Miller (1978) said

that the wire services set the agenda for Washington news carried in the media.

Print and broadcast media differ in other ways, as well. Public affairs information on television is usually event-oriented and temporal (Wade & Schramm, 1969), and works against political "reasoning" (Clarke & Fredin, 1978). On the other hand, newspapers are able to communicate more complex information and perspective (Wade & Schramm, 1969; Nimmo, 1970; Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989; Hendrickson, 1989). Print media can place clear emphasis on important matters. McClure and Patterson (1976) put it:

Newspapers succeed where television news fails because newspapers can clearly demonstrate the significance they attach to a given story. Newspapers have at their disposal the traditional means of indicating emphasis and significance--long stories, short stories; stories with pictures, stories without pictures; large headlines, small headlines; front page, back page; above the fold, below the fold. Thus the print medium gives readers a strong, lasting, visual indication of significance. (p. 26)

An additional distinction exists between print and broadcast audiences. Reading a magazine or newspaper requires greater concentration, along with the investment of time and effort, than attending to television or radio news (Nimmo, 1970; Eyal, 1981). Hill (1985) warned of the difference between quantity and quality in television news viewing, finding no significant correlation between the quantity of television exposure and an agenda-setting effect.

McClure and Patterson (1976) discovered a more direct agenda-setting effect related to local newspaper exposure.

However, those individuals motivated enough to read newspapers and news magazines are likely to have greater interest in keeping informed on public affairs. Nimmo (1970) found that these people also use broadcast media for information, are loyal partisans, and are special interest group members.

Daily newspapers bring their readers a broad range of information, including more reports of conflict. Clarke and Fredin (1978) found that markets with competing dailies provide greater information levels than monopoly newspaper markets. Lasorda (1991) found newspaper competition to contribute to public opinion diversity within communities. Olien, Donohue and Tichenor (1968) discovered that larger cities having daily newspapers carried more conflict reportage than non-daily papers. It should be noted that Washington, D.C., is a competing newspaper city. Its two hometown dailies are the Washington Post and the Washington Times. Other newspapers provide substantial coverage of Washington developments, including the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times, and are circulated in the Washington market.

Magazines also provide detailed information to readers, including Capitol Hill workers. Payne, Severn and Dozier

(1988) studied uses and gratifications motives as related to magazine reading. These researchers concluded that the content of a medium can predict the uses of specific media types. They found support for the diversion function as a motive for using consumer magazines. Furthermore, they linked interaction, surveillance and diversion motives to trade magazine usage. Age, sex, education level and income were unrelated to motives in predicting publication selection in the Payne, Severn and Dozier study.

On Capitol Hill, news magazines and opinion journals, as well as periodicals such as Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report and National Journal, may be regarded as "trade" publications for those people involved in policymaking (Fox & Hammond, 1977). As Mayo and Pasadeos (1991) reported with respect to business magazines, coverage of international business news has increased in number of stories over the past three decades, with more frequent mention of a U.S. connection evident (although the same amount of space is given this news topic). The magazines they content analyzed --Business Week, Forbes and Fortune--were included in the list of publications in the present study. Congressional staff whose boss is concerned about U.S. competitiveness abroad and trade issues may rely on these magazines to remain informed.

Senior congressional staffers fit the description of news readers, having the motivation and interest in public

affairs to invest the time and energy to keep themselves informed. They also tend to be highly educated, a factor associated with reading news publications. While print media may share the stage with broadcasters in bringing news to congressional staffers' attention, the availability and easy utility of print sources may increase their role above that of broadcast media in providing political information on Capitol Hill. Print sources may be clipped or "dogearred" and saved, making retrieval and storage easier than information broadcast into the office.

The Impact of the Media on Congress

The mass media are thought to have a significant impact upon policymaking, according to members of Congress themselves (Linsky, 1986). This is especially thought to be the case early in the policy process, as issues are being selected and framed. Lawmakers believe the press has great impact in identifying problems and setting the legislative agenda, although they also have stated that they enjoy more success at gaining press coverage for themselves than executive branch officials report having (Linsky, 1986). The impact of the media on Congress is evident in that 57 percent of congressional leaders reported relying ". . . on the mass media very much for information about their own policy areas" (Linsky, 1986, p. 136).

However, not every legislator may perceive the mass media as a valuable resource of job-relevant information. Riffe (1990) surveyed state legislators in Alabama in this regard. Using factor analysis, Riffe (1990) found from his correlational data that legislators who perceive the news media as a "consensus agent" generally rated them as a useful source of information in their jobs. Those who view the media in an adversarial way significantly rated the media as less helpful in providing useful information concerning legislative matters.

The influence between members of Congress and the news media can certainly run both ways. Blumler and Gurevitch (1981) wrote:

Politicians are highly salient to reporters as staples of running stories; information resources for background insight; and even audiences for their output, providing knowledgeable feedback. At times they may also serve as validators of ambiguous political situations, the news status of which would otherwise be uncertain. . . . But politicians must also tailor their activities to news media workways so as to make themselves more widely known; build up and sustain opinion constituencies; cultivate policy awareness and support; test public reactions to likely initiatives; and counter rivals' publicity efforts as well as damaging critical fire from other quarters. (p. 469)

Both parties may potentially gain from mutual cooperation, and the influence between press and politician likely deepens with the strengthening of a personal relationship and mutual trust between reporter and officeholder.

Still, the media affect Congress and its processes.

Graber (1982) discussed the agenda-setting function of the media upon policy and politics:

For many people in and out of government, media images become the reality on which their judgments are based. They also become the menu from which politicians select the political fare to be served to legislative bodies and publics. (p.11)

Linsky (1986) found that officials view the media as policy agenda setters, and that the media powerfully influence the context in which an issue is understood. Graber (1988) pointed to the same agenda-setting function, not only for average citizens but also for politicians, and the contextualizing process. Miller (1978) found that the news media influenced the items before congressional committees, from bringing issues to their attention to providing information and even affecting an issue's significance by giving the matter more news coverage.

It should be noted that the relationship among agenda setting, public opinion, and congressional representation and action has been shown to be complex. The news media do not in every instance produce congressional action, nor do legislators react to every news story on a public issue or to public opinion in a direct manner, or always lead the public or press agenda. Fryling (1985) examined the agenda of the U.S. Congress from 1945 to 1980, using time series analysis of ten issues in relation to media and public opinion agendas. Fryling found that, depending on the issue,

Congress sometimes set the agenda for press and public, Congress was insulated on other issues from outside influence, and the public's agenda and the congressional agenda interacted to set committee hearing priorities. It was concluded by Fryling that congressional committee hearing schedules were somewhat self-generated, with little evidence of public opinion consistently setting the congressional agenda.

News of the national government holds a plurality as to the most frequent news topics. Graber (1988) found this news category to be the largest among three major Chicago newspapers and the three major television networks. National government coverage ranged in that study from 38.6 percent in one newspaper to 44.1 percent on CBS.

People who attend to news media largely gain factual information from these sources. Viewers generally apply schemas to the information in order to interpret the data (Graber, 1980; 1988). Brinton and McKown (1961) found higher levels of knowledge among newspaper subscribers than non-subscribers regarding the issue of water fluoridation. They also noted that subscribers had formed attitudes toward fluoridation. Like Graber, these researchers noticed interpersonal discussions of the topic among subscribers. Graber concluded that interpersonal conversations, personal experience, and attitudes and opinions developed in the past

served as mediating factors--elements of cognitive schemas--for subjects in her studies. New information from the media acts in a "continuing adult political socialization and resocialization" fashion that adjusts currently held opinions and attitudes (Graber, 1980, p. 9). Thus, the media have a varying, but ongoing, impact upon individuals. Directly, the media provide information, increase knowledge of certain topics and make individuals aware of events. More indirectly, they provide the data by which people may adjust their interpretive schemas.

In government, the news media are recognized as helping to set the legislative agenda and giving significance to certain issues. They also have a key role in placing issues within the framework by which policymakers and the public understand the topics.

Print Media Sources on Capitol Hill

Many publications vie for the attention of congressional members and their staffs alike. Researchers have found that a number of media sources have been named by members and staff as useful in their efforts to remain informed about political and policy developments, as well as to learn of emerging issues and public opinion. Ornstein (1983) wrote: "Like the rest of us, [members of Congress] get most of their news and impressions of people and politics from the mass

media: the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, and the networks" (p. 208). Fox and Hammond (1977) confirmed the importance of print media as sources of information for congressional staff.

Government information officers, it has been noted, seek to discern public opinion from the news media. One information officer told Nimmo (1964) that he and his staff assessed public opinion from the daily editorial copy of the Washington Post, Washington Evening Star, Washington Daily News, New York Herald Tribune, New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal. The information officer said:

We have found that stories being run in these newspapers are generally those important in many other areas of the country. Furthermore, from the standpoint of editorial opinion, these six or seven newspapers cover the entire spectrum politically from conservative on through the liberal. We can find out what editorial reaction is to bills and policies throughout the spectrum, and that is the second reason that we choose these particular newspapers. (pp.185-186)

Although some of the newspapers mentioned to Nimmo are no longer published, the principle and practice outlined are still valid.

The most preferred news source of members of Congress, regardless of ideology, is the Washington Post. Weiss (1974) called the Post "the primary newspaper of Washington officialdom" (p. 5). Linsky (1986) found this to be so, writing:

The Post is the hometown paper for the national capital, the paper of record for the activities of the federal

government, the paper most federal officials read first in the morning. To government insiders, the news in Washington means to a considerable degree what appears in the Washington Post. (p. 70)

Miller (1978) determined that the Post sets the domestic issues news agenda. Phil Kent, a former press secretary to Senator Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), said that every office on Capitol Hill reads the Post (personal communication, March 22, 1989).

Two other newspapers tend to be preferred on the Hill after the Washington Post: the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal (Weiss, 1974). Miller (1978) said that the Times sets the international news agenda. Weiss (1974) also found that reading the Times, the Post and "'intellectual'" magazines (such as the New York Review of Books, New Republic and Commentary [Kadushin, Hover & Tichy, 1971]) was related to a liberal ideology, while reading the Journal, business, news and general magazines was related to a conservative ideology. However, in Washington, all ideological types in government read the Post. Phil Kent (personal communication, March 22, 1989) said that congressional conservatives read both the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal, but perceive the Journal as the more credible source, especially its editorial page.

Senators and representatives read other publications regularly, as well. Weiss (1974) reported that they read the major news magazines (Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World

Report). However, members reported much less readership of the political opinion magazines (New Republic, The Nation and National Review).

Specialized publications, which may include congressional committee reports and professional journals, generally wield high credibility among readers. Graber (1980) pointed out that these kinds of sources tend to be more influential than other information sources. However, her reference indicated this to be the case for specific policy-related information, as opposed to general policy and political information. Kadushin, Hover and Tichy (1971) found the three intellectual journals believed to have the most influence concerning policy were the New Republic, New York Review of Books and Commentary.

While liberal, moderate and conservative lawmakers may overlap in the publications they read, beginning with the Washington Post and continuing to other publications, reading intellectual journals is significantly related to liberal political views (Weiss, 1974). Further, Weiss (1974) seemed to confirm the reading of the Washington Post and New York Times across the ideological spectrum through a lack of correlation between these newspapers being read and measures of liberal ideology, although the relation was in the liberal direction.

It seems, then, that print media usually set the public's agenda, as well as sometimes doing so for

congressional legislators. Many print media sources, providing detail and perspective, enter congressional offices. Print media require greater effort on the part of the reader. These news sources also demand higher public affairs interest levels, which congressional staff generally possess. Also, a variety of print media sources provides a broader view of events and issues, which helps the staff reader to assess public opinion. It seems that a few newspapers and magazines hold preference on Capitol Hill. These sources include the Washington Post, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal among newspapers, and the weekly news magazines, at least among members of Congress.

Objectives of the Current Research

It is assumed that congressional staff develop preferences for certain publications. Further it is assumed that staffers perceive some publications as more credible than others. In "an age of information glut" (Graber, 1988, p. 1) in congressional offices, some mass media sources are simply ignored, some publications are periodically skimmed, while others are read religiously by various staffers. However, it is unknown which types of aides rely upon particular publications or how they view specific print sources in terms of credibility.

This study seeks to discover which publications congressional staff read the most in order to keep informed

about politics and policy news. A second objective is to learn how certain attributes of congressional aides correlate with publication usage.

Further, this study examines the perceived credibility of various publications by top staff members. For most readers, reading a specific publication consistently may be equivalent to finding it "credible." The degree to which this is the case with senior congressional staffers is explored here.

While much research has been conducted on the use of mass media, much of it examines media use by individuals for social and personal need fulfillment (Tan, 1985). Many media use studies focus on usage of different media types rather than examining usage of sources within one medium. This same level of analysis also characterizes many media credibility studies. Again, the present study makes individual publications within the print medium the level of analysis.

Further, congressional staff have largely been overlooked in media use and credibility research as a special population. The importance of congressional staff stems from their principal function: preparing members of Congress for the numerous variety of forums in which they operate (Carlile, 1981). Reading publications to find helpful, relevant information is part of this process for staff.

The findings of this research should contribute to the body of knowledge about media use and credibility by

exploring the level of analysis of individual publications. It also focuses on an important population, senior congressional staff. The findings of this study should be of interest not only to communications researchers and political scientists, but also to publishers and political communicators who want to know the publications relied upon by congressional staffers and how those readers perceive various publications in terms of credibility.

This study builds upon previous media use and credibility research, as well as political communication and congressional studies literature.

Media Use Research and Variables

Among media use studies, Clarke and Ruggels (1970) suggested that more research attention should turn from whether broadcast or print is relied upon more, and toward the strategies used to get specific types of news. This study attempts to move somewhat in that direction by looking at the print sources used for public affairs information by legislative staff members.

Researchers have attempted to explain media use behavior with single variables and sets of correlates, though Greenberg and Kumata (1968) warned against univariate explanations of media use. Palmgreen (1979) examined political learning as affected by media use, finding that

media exposure most strongly predicted learning about national political problems. This finding held even after controlling for other variables.

Differentiating among three media consumption variables --reliance, media use and focused media use--Culbertson and Stempel (1986) found both focused and general newspaper use correlated strongly with knowledge of issues pertaining to a state tax referendum. Newspaper reliance did not correlate; newspaper-oriented media consumers appeared to actively seek information across media types, however. McLeod and McDonald (1985) found a complex relationship between political attitudes and behavior and media dependence; they determined that media effects extend far beyond simple exposure, as Culbertson and Stempel (1986) also said.

Faber, Reese and Steeves (1985), however, reported that media reliance and time spent reading or viewing are related. They said the television reliant spend more time with television news than with other media, while the newspaper reliant spend more time with newspapers. The radio reliant did not spend more time with radio, and total time spent with all media was the same regardless of medium of reliance. Subjects were working women, whose time for media use is at a premium, the researchers said.

McLeod and Becker (1981) discussed a "transactional model" for the study of media use. It entails "'audience orientations,'" perceived media credibility, "dependence on a

particular medium for a given type of content, and level of attention paid to a particular type of content" (p. 72). The present study addresses at least two of those factors in media usage. Graber (1980) said that media use depends on the context in which usage takes place. McLeod and McDonald (1985) provided additional evidence that those who purposefully read newspapers for public affairs content exhibit high levels of political participation and economic knowledge. They said the more highly educated spend less time with television, rely less on it, and use newspapers for public affairs news more; older people, motivated more greatly by the need for surveillance, use both media more.

Basil (1990) reanalyzed Roper opinion data from 1937 through 1987 with respect to primary news source. Basil examined the effects of question wording, the availability of news media and generational effects. Three forms of the Roper primary news source question were found to have been used during the years 1937-87: open- vs. closed-ended, alternatives given, and the acceptance of multiple responses. Basil determined that availability of a medium accounted for the greatest percentage of variance, followed by question wording and then birth year of respondents. Thus, problems exist when comparisons are desired among various forms of the Roper media use question.

Drew and Weaver (1990) examined media attention/exposure and four possible effects: knowledge gain, opinion

direction, opinion strength and behavior. Using data collected in a telephone survey, Drew and Weaver factor analyzed the attention measures. It appeared to them that people interested in national issues were not necessarily interested in local issues, and vice versa. They reported that media audience members paid attention to relevant information, regardless of the medium delivering it. They wrote that media attention and media exposure are two different concepts. They found neither attention to media coverage of government nor radio or newspaper exposure to predict direction of opinion. In other words, there is no "magic bullet" effect bestowed by news media upon audience opinions, at least not directly.

Variables of Media Use

Past media use studies have attempted to determine the factors which correlate with media usage patterns. Such variables range from the usual demographic factors to more complicated indices. For example, Palmgreen (1979) employed "traditional predictors"--education, age, socioeconomic status, length of residence, organization membership, interest in politics, political participation and interpersonal relationships--to explain political learning. He also sought to discern the factors' interrelationships. Age was used as a variable by Faber, Reese and Steeves

(1985); McLeod and McDonald (1985); Miller, Singletary and Chen (1988); and Drew and Weaver (1990). Education was measured by Faber, Reese and Steeves (1985); McLeod and McDonald (1985); Culbertson and Stempel (1986); Miller, Singletary and Chen (1988); and Drew and Weaver (1990).

Other demographic variables employed in media use studies include sex (Greenberg, 1966; Greenberg & Kumata, 1968; Gandy, Matabane & Omachonu, 1987; Miller, Singletary & Chen, 1988; Drew & Weaver, 1990), income (Greenberg & Kumata, 1968; Becker & Preston, 1969; Wade & Schramm, 1969; Faber, Reese & Steeves, 1985) and occupation (Wade & Schramm, 1969; Nimmo, 1970; Faber, Reese & Steeves, 1985). Graber (1988), on the other hand, used a life-style index in relation to information processing. She argued that life-style serves as a better predictor of media use than demographic characteristics. Still other factors tested include available time (Samuelson, Carter & Ruggels, 1963), religious preference (Graber, 1988), political party identification and ideology (Nimmo, 1970; Drew & Weaver, 1990).

Other measures used as independent variables include media preference (Miller, Singletary & Chen, 1988), media exposure (McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Miller, Singletary & Chen, 1988), reliance on newspapers/television (McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Culbertson & Stempel, 1986), frequency of reading/viewing (Culbertson & Stempel, 1986; Drew & Weaver,

1990), content attended to (McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Culbertson & Stempel, 1986; Drew & Weaver, 1990), and gratifications measures (McLeod & McDonald, 1985).

Berkowitz and Pritchard (1989) found that for three levels of political knowledge the demographic block of political interest, age and education was significantly related to newspaper reliance.

Media use studies have frequently focused upon the amount or type of media exposure, or use of print vs. broadcast media. The same types of independent variables that correlate with media use at that level can be applied in the study of media use at the individual publication level. However, there have been few previous studies at that level on which to more solidly base the present kind of inquiry.

A number of past studies sought the most reliable measures of media use. One media use question that has been employed and analyzed frequently is the Roper question. As mentioned above, Basil (1990) reported problems arising in changes in the wording of the Roper question over the years, limiting the reliability of comparing responses. Carter and Greenberg (1965) refined the question in "methodological purity" by forcing respondents to choose one medium, not allowing them to give more than one answer. The question then became: "From which one of the following sources do you get most of your news about what's going on in the world today--from the newspaper or radio or television or magazines

or talking to people or where?" (Greenberg, 1966). Similar single-medium choice questions were used by Rimmer and Weaver (1987). Miller, Singletary and Chen (1988) asked a form of the Roper question phrased to learn respondents' preferred medium for political information. They regarded the medium named first to indicate media preferences, with 40 percent of their sample from the general population naming newspapers first and 46 percent naming television first.

Other studies have employed media exposure measures. These questions often measured frequency of exposure to media in terms of time spent reading or viewing (Samuelson, Carter & Ruggels, 1963; Finnegan & Viswanath, 1988), "a five-point scale from never to every day" (Jeffres, Dobos & Lee, 1988, p. 578), number of newspapers or magazines read (Greenberg & Kumata, 1968; Jeffres, Dobos & Lee, 1988), or whether a medium, source or newspaper section was read "regularly" or "occasionally" (Weiss, 1974; McClure & Patterson, 1976; Finnegan & Viswanath, 1988). Miller, Singletary and Chen (1988) measured frequency of exposure as number of days per week respondents read a daily newspaper or watch the news on television, as did Drew and Weaver (1990). Clarke and Fredin (1978) utilized message discrimination--the communication of specific topic symbols--rather than "gross media use." Gaziano and McGrath (1987) measured attitudes toward news and media, using statements with an agree-disagree continuum. Clarke and Ruggels (1970) examined media channel preference

for public affairs news, that is, "perceptions of which medium provides the 'best coverage' of individual [public affairs] stories in the news" (p. 466). Drew and Weaver (1990) measured the degree of attention paid to a given subject during media exposure. Using multiple regression, Drew and Weaver (1990) found different media attention and exposure measures to be associated with different effects, with overlap where knowledge gain is concerned.

On the level of specific publications usage, the present study draws its media use measures from elements of some of the above research studies, as well as the following. Weiss (1974) provides guidance in measurement of publications used. Weiss asked American leaders in many fields about the magazines, newspapers, professional journals and columnists they read. Weiss used both open-ended "recall" questions and "'recognition'" questions, a checklist of magazines, along with whether the publications were read "'occasionally'" or "'regularly.'" Although scored by number of newspapers or magazines read, Greenberg and Kumata (1968) asked respondents "'Which, if any, newspapers [/magazines] do you read regularly or occasionally?'" (p. 643).

Media Credibility Research and Variables

In general, discerning the elements of media credibility is complex. Graber (1980) said that the information from all communications media flows together so that the various media

contents affect each other. For instance, "[p]rint news impact may be blunted by prior television and radio presentations which have removed the edge of novelty" (Graber, 1980, p. 136). Thus, previously received reports from a particular publication may affect the impact of related information received later from another print media source.

With that possibility in mind, previous studies show the various approaches taken by researchers in exploring the concept of credibility. Westley and Severin (1964) examined relative credibility among the types of media; credibility was measured in terms of "the most accurate and truthful news" (p. 326). Carter and Greenberg (1965) studied media credibility by asking for a rating of each medium--television, newspapers and radio--of the percentage of news believed (0-100 percent). Sargent (1965) conducted an experimental study of college students in which he used current news stories attributed to eight different sources, four personal names and four impersonal media names (i.e., Time, New York Times, U.S. News and World Report, and NBC-TV).

Singletary (1976) sought to determine the components of favorable news source credibility by having subjects list all the words describing what made the news source they had in mind "credible." Another set of subjects rated how consistent each word listed was with the concept of

credibility as indicated on a six-point semantic differential scale. Gunther and Lasorda (1986) used five-point scales to correlate respondents' ratings of their personal interest in four political issues with their ratings of trust in newspaper content with respect to those issues. Rimmer and Weaver (1987) made secondary analysis of American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) data from a previous credibility study.

These and other studies provide some interesting and pertinent findings from which to extrapolate variables and measurement techniques. Sargent (1965) found that personal news sources were rated higher on ethical factors--accurate, sincere, responsible and impartial--than impersonal sources. Brehm and Lipsher (cited in Jacobson, 1969) found that the closer the source and the receiver are in agreement, the more trustworthy the source is perceived to be. Jacobson (1969) discovered that people who believe newspapers the most perceive newspapers as more dynamic and authentic than radio, less objective than television and radio, and less dynamic than television.

Gunther and Lasorda (1986) found that as issue importance increased, respondents trusted issue-related information in newspapers more. They surmised that at the upper end of issue importance, highly partisan readers may trust the media less on that issue; thus, post-hoc analysis supposed a curvilinear relationship to exist. Gunther (1988)

further pursued attitude extremity and trust in media, finding trust in newspapers to be highest among the politically neutral and lowest for partisans. Gunther said perceptions of a liberal bias in the media is clearly related to political ideology. Gunther (1988) discovered:

Trust increases for the just moderate to the moderate-liberals, and then declines again as extremity moves to the staunch liberal position. But for the other side of the middle-of-the-road, trust measures take a steady downward slide as respondents report themselves more firmly conservative. (p. 286)

Graber (1988) found that subjects generally believed specific reporters or media except when a report directly contradicted personal experience. Complaints usually centered around exaggeration and a wrong emphasis. Mason and Nass (1989) reported that readers who are more strongly favorable toward the target of a "mudslinging" newspaper article are likely to view the newspaper as biased against the target, basing their interpretation upon their previously held disposition toward the target of a "cheap shot" being reported in the newspaper.

Another line of research has examined dimensions of the concept, credibility. Hovland and Weiss (1951) identified two dimensions of source credibility: trustworthiness and expertness. Shaw (1973) examined the elements that comprise credibility. Using secondary analysis, he reported three "necessary [but] not sufficient conditions for media credibility" (p. 311): trustworthiness, impartiality and completeness. Singletary (1976) found "credibility" to be a

very complex arrangement of overlapping factors. He identified six primary characteristics of source credibility through factor analysis: knowledgeability, attraction, trustworthiness, articulation, hostility and stability.

Andsager (1990) applied four sets of Gaziano and McGrath's bipolar adjectives to measure the credibility of political columnists. The measures were: credible-not credible, fair-unfair, accurate-inaccurate, and trustworthy-not trustworthy. Factor analysis yielded three main factors in regard to the larger scope of the study; however, the credibility factor consisted of credible, fair and accurate.

Investigating the degree of public confidence in the media, Gaziano (1988) compared the findings of four major surveys taken in 1985. She compared the operational definitions of credibility used in the surveys. Five of the twelve definitions were common to all four surveys: 1) accuracy, completeness, covering up facts; 2) being unbiased, balance of coverage, fairness, objectivity; 3) overall evaluations of how well media do their jobs; 4) confidence in media institutions, comparisons of media with other institutions; 5) the relationship of news media to government. Gaziano (1988) determined that the surveys taken together do not indicate a lack of public confidence in the media.

In an effort to learn the characteristics of people who perceive the media as less credible, Gaziano and McGrath

(1987) identified two personality types: "'less well informed and suspicious'" and "'sophisticated skeptics.'" The latter group is more likely to be found on Capitol Hill than the former. "Sophisticated skeptics" have higher education and income, have greater knowledge of and personal experience with news media, are very critical of the news media and likely to act on media affronts, and are generally Republican and conservative. If some congressional staff are "sophisticated skeptics" of the media in general, there may be certain publications they consider credible.

Variables of Media Credibility

Many of the independent variables used in the study of media use also have been used in the area of media credibility. The variables are discussed here in light of media credibility.

First, education serves as a "shorthand measure for intelligence" (Clarke & Fredin, 1978). Concerning media credibility, researchers found that attending college indicates perceptions of greater newspaper credibility (Westley & Severin, 1964; Greenberg, 1966; Nimmo, 1970). Sargent (1965) found that more intelligent subjects consumed more news content regularly. However, Gaziano and McGrath

(1987) discovered that "sophisticated skeptics" were more highly educated, as well.

Sex has served as an independent variable of media credibility. Past studies showed that males perceived newspapers as the most credible medium (Westley & Severin, 1964; Greenberg, 1966; Nimmo, 1970).

Also, political ideology has been used as an independent variable. Westley and Severin (1964) said that little difference existed between Republicans and Democrats as far as rating newspapers more credible is concerned. On the other hand, Gaziano and McGrath (1987) found conservatives and Republicans significantly more critical of the media. Gunther (1988) found the more ardently partisan at both ends of the ideological spectrum to be more distrustful of newspapers.

Age has been found to be a factor in perceived media credibility. Older men are more likely to view newspapers as the most credible medium (Greenberg, 1966; Nimmo, 1970).

Length of experience may influence one's views of a publication's credibility. Graber (1988) found that when personal experience and news reports conflict, individuals believe their own experience and disbelieve the media.

Media credibility has been measured in several ways in past studies. It should be kept in mind that much previous research has explored a different level of analysis than in this study. The current level of analysis--specific

publications--has received little examination in regard to media credibility. This is even more the case concerning the the specialized population under study here, senior congressional staff.

Carter and Greenberg (1965) measured media credibility with a Roper question:

If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines, and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe--the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers? (p. 30)

Jacobson (1969) used the same basic question, only leaving out magazines as an option and asking for the person's second choice.

Additionally, scales of "adjectival opposites" have been employed to measure media credibility (Jacobson, 1969). Jacobson constructed four indices--authenticity, objectivity, dynamism and respite. Rimmer and Weaver (1987) used the ASNE 12-question scale to measure various elements of credibility, similar to those used by Jacobson. Rimmer and Weaver also made use of an abbreviated scale introduced by Meyer. This simpler measure asks:

1. Is TV news/the newspaper biased or unbiased?
2. Does TV news/the newspaper tell the whole story or doesn't it tell the whole story?
3. Is TV news/the newspaper accurate or inaccurate?

4. Can TV news/the newspaper be trusted or can't it be trusted?

As for other indicants of media credibility, Shaw (1973) reported that trustworthiness, impartiality and completeness seem to most strongly influence the choice of the most believable medium. Gaziano and McGrath (1987) called "'believability'" the strictest definition of "'credibility.'"

Meyer (1988) focused on two dimensions of newspaper credibility. Meyer developed indexes of "believability" and "community affiliation." Factor analysis produced a believability index that consisted of five elements with "a still respectable .83" Cronbach's alpha (p. 573): fair-unfair, unbiased-biased, tells the whole story-doesn't tell the whole story, accurate-inaccurate, can be trusted-can't be trusted. An important aspect of Meyer's study is that it examined the credibility of a specific newspaper, the Charlotte, N.C., Observer, as rated by its readers. Meyer noted how little is known of credibility at the level of specific media and that research should be undertaken at that level.

Newhagen and Nass (1989) outlined much of the trouble with media credibility research to date. They said, first:

Unfortunately, these investigations into source credibility are of doubtful comparability, because of confusion as to whether these dimensions are predictors of perceived credibility or are dimensions of credibility itself. (pp. 277-278)

They continued:

A second problem in studies of source credibility is the definition of what a source is. A critical omission . . . is that frequently no distinction is made between a person as source as opposed to an organization as source. (p. 278)

Newhagen and Nass (1989) used two sets of sixteen identical questions in a factor analysis of principal components to construct separate scales of credibility for television and newspaper. Respondents answered on a five-point scale, positively or negatively (this measure is similar to a semantic differential scale, they reported).

Newhagen and Nass (1989) hypothesized and, in fact, found support, that people apply different criteria in judging the credibility of news on television and that of newspapers. Mass media news credibility was defined as ". . . the perception of news messages as a plausible reflection of the events they depict" (p. 278). The researchers determined that people judge the credibility of television news based on their evaluations of the on-camera individuals delivering the news, while newspapers are judged on credibility as an institution, an organizational unit, because of the distance between the readers and the message deliverers. It was concluded that the differences in the media themselves cause news consumers to invoke very different criteria, which are not comparable by nature, when asked to rate media credibility.

Previous research in both media use and media credibility have answered many questions, but it has raised a number of them, too. The problem of different criteria people use in judging the credibility of newspapers and television, as Newhagen and Nass (1989) found, is one of the most recent areas of added uncertainty. If the criteria of credibility by medium differs, then the criteria and the primary factors that constitute "credibility" may also differ between an individual newscaster vs. a specific syndicated columnist vs. CNN vs. the Wall Street Journal. This difference is indicated by the various findings and the alternative components of credibility found in the literature.

Media research needs to examine the use and credibility of specific sources within a single medium for the sake of making reliable comparisons. Use of specific publications for a particular kind of information--political and policy news by legislative staff--should receive attention because of the addition such research would make in the uses and gratifications tradition.

Media Use and Credibility Measurement

In the Present Study

The present study employs a "recognition" type question with indicators of frequency of reading various publications. A number of publications are listed in three categories by

type: newspaper, magazine and opinion journal.

Congressional staff members indicate on a one-to-five scale how often they usually read each publication from "never" to "every issue." Staffers may also name other publications they read that are not listed and, if they do so, are to indicate frequency of use.

Additionally, a "recall" type question is included under each category. Staff members are asked a variant of the Roper question. They must choose one newspaper, magazine and opinion journal that they would prefer to read if they were limited to one source per category. The publications chosen here may represent the single publication that the respondent would read if only limited time were available for reading that type of publication at an especially busy period.

To measure media credibility in this study, elements of foregoing measures are incorporated. First, respondents are asked to rate each publication on four key elements of credibility: bias, completeness, accuracy and trustworthiness (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987). These elements cover parts of the attitudinal measures used in Jacobson's (1969) indices and include factors identified by Singletary (1976), as well as by other researchers. These ratings measure perceptions of credibility toward each publication in the lists. Staffers are asked to rate each publication on a five-point scale for each of the four components. All the negative attributes are given at the low end of the

continuum, while positive attributes appear at the upper end, allowing the creation of a credibility index. The higher the rating of a publication, the more credible the source is considered. These measures of credibility have been found valid and reliable by previous researchers. This study applies these measures to specific publications rather than to a medium as whole.

Second, a believability question is asked (Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Gaziano & McGrath, 1987). Congressional staff members are asked, if they received conflicting reports from the sources, which one publication would they be most inclined to believe? This question addresses Gaziano and McGrath's (1987) "most stringent definition of 'credibility' "--believability (p. 1). This again is a form of the Roper question applied to specific publications. It is expected that respondents will closely associate believability here with the overall credibility ratings indicated above.

Demographic and Political Factors Measured

First, education indicates both intellectual ability and use of print media. Graber (1988) linked education level with intelligence and more sophisticated schema development in processing information, but noted the concomitance of topic interest in the process. Others found a correlation between education level and news comprehension (Robinson &

Levy, 1986), political information holding (Palmgreen, 1979) and public affairs knowledge (Clarke & Fredin, 1978). Clarke and Fredin (1978) called education "a shorthand measure of ability" (p. 146).

Researchers also have noted a correlation between use of print media (rather than broadcast) as a primary source for political news and information, and education (Samuelson, Carter & Ruggels, 1963; Greenberg, 1966; Robinson, 1967; Wade & Schramm, 1969; Nimmo, 1970; Clarke & Fredin, 1978; Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989). However, it is uncertain whether the less educated actually learn less from news media, because they rely on television instead of newspapers, or because they simply lack interest in public affairs (Reese & Miller, 1981; Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Miller, Singletary & Chen, 1988), at least in terms of strict print vs. broadcast reliance.

Congressional staff are generally well educated, many having legal training (Malbin, 1977; Henschen & Sidlow, 1986). Level of education may indicate the use of particular publications by congressional staff as part of their information seeking.

Second, race may bear upon the media sources used by congressional staff members. Wade and Schramm (1969) found that white males were more likely to use print media for public affairs information. Similarly, Graber (1988) said that ethnic origin served as a predictor of information

selection, although she did not equate ethnic origin with race. Nonetheless, race is considered a potential factor in determining media use.

Third, religious preference may influence publication selection among congressional staff. Scheb (1989) found that Protestants and Catholics tend to identify themselves more as conservatives, while those of other or no religious affiliation identify themselves more often as ideologically liberal. Graber (1988) noted that religious preference influences information selection. Thus, religious preference is solicited here.

Fourth, sex has been found to be a significant factor in explaining media use (Wade & Schramm, 1969). Samuelson, Carter and Ruggels (1963) controlled for sex by selecting an all-male sample, while Faber, Reese and Steeves (1985) studied a sample of working women. Gandy, Matabane and Omachonu (1987) found that males had more knowledge about a specific issue due to seeking information from the media. Sex may also explain differences in media use among congressional staff.

Fifth, age is likely to account for media usage differences among congressional staff (Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989). Staff on Capitol Hill tend to be "young" (Fox & Hammond, 1977; Malbin, 1977; Henschen & Sidlow, 1986). Graber (1988) found that younger people pay less attention to news, partially due to lack of experience with which to

process the information, as well as lack of time (Samuelson, Carter & Ruggels, 1963, also noted the time factor).

However, even young congressional staff members are likely to use media sources as part of their jobs, especially if they serve in senior positions. Although Greenberg (1966) found that age does not predict media use, his finding came in the context of print vs. broadcast usage, not that of specific publications. He discovered, however, that younger, well educated males preferred the newspaper as an information source. Thus, age is taken into account in the present study.

Sixth, length of experience on Capitol Hill may serve as an important variable. Graber (1988) found that experience affects attention to news and the sophistication of schemas. Noted earlier was the fact of exposure to and experience in a field increasing one's expertise in that area. Some congressional staffers are policy specialists, while others are generalists. Many staffers may have limited experience (because of their relative youth, as Graber suggested) and view Hill experience as a credential for future career moves (Malbin, 1977; Salisbury & Shepsle, 1981). It seems that with more Capitol Hill experience, staffers would learn which publications to read in order to maximize their time and effort. It may be reasonably expected that staffers with more Hill experience will have developed stronger media source preferences, although these may change somewhat with

alterations in position and areas of responsibility.

People with more congressional experience are more likely to have dealt with the media firsthand. They also work every day where reporters come to gather much of the national news. Staff often know about policy developments and emerging debates in Congress before they are reported in the news. If the media are perceived as getting the story wrong, knowledgeable staffers are likely to believe what their own knowledge and experience dictates.

Seventh, political ideology likely influences the choices of print media sources made by congressional staffers. Earlier, it was said that reading the New York Times, the Washington Post and intellectual journals tend to be associated with more liberal views, while reading the Wall Street Journal and newsweekly magazines are associated with more conservative views (Weiss, 1974). Within the decade of the 1980s, Washington became the home to another daily newspaper which is recognized as a more conservative paper, the Washington Times. Phil Kent (personal communication, March 22, 1989) said that the Times had gained some respect on the Hill by the mid-1980s.

Congressional staff members are quite loyal to their boss, having close personal ties to the member (Salisbury & Shepsle, 1981; Freudenburg, 1986; Henschen & Sidlow, 1986).

They usually share ideological and partisan perspectives (Malbin, 1977).

Thus, accounting for ideology should contribute toward understanding congressional staff media use. The variable ideology is measured here in two ways. First, as Scheb (1989) found most liberals identifying themselves as Democrats and most conservatives as Republicans, party affiliation is the first measure. Second, self-identification along a seven-point continuum from "very liberal" to "very conservative" is the other measure of ideology (Erikson, Luttbeg & Tedin, 1988).

Eighth, geographical area represented by the member may bear upon staff media use. Certain media sources are likely to be preferred by congressional staff in accordance with the part of the country the member represents. This study asks for the state represented by the member and categorizes states into Census Bureau regions (Byerly, 1990).

Ninth, the chamber of Congress in which a staff member serves may affect media use. Senators represent entire states, while representatives serve on behalf of congressional districts, which are usually smaller in size and number of constituents (although there are a few at-large House members). Such institutional differences may influence House and Senate staff publication selection.

Finally, the position held by a senior staffer is likely to bear upon the publications usually read. LDs often are

legislative generalists in terms of heading a member's legislative program, but also specialists concerning the issue areas for which they are responsible. AAs and press secretaries are usually generalists, but have somewhat different information needs.

Hypotheses

The level of analysis here is the individual publication. The population of study is senior level congressional staff. Because the data gathered here represent a primary data set, it is fully described in the fifth chapter, giving a composite view of sample respondents and their preferred and most believed publications. Evidence of strong relationships among movements of variables will assist in further analysis. Close attention is given to three key variables as they relate to media use and credibility: House vs. Senate, Republican vs. Democrat, and AA vs. LD vs. press secretary.

Two general hypotheses are tested in this study. One concerns media use, and the other relates to media credibility.

The first hypothesis is:

Congressional staff differ in publication usage in terms of political party affiliation, House/Senate service and staff position.

The second hypothesis is:

Congressional staff differ in perceptions of publication credibility in terms of political party affiliation, House/Senate service and staff position.

The data are expected to indicate that House and Senate staffers differ in their media behavior because of the two-year vs. six-year terms, making vastly different election time frames under which they respectively work. A common complaint in the House is members are constantly running for re-election, whereas the longer Senate term gives senators more "breathing room" and time to focus on broader individual policy interests. The priorities of top staff necessarily reflect those of the member for whom they work. Also, representatives tend toward more provincial perspectives because they usually represent districts smaller than the entire states represented by senators.

Republican and Democratic staff are expected to differ in their media behavior, not so much in publications used, but in terms of perceived credibility. Most key staff members probably read the Washington Post regularly, for example, but Democrats probably will rate it higher on credibility measures than will Republicans. This expectation is based on the generally accepted assumption that Democrats tend to be more liberal ideologically and Republicans more conservative. Although both are likely to read some of the same publications, their perspectives regarding those

sources' credibility are likely to vary systematically.

The media behavior of top staffers (AAs, LDs and press secretaries) likely differs as a function of job duties and the information needs of people in these three positions. The AA's focus is on making sure the office runs smoothly and all the member's policies are carried out (Senate Republican Policy Committee list). Additionally, the AA usually serves as the top political strategist for the member. The LD manages the legislative staff and is in charge of developing the member's legislative program (Senate Republican Policy Committee list). The press secretary functions as the communications director, providing liaison with the news media in Washington and at home, and serving as a resource for ideas. The press secretary must remain informed on a wide range of fronts. As a result of the varied responsibilities of these three staff positions, use of the print media to fulfill their job duties is likely to differ from one position to another.

CHAPTER IV

METHODS

The present study should shed light on senior congressional staff print media use habits and the staffers' perception of the credibility of specific publications. These aspects of study should combine to contribute to an area that has not been well explored.

Sampling Procedure

There are 435 representatives in the House and 100 senators in the U.S. Congress. The entire population of personal staffers who serve in the top three positions-- administrative assistants (AAs), legislative directors (LDs), and press secretaries--is relatively small at a little more than 1,600. In some offices, however, one person may be responsible for two of these jobs, or two people may share the responsibilities of the third position. Still, these cases are the exception.

Some staffers who handle these three key functions may use different titles. For instance, the person responsible for AA duties may go by the title chief of staff, or the LD may be known as the chief counsel. Nevertheless, AA, LD, and press secretary are more commonly used in Capitol Hill offices. Differences in title should have no effect on the outcome of this study, and the top three personal staff

positions were chosen as the population to be studied here. These aides are usually responsible for close consultation with members of Congress. They most likely read the mass media to remain informed about political developments that affect their areas of professional responsibility.

A staff member in one of the top three positions in each of the 535 personal offices was selected to complete a questionnaire. The Spring 1991 U.S. House of Representatives and July 1991 U.S. Senate telephone directories served as the sampling frame. These directories provided a list of House members and senators, along with their office locations. As a control measure, only personal staff members, and no committee staffers, were surveyed. All 535 personal offices were included because this size sample, if all subjects responded, would yield a sampling error of approximately two percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983).

A single congressional office represented a sampling unit in this study. From the sampling frame (alphabetical lists of House and Senate members), a random start, systematic sampling technique was employed. The office at the random starting point had its AA selected into the sample. The LD was chosen in the next office on the list. The third office listed from the starting point had its press secretary selected into the sample. The selection sequence was repeated beginning with the fourth office, with sample

selection made according to staff position: AA, LD, press secretary. Again, one staffer in every House and Senate personal office comprised the sample of 535. Sample subjects were selected on the basis of position with no attempt to identify the individuals.

Data Collection

To gather data regarding congressional staff media use and perceived credibility, a mail survey was employed. This method seemed the most cost-efficient and reasonable approach for this project. Few personnel are needed to implement a mail survey (Dillman, 1978). Questionnaires were delivered personally in an effort to hold down costs and increase the participation rate (Babbie, 1989).

Second, mail surveys can be executed fairly quickly, from two weeks (Cox, 1966) to eight weeks or longer (Dillman, 1978), including the complete implementation phase from having materials printed through two follow-up mailings.

Third, mail surveys can achieve respectable questionnaire response rates. Depending upon factors such as incentives and follow-up measures used, mail surveys can yield response rates into the 70 percent range (Dillman, 1978; Goyder, 1985). Ryan (1978) concluded that follow-up mailings with elite populations can increase participation rates significantly, and such follow-up contacts are essential when the initial mailing's rate of return is low.

While Dillman (1978) said that specialized populations respond to surveys to a higher degree than do general populations, congressional staff seem to be one specialized population that responds less often. Several respondents with whom this writer is personally acquainted said they usually do not take time to respond to surveys. Senior staff members' time is at a premium, and the number of proprietary surveys of staff opinions has increased during recent years. Additionally, some offices have implemented policies of not responding to surveys at all.

In order to maximize response to a mail survey, a number of steps can be taken. However, the strategy consists of three key measures: "minimize the costs for responding, maximize the rewards for doing so, and establish trust that those rewards will be delivered" (Dillman, 1978, p. 12). This is Dillman's Total Design Method (TDM) of survey research. Kimball (1961) suggested that simple incentives to participate are likely to be most effective because "each additional incentive has a lower incremental advantage when used in combination with other incentives than it would have by itself" (p. 64). Thus, incentives were used in moderation (money was not enclosed as a reward, for example) and were practical or less tangibly rewarding in nature.

Steps were taken to reduce the costs to the respondent. The questionnaire booklet was made to appear fairly brief by leaving plenty of open space and keeping the booklet to 12

pages, including the front cover and introductory letter just inside. The 12-page questionnaire length conformed to Dillman's (1978) finding that 10-to-12 page surveys are the maximum length before which response rate rapidly declines. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thus, the only cost to subjects was the time involved to complete the questionnaire.

Also, questions were worded and arranged to reduce the respondent's effort. In most cases, respondents had only to circle a number on a one-to-five scale or write a publication name on a blank line. Chances for embarrassment were reduced by informing respondents that the demographic and personal data were only for statistical purposes and would be confidential. Respondent names were not to be written on the booklets.

Rewards for participation were included. The introductory letter inside the booklet's front cover and the questionnaire section each included a statement of appreciation to the respondent. It was stressed that the respondent was one of a select few chosen to participate, as well as the importance of that individual's participation. Also, respondents could receive a copy of the results if they enclosed a business card in the return envelope (and kept separate from the questionnaire, of course). However, Nitecki (1978) reported finding no significant effect of a

nonmonetary incentive on response rate for a mailed questionnaire.

Trust was established by identifying the study with the University of Tennessee. Brunner and Carroll (1969) found that the use of university letterhead increased response by better than 20 percent over a survey with an unidentified cover letter. However, Nitecki (1978) concluded that the effects of prestigious sponsorship were insignificant in mailed questionnaire response rates. Still, the introductory letter printed inside the front cover of the questionnaire here was on University of Tennessee School of Journalism letterhead, based on the idea that identification with a university would indicate the non-proprietary nature of the project.

Dillman (1978) set forth guidelines for writing and organizing cover letters. He said the first paragraph should accomplish two purposes: "(1) explain what the study is about and (2) convince the respondent that the study is useful" (p. 165). The second paragraph should persuade respondents that their response is important to the success of the study. The third paragraph should promise confidentiality of the data. The fourth paragraph should reinforce the usefulness of the study to society. Next should come a statement that the surveyor is willing to answer respondents' questions. Finally, a statement of thanks should be included. The letter printed in this

questionnaire followed these guidelines, along with similar principles offered by Comstock and McCombs (1981) to increase survey response.

A master list of room numbers was made for each of the six House and Senate office buildings. The list also included, by job title, the person to be surveyed and a control number that corresponded to a number on the back of each return envelope. Having control numbers allowed the office number to be checked off the list once the questionnaire was returned so respondents who participated the first time would not be contacted in follow-up. The list was arranged in numerical order by room number to aid in distribution.

A questionnaire booklet was personally delivered to each office for completion and return by mail, using a self-addressed, stamped envelope. During the time between publication of the telephone directories and implementation of the survey, several changes in congressional membership occurred. For instance, a couple of members died and others retired for health reasons or to seek election to another office. As these members were replaced, the assignment of office suites changed. Office locations change as more senior members bid for more desirable window views or closer proximity to the Capitol or to a certain committee room. In the cases in which changes were encountered during distribution, questionnaire delivery was made according to

the job title originally selected for a given room number. In effect, the master list became the sampling frame because the list of office numbers was given precedent over the list of congressional members, which was not consulted following the initial sample selection process.

Survey implementation took place at the end of the 102nd Congress, first session and during the Christmas recess. That is, the survey extended from November through December 1991. That period included the initial delivery of 535 questionnaires, one per office, and a second drop-off among those who did not participate during the first round, as determined by control numbers on returned envelopes. When the questionnaires were taken to each office, receptionists were asked if the person who was to complete it, referred to by title, was available. The typical response was that the individual was "in a meeting" or "on the telephone right now." If this response was given, the questionnaire was handed to the receptionist, who was asked to give the booklet to the AA, LD, or press secretary. The desired individual was seen in person more often on the House side than on the Senate side. When the person to be surveyed was seen, a brief explanation was given about the study, and the person was asked to take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it in the accompanying envelope.

Eight pretested questionnaires indicated that the survey booklet should take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. This estimated time frame was given to the subjects or the receptionists, as well.

From the first 535 questionnaires delivered, 152 were completed and returned. This represented a 28.4 percent response rate. The follow-up delivery yielded 48 additional surveys returned, which increased the total response to 37.4 percent. (Additionally, seven offices returned the questionnaire or sent a letter indicating they do not participate in surveys.)

Relatively low questionnaire response rates, although undesired, have been reported in the literature. Weaver-Lariscy and Tinkham (1991) analyzed data from a survey with a 43 percent total response rate. They conceded that this rate would not be high for a survey of the general population, but it was in line with "many studies of active participants in the electoral process" (p. 436). These researchers cited Howell's (1982) 38 percent response rate of electoral candidates, as well as Carlson, Burrell and Dolan's (1989) survey of state political convention delegates that yielded an 18.1 percent response rate. Wearden and Endres (1991) achieved a 44 percent participation rate among the specialized population of communications journal reviewers. Chang, Voelker and Lee (1990) attained a 51.6 percent return rate in a three-mailing survey of newspaper editors, using a

six-page questionnaire. Follow-up contacts with nonrespondents discovered, among other reasons for nonparticipation, that lack of time, too long a questionnaire, and complaints of generally receiving too many questionnaires were cited as reasons. Rentner and Bissland (1990) achieved a 36.8 percent response rate to a mail survey of public relations professionals. Kanervo and Kanervo (1989) attained 35.4 percent participation in a mailed questionnaire survey sent to a sample of city administrators nationwide. The present study's response rate of 37.4 percent, then, is in line with previously reported studies in the literature.

This rate of participation was considered acceptable for this extremely busy, over-surveyed, specialized population. There is no good time to survey top-level congressional staff because they always have many duties to perform and carry heavy loads of responsibility. This survey was conducted during extreme times, in terms of demands on staff time. At the end of a session of Congress, there is a strong push to clear much legislation from the calendar. The end of the first session of the 102nd Congress was no exception, with several appropriations bills, a major transportation bill, and talk of tax legislation all to be addressed before adjournment. After Thanksgiving, Congress was in recess, but many staffers complained that they were still busy trying to catch up on all the work they had postponed during the end-

of-session push. Also, many top staffers left Washington during December. Some staff members took vacations, while others traveled to the member's district or state to do field work. Members often use recess periods to conduct field hearings of their committees, to hold "town meetings" with their constituents, or to launch a major initiative back home. Top staffers frequently are called upon to assist in these efforts.

The Survey Instrument

The questionnaire itself (see Appendix) was designed along the guidelines of Dillman's (1978) TDM method. This included grouping related questions together and seeking orderly and logical flow of thought from question to question and from section to section.

A booklet format was employed, folding three 8 1/2 inch by 11 inch sheets of paper in half to form a booklet with 12 total pages, counting front and back. The front cover had printed in large, bold letters, "Congressional Staff Questionnaire." The front cover also bore an eagle from clip art, the same eagle design from the Great Seal of the United States.

Inside the front cover was printed an introductory letter on University of Tennessee letterhead. It bore the signature of the project director. As discussed above, the letter sought to enlist the participation of the recipient.

The first section of the questionnaire dealt with print media use. Media use questions generally followed the format of a "recognition" type used by Weiss (1974). Checklists were given of three types of publications: newspapers, magazines and opinion journals. Six newspapers were listed, 12 magazines, and six journals of opinion. The publications named in each list were chosen in accordance with the scholarly literature, a review of publications in The Standard Periodical Directory (1989) and personal observation on Capitol Hill. The selection was generally confirmed as valid by pretest. Also, each list included an "Other" with a line so respondents had the opportunity to insert additional publications not listed but usually read by an individual.

Respondents were asked, "About how often do you usually read the following [type of publication]?" They were instructed to circle a number on a one-to-five scale with respect to frequency of use: one meaning "never," two meaning "seldom," three meaning "sometimes," four meaning "often," and five meaning "every issue." This kind of measure was chosen in order to focus on general patterns of publication preference. Additionally, a one-to-five scale would overcome the varying frequencies of publication found within and between lists.

Following each publication usage list, a derivative of the Roper question was posed. Respondents were asked, "If

you could use ONLY ONE [type of publication] from this list, which ONE [type of publication] would you choose?" This forced-choice question is similar to that used by Rimmer and Weaver (1987).

Next followed a media credibility section. Respondents were instructed to rate each publication on four scales and to skip any publication with which they did not feel familiar enough to rate. The abbreviated scale, introduced by Meyer and used by Rimmer and Weaver (1987), was presented as a one-to-five scale for each measure. The measures were: biased/unbiased, doesn't tell whole story/tells whole story, inaccurate/accurate, and not trustworthy/trustworthy. Subjects were asked to "Rate these [type of publication] from 1 to 5 on how [positive attribute] or [negative attribute] each is." All the negative attributes were given at the low end of the scale and the positive attributes at the upper end to allow the construction of a credibility index for each publication; the higher the rating, the more credible the publication. Respondents rated the newspapers on all four aspects of credibility, then magazines on the four aspects, and then the opinion journals on the four components.

An additional question followed each grouping of publication types in the media credibility section. Respondents were asked, "If you received conflicting reports from these [types of publication], which one [type of publication] would you be most inclined to believe?" This

question, employing Gaziano and McGrath's (1987) strictest definition of credibility--"believability"--forced the choice of a single newspaper, magazine and opinion journal that respondents reported they would most likely believe, or extend the most credibility to, in the face of conflicting information in other publications of the same type.

The final section of the questionnaire asked for demographic and political data to be used in the statistical interpretation of the results. Respondents were reminded that their individual responses in this section would be held in confidence and were for statistical purposes. These questions included the congressional body worked for, the state represented by the member, years and months of total Capitol Hill experience, sex, years of education and degrees held, age, race, religion, political party affiliation, ideology ("very liberal" to "very conservative" on a seven-point scale) and professional position.

The back page included, besides the last two demographic/personal questions, a boldly printed "thank you" statement and space for additional comments. Also printed at the bottom of the last page was the return address, just in case the accompanying return envelope became separated from the questionnaire booklet.

Data Analysis

Because of the cost and effort involved in compiling a new data set using survey research and involving a sample of this size, a number of demographic and political factors were measured. This information helps provide a full description of the respondents, given the exploratory aspects of this study among an elite population. The SAS statistical software package was used for analyzing the data by computer (SAS Institute Inc., 1985).

Initial analysis entailed the examination of central tendency and dispersion measures among the data. All basic first moment information was noted, and much of it is reported in the next chapter. Correlative diagnostic tests were made in order to assess multicollinearity among independent variables and identify potential, related problems. Further correlative analysis was made to test the hypotheses for mean value differences of subgroups, as well as distributional analysis, and findings are reported in the results chapter.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

The 200 respondents fairly resembled the original sample in terms of the three key variables: congressional body, political party and staff position. Originally, the sample included about 19 percent from the Senate and 81 percent from the House. As seen in Table 1, the actual response was about 80.5 percent from the House, 14.5 percent from the Senate and 5 percent who did not indicate the body of Congress.

For political party, the original sample contained about 61 percent Democrats and 39 percent Republicans. The actual response yielded 50 percent Democrats, 39.5 percent Republicans, 7 percent Independents, and 3.5 percent with unspecified party affiliations. The Independent response poses somewhat of a question as to what those respondents meant regarding their party affiliation because all but one member of Congress are Republicans or Democrats; one House member calls himself a Socialist but essentially votes with the Democratic majority.

By position on staff, the sample drawn originally included a third in each of the three top staff positions. The response was 29.5 percent from administrative assistants, 23 percent from legislative directors and 43 percent from press secretaries. Thus, the top two positions were underrepresented somewhat and the press position

Table 1. Percentages of Nominal Demographic and Political Variables

Variable	N	%
Congressional body		
House	161	80.5
Senate	29	14.5
No response	10	5.0
Political party		
Democrat	100	50.0
Republican	79	39.5
Independent	14	7.0
Other	2	1.0
No response	5	2.5
Position		
Admin. Assistant	59	29.5
Legis. Director	46	23.0
Press secretary	86	43.0
No response	9	4.5
Highest degree		
BA/BS	115	57.5
MA/MS	36	18.0
JD	21	10.5
MBA	5	2.5
Ph.D.	13	6.5
Other	3	1.5
No response	7	3.5
Religion		
Protestant	97	48.5
Catholic	54	27.0
Jewish	18	9.0
Other	16	8.0
No response	15	7.5
Race		
Black	5	2.5
Hispanic	1	0.5
Oriental	2	1.0
White	184	92.0
Other	1	0.5
No response	7	3.5

Table 1, Continued

Variable	N	%
Region		
Northeast	36	18.0
Midwest	44	22.0
South	69	34.5
West	34	17.5
No response	18	9.0
Sex		
Female	50	25.0
Male	146	73.0
No response	4	2.0

overrepresented among respondents. Almost 5 percent of respondents did not indicate their staff position.

Regarding highest degree earned, 57.5 percent of respondents held bachelor's degrees. Eighteen percent of the sample had master's degrees, with an additional 2.5 percent holding the master's in business administration (MBA). Ten and a half percent of respondents had earned law degrees; 6.5 percent held Ph.D.'s, with 1.5 percent having earned other kinds of degrees. No response to this question was given by 3.5 percent of survey participants.

With respect to religious affiliation, 48.5 percent of respondents were Protestant, and 27 percent were Catholic. Nine percent of respondents were Jewish, and 8 percent

belonged to other religions; 7.5 percent of respondents did not respond to this question.

Concerning racial and ethnic backgrounds, 92 percent of respondents were white. Blacks comprised 2.5 percent of respondents, Hispanics 0.5 percent, and Orientals 1 percent. Other ethnic backgrounds accounted for .5 percent of respondents, with 3.5 percent giving no response to the question.

Every region of the country was represented in the sample, with a plurality of respondents working in offices of Southern legislators. Southern respondents comprised 34.5 percent of the total, Midwesterners 22 percent, Northeasterners 18 percent, and 17.5 percent from the West. Nine percent gave no indication of geographic area of representation. Regions were determined using Census Bureau criteria.

Males accounted for 73 percent of respondents, and females comprised 25 percent. Two percent of respondents gave no indication of gender. This response distribution compares with 65 percent male and 35 percent female in the top three positions among the population (Shapiro & Touya, 1990; Twenhafel, 1991).

Table 2 shows the results of continuous demographic and political variables. The mean age of respondents was 35 years, with the mode being 30 years. On average, respondents had worked on Capitol Hill 6.3 years; the mode was 3 years.

Table 2. Means of Continuous Demographic and Political Variables

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Mode	Range	N
Age	35	8.93	30	21-64	190
Years in Congress	6.3	5.42	3	<1-30	194
Years of Education	16.8	1.57	16	12-23	78
Ideology	4	1.45	5	1-7	197

The mean years of education was 16.8, and the mode was 16 years. Ideologically, the sample mean was the middle value, 4, on a 1-to-7 scale. The mode of 5 indicated that the respondents were ideologically moderate, on the average, with a slight conservative bent.

The four continuous variables, when examined by party affiliation, congressional body and staff position, indicate several statistically significant differences among means. For AAs, the mean age was 40.7 years; LDs and press secretaries (PSs) were both 32 years old on average ($p < .0000$). No practical or statistical significance was found for the age variable either between Republicans (34 years) and Democrats (35 years) or those in the House (34.5 years) and those serving in the Senate (35 years).

Years worked in Congress (not necessarily worked in the same office) yielded significant differences for staff

position, but not in relation to political party or congressional body. The mean number of years on Capitol Hill for AAs (9.5 years) was a statistically significant difference from LDs (6.9 years) at the .02 level, and from PSs (3.9 years) at the .0001 level. Press secretaries and LDs differed significantly in years worked in Congress at the .001 level. No significant difference was found between the means of Republicans (7 years) and Democrats (6 years) or between House workers (6 years) and Senate staff (7 years).

Concerning years of education, LDs were the most highly educated among the three top positions, with a mean of 17.75 years. This figure differed significantly from AAs (16.39 years) at the .05 level; however, LDs did not differ significantly in years of education from PSs (16.62 years). Additionally, the mean education years of PSs and AAs was not a statistically significant difference. No significant difference was found between mean years of education for Republicans (16.7 years) and Democrats (16.8 years). Likewise, there was no difference statistically between House staff (16.7 years) and Senate workers (17.5 years) with respect to years of education.

With regard to ideology, a significant difference was found for political parties, as was expected ($p < .0001$). Republicans rated themselves as more conservative (mean=5), while Democrats considered themselves to be more liberal (mean=3). No statistical difference was found for the

ideology measure between House (3.99) and Senate (4.29) ratings. Neither was any difference indicated in terms of staff position (AAs=3.97; LDs=3.98; PSs=4.06).

A correlation matrix was generated to identify which independent variables were highly correlated with one another. Table 3 shows the results of this procedure. Pearson correlation coefficients indicated statistically significant collinearity in nine instances. No significant collinearity problems were found among staff position, body of Congress, and political party--the three variables of primary concern in this study. The sets of variables with significant levels of intercorrelation were: highest degree held and congressional body, years of education and years worked on Capitol Hill, highest degree and years of education, age and years worked in Congress, age and years of education, political party and race (all Republican respondents were white), ideology and political party affiliation, staff position and years worked on Capitol Hill, and position and age.

Media Use

Generally, most senior Hill staff would choose, if forced to select one publication from each list, the Washington Post among newspapers, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report among magazines and New Republic (closely followed by National Review) among opinion journals. Tables

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients for Demographic and Political Variables

	Cong Body	Region	Yrs Hill	Sex	Yrs Educ	Degree	Age	Race	Religion	Party	Ideology	Position
Cong Body	1.0000											
Region	-0.0024 (.0)	1.0000										
Yrs Hill	-0.0758 (.9850)	-0.0048 (.0)	1.0000									
Sex	0.1087 (.5586)	-0.1351 (.9705)	-0.1432 (.0)	1.0000								
Yrs Educ	0.1390 (.4005)	0.1715 (.2953)	0.2701 (.2669)	-0.0524 (.0)	1.0000							
Degree	0.2557 (.2812)	0.0456 (.1826)	0.1364 (.0338)	-0.0758 (.6859)	0.6892 (.0)	1.0000						
Age	-0.0418 (.0449)	0.0255 (.7250)	0.4780 (.2903)	-0.2187 (.5582)	0.3171 (.0001)	0.1004 (.0)	1.0000					
Race	0.0457 (.7244)	-0.0716 (.5804)	0.0272 (.8339)	0.0819 (.5269)	-0.2171 (.0901)	-0.1769 (.1689)	-0.2022 (.1150)	1.0000				
Religion	-0.2123 (.9977)	-0.0836 (.5183)	-0.1103 (.3933)	0.0163 (.9000)	-0.0432 (.7389)	-0.0827 (.5231)	-0.0588 (.6499)	-0.0538 (.6779)	1.0000			
Party	0.1122 (.3855)	0.0611 (.6370)	0.0767 (.5534)	-0.2431 (.0570)	0.0006 (.9964)	-0.0367 (.7773)	0.0335 (.7960)	-0.2572 (.0435)	-0.1645 (.2014)	1.0000		
Ideology	0.0423 (.7441)	0.0540 (.6768)	0.1013 (.4335)	-0.1949 (.1289)	-0.0898 (.4876)	-0.0858 (.5075)	0.0854 (.5094)	0.0881 (.4958)	-0.1903 (.1385)	0.5723 (.0001)	1.0000	
Position	0.2275 (.0753)	0.0055 (.9660)	-0.4314 (.0005)	0.0930 (.4722)	-0.0804 (.5345)	-0.0954 (.4608)	-0.4386 (.0004)	0.2021 (.1153)	-0.0434 (.7378)	-0.0258 (.8424)	-0.0717 (.5798)	1.0000 (.0)

4, 5 and 6 report overall preferences for each type of publication, based on the more stringent forced-choice measure. When overall usage was gauged by combining responses of reading publication "often" or "every issue," the three newspapers listed first on Table 4 remained the same. The Washington Times moved above the "Others" category, and USA Today edged Christian Science Monitor by half of a percentage point.

"Other" newspapers were those listed on the questionnaire by respondents. Twenty-seven different newspapers were listed, most being state and local district newspapers from around the country. Four newspapers were listed most frequently in the "Other" category. The Los Angeles Times was named by nine respondents, the Chicago Tribune by six, Newsday and Roll Call (a twice-weekly Capitol Hill newspaper) by three respondents each.

For magazines, the less stringent measure of frequency of use left the top three magazines in Table 5 in place. However, National Journal moved to fourth place, ahead of U.S. News and World Report, and Business Week came next, ahead of The Economist by a half percent. From there, the order became Forbes, Fortune, Insight, Atlantic Monthly and New Dimensions on the News.

For opinion journals, the order remained nearly the same as in Table 6, except Human Events moved ahead of Nation, and American Spectator was not taken into account in the less

Table 4. Overall Staff Preference of Newspapers by Rank

Newspaper	Rank	N	%
Washington Post	1	134	67.0
Wall Street Journal	2	24	12.0
New York Times	3	23	11.5
Others (various papers)	4	6	3.0
Washington Times	5	4	2.0
USA Today	6	1	0.5

Table 5. Overall Staff Preference of Magazines by Rank

Magazine	Rank	N	%
Congressional Quarterly	1	92	46.0
Newsweek	2	28	14.0
Time	3	23	11.5
U.S. News and World Report	4	20	10.0
The Economist	5	12	6.0
National Journal	6	4	2.0
Fortune	7.5	2	1.0
Insight	7.5	2	1.0
Forbes	10	1	0.5
Business Week	10	1	0.5
Atlantic Monthly	10	1	0.5

Table 6. Overall Staff Preference of Opinion Journals by Rank

Opinion Journal	Rank	N	%
New Republic	1	54	27.0
National Review	2	46	23.0
Nation	3	16	8.0
Human Events	4	10	5.0
Progressive	5	3	1.5
Commentary	6	2	1.0
American Spectator	7	1	0.5

stringent configuration. Several respondents listed "other" journals of opinion in addition to those named in the questionnaire. These included: American Spectator (two entries), Washington Monthly (listed twice), In These Times, Ripon Forum, Foreign Policy and Foreign Affairs (each listed once).

Newspaper Usage

Frequency of newspaper use, when analyzed in light of the three independent variables of interest, differed significantly among sample respondents. Table 7 gives the results of significance tests of means (t-tests) by political party for frequency of newspaper use. Democrats read the Washington Post and the New York Times significantly more frequently than Republicans, although Republicans read the Post very often. On the other hand, GOP staffers read the

Table 7. Frequency of Use of Newspapers as a Function of Political Party*

Newspapers	Democrat N=99		Republican N=77		p
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Christian Science Monitor	2.15	1.08	1.95	1.04	N.S.
New York Times	3.57	1.10	2.87	1.19	.0001
USA Today	2.26	1.10	2.26	1.01	N.S.
Wall Street Journal	3.23	1.15	3.81	1.04	.0001
Washington Post	4.87	0.51	4.59	0.95	.05
Washington Times	2.19	1.11	3.69	1.18	.0001

* 1=Never Read, 5=Read Every Issue

Wall Street Journal and the Washington Times to a significantly greater degree than Democratic staff. Cross-tabulation of the most preferred newspaper, using the forced-choice response, by party indicated the Washington Post to be the primary choice among both parties, followed by the New York Times for Democrats and the Wall Street Journal for Republicans (see Table 8). The distribution was the same as the usage as shown in Table 7: More Democrats chose the New York Times and the Washington Post than did Republicans, and more Republicans selected the Wall Street Journal as their preferred newspaper.

As a function of congressional body, there was only one significant difference in the means of newspaper frequency of use (see Table 9). Staff members in the Senate read the New York Times more frequently than House staff, in statistical

Table 8. Distribution of Most Frequently Read Newspapers by Political Party*

Newspapers	Democrat		Republican	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Chr. Sci. Mon.	0	(0)	0	(0)
New York Times	15	(9)	6	(3)
USA Today	1	(.6)	0	(0)
Wall St. Journal	3	(2)	19	(11)
Washington Post	77	(45)	46	(27)
Washington Times	0	(0)	4	(2)
Other	1	(.6)	1	(.6)
Total	97	(57)	76	(43)

* N=173

Table 9. Frequency of Use of Newspapers as a Function of Congressional Body*

Newspapers	House N=160		Senate N=28		p
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Christian Science Monitor	2.17	1.13	2.15	1.06	N.S.
New York Times	3.22	1.21	3.69	1.04	.05
USA Today	2.24	1.06	2.36	0.95	N.S.
Wall Street Journal	3.48	1.15	3.69	0.93	N.S.
Washington Post	4.76	0.71	4.76	0.79	N.S.
Washington Times	2.85	1.37	3.32	1.39	N.S.

* 1=Never Read, 5=Read Every Issue

significance terms. The forced-choice newspaper measure yielded nonsignificant results in cross-tabulation. Further, a third of the cells contained fewer than five observations, calling the validity of the chi square statistic in that instance into question.

By position, the frequency of reading various newspapers differed in some instances for PSs. That is, the mean frequency of newspaper use for press secretaries was significantly greater than those of AAs and LDs for the Christian Science Monitor, New York Times and USA Today (see Table 10). On the whole, PSs read all newspapers more frequently than AAs or LDs. Administrative assistants and LDs seemed to rely on the Washington Post and Wall Street Journal, and read other newspapers less often. Multiple t-tests were used for means testing here. Although employing multiple t-tests increases the likelihood of incorrectly rejecting a null hypothesis (Kleinbaum, Kupper, & Muller, 1985), it was determined that the risk was not so great as to artificially raise the significance level above an acceptable alpha level in this case. Cross-tabulation of staff position by choice of the top three newspapers showed the frequency distribution to be statistically insignificant. Majorities of respondents in all three positions chose the Washington Post above all other newspapers in the forced-choice question.

Table 10. Frequency of Use of Newspapers as a Function of Position on Staff and Results of Significance (t) Tests*

Newspapers	Administrative Assistant N=59		Legislative Director N=45		Press Secretary N=85		AA/LD		LD/PS		AA/PS	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	p		p		p	
Chr. Sci. Monitor	1.98	0.99	1.93	1.09	2.48	1.20	N.S.		.05		.05	
New York Times	3.17	1.26	2.70	1.19	3.69	1.02	N.S.		.0001		.05	
USA Today	2.05	1.06	1.86	1.03	2.65	0.91	N.S.		.0001		.005	
Wall Street Jnl.	3.49	1.14	3.24	1.26	3.66	1.07	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
Washington Post	4.69	0.82	4.61	0.98	4.89	0.41	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
Washington Times	2.78	1.39	2.66	1.29	3.17	1.33	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	

* 1=Never Read, 5=Read Every Issue

A Senate press secretary commented on publication usage:

It is difficult to compare some publications because they serve a different purpose. Ex.--[Washington] Post is better for quick info--[Washington] Times has better in-depth thoughtful reporting [probably referring to its "Commentary" section]. . . .

Unfortunately, the specific content sought in usage of the various publications listed in the questionnaire goes beyond the scope of this study. However, it may be assumed that congressional staff have content-related reasons for reading some publications more frequently than others, although the above quoted respondent noted that some publications are received on a complimentary basis, making them "more accessible despite their quality."

Magazine Usage

The frequency of reading magazines varied as a function of political party and position more than by service in the House or Senate. Table 11 lists the differences of means and significance test results with respect to party affiliation. Staff in both parties read Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report most frequently, with no statistically significant difference indicated. The significant differences occurred for Time and Newsweek, read more often by Democrats, and U.S. News and World Report, which Republicans read more frequently. The most preferred magazines as determined by the forced-choice responses and political party reflected an

Table 11. Frequency of Use of Magazines as a Function of Political Party*

Magazines	Democrat N=99		Republican N=78		p
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Atlantic Monthly	1.90	1.14	1.42	0.66	.0005
Business Week	2.36	1.10	2.33	1.00	N.S.
Congressional Qtly.	4.33	0.92	4.27	1.01	N.S.
Forbes	2.06	1.03	2.18	1.09	N.S.
Fortune	2.02	1.04	2.09	1.01	N.S.
Insight	1.56	0.86	2.23	1.16	.0001
National Journal	3.57	1.32	3.26	1.42	N.S.
New Dimensions	1.15	0.54	1.27	0.62	N.S.
Newsweek	3.93	1.05	3.47	1.22	.01
The Economist	2.18	1.11	2.22	1.26	N.S.
Time	3.80	1.09	3.46	1.20	.05
US News/World Rpt.	3.17	1.16	3.53	1.13	.05

* 1=Never Read, 5=Read Every Issue

order of magazine preference along the same lines as by the means for magazine usage (see Table 12).

As a function of congressional body, frequency of magazine use differed little. The most often read publication, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, significantly differed between House and Senate usage (HMean=4.39, SMean=3.96, d.f.=169, p,.03); no other pairs of means was significantly different in statistical terms. Cross-tabulations for preferred magazines yielded questionable chi square statistics in terms of validity because of the small cell counts among Senate responses. However, preferences were led by Congressional Quarterly,

Table 12. Distribution of Most Frequently Read Magazines by Political Party*

Magazines	Democrat		Republican	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Atlantic Monthly	1	(.6)	0	(0)
Business Week	1	(.6)	0	(0)
Cong'l. Quarterly	47	(28)	33	(20)
Forbes	0	(0)	1	(.6)
Fortune	1	(.6)	1	(.6)
Insight	0	(0)	2	(1)
National Journal	2	(1)	2	(1)
New Dimensions	0	(0)	0	(0)
Newsweek	19	(12)	6	(4)
The Economist	4	(2)	7	(4)
Time	11	(7)	9	(5)
U.S. News/World Report	4	(2)	14	(8)
Other	0	(0)	0	(0)
Total	90	(55)	75	(45)

* N=165

followed by Newsweek and U.S. News, for both houses (chi square=7.27, d.f.=2, $p<.03$).

Table 13 reports the frequency of magazine use by staff position. It appeared that while respondents in all three senior staff positions read CO Weekly Report most frequently, AAs and LDs relied on it significantly more often than did PSs. A Democratic LD in the House wrote, "You need to remember that time for reading is limited. Congressional Quarterly is by far the best and most concise publication available." It seemed that AAs and PSs generally read other magazines more than do LDs, who must focus attention on

Table 13. Frequency of Use of Magazines as a Function of Position on Staff and Results of Significance (t) Tests*

Magazines	Administrative Assistant N=59				Legislative Director Secretary N=45				Press N=85				AA/LD LD/PS AA/PS			
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	p	p	p	p
Atlantic Monthly	1.86	1.15	1.64	0.93	1.68	1.02	1.68	1.02	1.68	1.02	1.68	1.02	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Business Week	2.37	1.17	2.28	1.03	2.35	1.07	2.35	1.07	2.35	1.07	2.35	1.07	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Congress'l. Qtly.	4.48	0.80	4.69	0.56	3.98	1.19	3.98	1.19	3.98	1.19	3.98	1.19	N.S.	.0001	.005	.005
Forbes	2.25	1.17	1.84	1.00	2.20	1.03	2.20	1.03	2.20	1.03	2.20	1.03	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Fortune	2.10	1.08	1.87	0.92	2.20	1.07	2.20	1.07	2.20	1.07	2.20	1.07	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Insight	1.68	0.97	1.91	1.04	2.02	1.14	2.02	1.14	2.02	1.14	2.02	1.14	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
National Journal	3.70	1.38	3.25	1.48	3.38	1.28	3.38	1.28	3.38	1.28	3.38	1.28	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
New Dimensions	1.12	0.38	1.56	0.48	1.28	0.70	1.28	0.70	1.28	0.70	1.28	0.70	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Newsweek	3.75	1.23	3.30	1.25	3.91	0.96	3.91	0.96	3.91	0.96	3.91	0.96	.05	.005	N.S.	N.S.
The Economist	2.00	1.01	2.20	1.24	2.30	1.23	2.30	1.23	2.30	1.23	2.30	1.23	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Time	3.67	1.15	3.33	1.33	3.82	0.97	3.82	0.97	3.82	0.97	3.82	0.97	N.S.	.05	N.S.	N.S.
U.S. News/Wd. Rpt.	3.22	1.24	2.84	1.17	3.65	1.00	3.65	1.00	3.65	1.00	3.65	1.00	N.S.	.0005	N.S.	N.S.

* 1=Never Read, 5=Read Every Issue

legislative business and need more detailed legislative information. This was the case with the three principal newsweeklies, U.S. News and World Report, Time and Newsweek, which AAs and PSs read more often than LDs. Cross-tabulation of forced-choice responses supported this trend in preference order in terms of frequency distribution. All three positions selected CO Weekly Report most often. Legislative directors were greatly outnumbered in preferring other magazines. The second most preferred magazine among AAs, as revealed in a frequency distribution, was Newsweek, followed by Time; PSs next preferred Time, closely followed by Newsweek (chi square=10.75, d.f.=4, $p<.03$).

Again, the specific content sought in publication usage is beyond the scope of this study. However, reading time is limited for Hill staffers. A Democratic Senate press secretary noted, "In terms of 'overload' I definitely feel it. I really seldom have time for weekly news magazines, let alone the more specialized publications"

Opinion Journal Usage

As one might expect, opinion journal usage differed significantly by political party, but not as a function of congressional body or staff position. Aside from Commentary, the differences in mean frequency of use was statistically significant for the five other opinion journals (see Table

Table 14. Frequency of Use of Opinion Journals as a Function of Political Party*

Opinion Journals	Democrat N=99		Republican N=79		p
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Commentary	1.30	0.65	1.39	0.79	N.S.
Human Events	1.25	0.68	1.95	1.25	.0001
Nation	1.95	1.09	1.54	0.80	.005
National Review	2.03	1.14	2.85	1.30	.0001
New Republic	2.87	1.38	2.48	1.23	.05
Progressive	1.53	0.91	1.15	0.43	.0005

* 1=Never Read, 5=Read Every Issue

14). Republicans read National Review and Human Events significantly more often than Democrats, while Democrats read New Republic, Nation and Progressive more frequently than Republicans. This finding was in general accord with the ideological perspectives of these publications, although Republicans reported reading New Republic more than any other journal except National Review. Also, Democrats on the average read National Review more often than other opinion journals except New Republic.

Table 15 gives the distribution of opinion journals in the forced-choice selection of preference for use by party. The low cell counts of Democrats for Human Events and National Review and of Republicans for Nation and New Republic, it may be argued, reflect a real political difference among these publications and their usage between

Table 15. Distribution of Most Frequently Read Opinion Journals by Political Party*

Opinion Journals	Democrat		Republican	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Commentary	1	(1)	1	(1)
Human Events	1	(1)	8	(7)
Nation	13	(11)	2	(2)
National Review	11	(9)	30	(25)
New Republic	35	(29)	13	(11)
Progressive	3	(3)	0	(0)
Other	0	(0)	1	(1)
Total	64	(54)	55	(46)

* N=119

the parties. Separate cross-tabulation of only National Review and New Republic by party yielded highly significant results (chi square=18.81, d.f.=1, $p<.000$), as did cross-tabulation of the four most preferred opinion journals (New Republic, National Review, Human Events, and Nation; chi square=32.09, d.f.=3, $p,.000$). Nonparametric statistics calculated with more opinion journals included were of questionable validity and nonsignificant. These cross-tabulations increased too highly the number of cells with insufficient counts for chi squares to be valid.

Opinion journal usage differences as a function of congressional body was statistically nonsignificant (see Table 16). New Republic and National Review were reported to be read most often in this publication category, with no

Table 16. Frequency of Use of Opinion Journals as a Function of Congressional Body*

Opinion Journals	House N=159		Senate N=29		p
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Commentary	1.34	0.68	1.62	0.98	N.S.
Human Events	1.60	1.05	1.48	0.79	N.S.
Nation	1.78	1.05	1.86	0.95	N.S.
National Review	2.44	1.28	2.45	1.21	N.S.
New Republic	2.69	1.30	2.66	1.37	N.S.
Progressive	1.40	0.80	1.41	0.73	N.S.

* 1=Never Read, 5=Read Every Issue

meaningful differences in usage between houses of Congress. Analysis using frequency distribution also yielded no significant statistics.

With respect to staff position, the only difference in mean frequency of opinion journal use occurred between LDs and PSs for reading Progressive (see Table 17). Statistical significance existed between these two groups' means, with PSs reading Progressive more than did LDs, although that publication was seldom read by any senior staffers. Likewise, frequency distributions of the most preferred journals of opinion by position yielded no significant statistical findings. Most respondents selected New Republic most frequently under forced choice, closely followed by National Review (the same number of PSs chose each of these

Table 17. Frequency of Use of Opinion Journals as a Function of Position on Staff and Results of Significance (t) Tests*

Opinion Journals	Administrative Assistant N=59		Legislative Director N=45		Press Secretary N=84		AA/LD		LD/PS		AA/PS	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	p		p		p	
Commentary	1.24	0.43	1.38	0.91	1.44	0.70	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
Human Events	1.59	1.07	1.38	0.83	1.69	1.05	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
Nation	1.78	1.04	1.69	0.97	1.91	1.03	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
National Review	2.37	1.20	2.16	1.31	2.60	1.25	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
New Republic	2.64	1.31	2.64	1.33	2.77	1.32	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
Progressive	1.44	0.95	1.18	0.45	1.41	0.73	N.S.		N.S.	.04	N.S.	

* 1=Never Read, 5=Read Every Issue

two journals, and only one more AA selected New Republic over the number of AAs choosing National Review).

Regarding frequency of publication use and publication preference, primary differences seemed to relate to political party more than to house of Congress or position on staff. However, aside from the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, the next most evident difference in usage appeared to be that press secretaries read more broadly than do AAs and LDs.

Media Credibility

At the aggregate level without considering the influence of independent variables, senior congressional staff would most likely believe the New York Times, followed by the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, and the Christian Science Monitor if faced with conflicting reports among newspapers. This finding came from the forced-choice question concerning newspaper credibility (see Table 18). For magazines, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report was chosen overwhelmingly, as shown in Table 19. Among opinion journals, New Republic topped the list, followed closely by National Review (see Table 20). As will be seen, while some publications may be read more, they are not necessarily believed more.

Table 18. Overall Rank of Newspaper Selection for Credibility

Newspapers	Rank	N	%
New York Times	1	63	31.5
Wall Street Journal	2	43	21.5
Washington Post	3	25	12.5
Christian Science Monitor	4	21	10.5
Washington Times	5	7	3.5
USA Today	6	1	0.5

Table 19. Overall Rank of Magazine Selection for Credibility

Magazines	Rank	N	%
Congressional Quarterly	1	95	47.5
The Economist	2	15	7.5
U.S. News/World Report	3	14	7
National Journal	4	11	5.5
Newsweek	5	9	4.5
Time	6.5	3	1.5
Atlantic Monthly	6.5	3	1.5
Business Week	8.5	1	0.5
Insight	8.5	1	0.5

Table 20. Overall Rank of Opinion Journal Selection for Credibility

Opinion Journals	Rank	N	%
New Republic	1	40	20
National Review	2	32	16
Human Events	3.5	9	4.5
Nation	3.5	9	4.5
Commentary	5	3	1.5
Progressive	6	2	1

Newspaper Credibility

The most significant of the three principal correlative variables was political party. Position on staff and congressional body were lesser correlates of newspaper credibility measures, as well as among the other two types of publications. Frequency distribution of credibility choices for newspapers, using the forced-choice measure, is shown in Table 21. Democrats chose to believe the New York Times, while Republicans believed the Wall Street Journal most often.

Table 22 shows the mean differences in credibility ratings of newspapers by party. Republicans rated the Wall Street Journal most highly among newspapers, followed by the Christian Science Monitor and the New York Times. Democrats gave the New York Times the highest rating, followed by the Christian Science Monitor and the Washington Post. The Democrats rated the Washington Times the lowest in credibility terms, while Republicans rated it higher than the Post, which received the lowest GOP credibility rating.

A House Republican LD commented on credibility:

Most media is [sic] quite biased, usually toward the liberal point of view. Those who rely solely on the Post, for instance, for their print news will have a distorted view of things. In the case of the Wall Street Journal, although the editorial page is conservative, they [sic] stick to the facts with their [sic] hard news.

Thus, congressional staff perceive the various publications differently where credibility is concerned, and

Table 21. Distribution of Most Believed Newspapers by Political Party*

Newspapers	Democrat		Republican	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Chr. Sci. Monitor	10	(7)	8	(6)
New York Times	43	(30)	13	(9)
USA Today	0	(0)	1	(1)
Wall St. Journal	9	(6)	29	(20)
Washington Post	19	(13)	5	(3)
Washington Times	0	(0)	7	(5)
Other	0	(0)	1	(1)
Total	81	(56)	64	(44)

* N=145

those differences in perception vary systematically by political party.

Position on staff had little influence on perceptions of newspaper credibility, although a few significant differences were found. Cross-tabulations of most-credible newspapers by position yielded no significant statistic with respect to the observed frequency distribution.

The credibility index, constructed by adding mean ratings of the four credibility components, significantly differed only between PSs and AAs for the Washington Times. The Times had a mean index of 9.79 from PSs and of 8.39 from AAs (d.f.=117, $p < .03$). Other differences in ratings on the credibility components "accuracy" and "trustworthiness" occurred mainly between AAs and PSs. For trustworthiness,

Table 22. Mean Credibility Ratings of Newspapers by Political Party and Significance (t) Test Results*

Newspapers	Bias	Completeness	Accuracy	Trustworthiness	Index
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>					
GOP (N=62)	3.46	3.39	3.77	3.89	14.56
Dem (N=87)	3.73	3.66	4.17	4.21	15.75
p	N.S.	N.S.	.003	.04	.03
<u>New York Times</u>					
GOP (N=75)	2.47	3.37	3.50	3.33	12.67
Dem (N=97)	3.80	4.26	4.31	4.37	16.73
p	.0000	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001
<u>USAToday</u>					
GOP (N=73)	3.42	2.10	2.92	3.00	11.62
Dem (N=95)	3.33	2.06	3.23	3.19	11.89
p	N.S.	N.S.	.01	N.S.	N.S.
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>					
GOP (N=77)	3.22	3.92	4.14	4.14	15.41
Dem (N=97)	2.69	3.37	3.90	3.74	13.65
p	.002	.0001	N.S.	.001	.0001
<u>Washington Post</u>					
GOP (N=77)	1.93	2.92	3.00	2.83	10.65
Dem (N=99)	3.36	4.07	4.13	4.18	15.73
p	.0000	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001
<u>Washington Times</u>					
GOP (N=76)	2.49	2.95	3.11	3.01	11.10
Dem (N=98)	1.74	1.96	2.31	2.04	7.91
p	.004	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000

* Components: 1-5 scale; Index Range: 4-20; The higher the rating, the more credible the publication is considered.

PSs rated the Washington Times significantly higher (mean=2.67) than did AAs (mean=2.14, d.f.=119, $p<.009$). In terms of accuracy, PSs gave the Washington Times a 2.90 mean rating, AAs a 2.35 mean rating (d.f.=121, $p<.005$). These positions showed differences in ratings for accuracy with respect to the Wall Street Journal (PSMean=4.17, AAMean=3.86, d.f.=122, $p<.02$), the Washington Post (PSMean=3.84, AAMean=3.46, d.f.=123, $p<.02$) and the New York Times (PSMean=4.13, AAMean=3.86, d.f.=120, $p<.04$).

Press secretaries significantly differed with LDs on accuracy ratings of the New York Times (PSMean=4.13, LDMean=3.71, d.f.=65.2, $p<.03$) and the Washington Post (PSMean=3.84, LDMean=3.37, d.f.=66.7, $p<.04$).

No significant statistical differences occurred between houses of Congress in newspaper ratings or in frequency distributions.

Magazine Credibility

With magazines, as with newspapers, political party yielded the most differences in terms of mean credibility ratings (see Table 23). Both parties rated Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report highest (combined index mean=18.48) with no statistical difference between group means whatsoever. However, the difference between mean ratings for National Journal, which received the second-highest rating

Table 23. Mean Credibility Ratings of Magazines by Political Party and Significance (t) Test Results*

Magazines	Bias	Completeness	Accuracy	Trustworthiness	Index
<u>Atlantic Monthly</u>					
GOP (N=48)	2.78	3.00	3.23	3.17	12.34
Dem (N=67)	3.31	3.59	3.80	3.86	14.74
P	.001	.002	.0002	.0000	.0001
<u>Business Week</u>					
GOP (N=62)	3.24	3.22	3.54	3.58	13.39
Dem (N=77)	2.94	3.33	3.55	3.59	13.40
P	.03	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
<u>Congressional Quarterly</u>					
GOP (N=71)	4.52	4.51	4.56	4.63	18.46
Dem (N=88)	4.55	4.53	4.70	4.69	18.51
P	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
<u>Forbes</u>					
GOP (N=71)	3.08	3.31	3.53	3.60	13.44
Dem (N=70)	2.65	3.13	3.29	3.25	12.38
P	.006	N.S.	N.S.	.008	.03
<u>Fortune</u>					
GOP (N=58)	3.12	3.35	3.58	3.58	13.50
Dem (N=69)	2.67	3.19	3.31	3.25	12.47
P	.003	N.S.	.02	.01	.02
<u>Insight</u>					
GOP (N=60)	2.36	2.83	3.00	3.00	11.33
Dem (N=69)	1.82	2.04	2.33	2.08	8.14
P	.002	.0000	.0001	.0000	.0000

Table 23, Continued

Magazines	Bias	Completeness	Accuracy	Trustworthiness	Index
<u>National Journal</u>					
GOP (N=64)	3.41	3.73	3.94	3.94	15.27
Dem (N=83)	4.04	4.14	4.29	4.25	16.75
p	.001	.02	.009	N.S.	.02
<u>New Dimensions on the News</u>					
GOP (N=37)	2.30	2.50	2.64	2.56	10.03
Dem (N=40)	2.23	2.33	2.44	2.30	8.77
p	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
<u>Newsweek</u>					
GOP (N=72)	2.43	2.74	3.00	2.78	10.79
Dem (N=87)	3.40	3.51	3.67	3.60	14.16
p	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
<u>The Economist</u>					
GOP (N=57)	3.14	3.55	3.70	3.70	14.02
Dem (N=71)	3.15	3.60	3.73	3.77	14.42
p	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
<u>Time</u>					
GOP (N=72)	2.39	2.74	2.99	2.82	10.76
Dem (N=88)	3.26	3.46	3.71	3.59	14.07
p	.0000	.0001	.0000	.0000	.0000
<u>U.S. News and World Report</u>					
GOP (N=72)	3.32	3.38	3.57	3.54	13.85
Dem (N=84)	3.26	3.42	3.63	3.74	14.09
p	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.

* Components: 1-5 scale; Index Range: 4-20; The higher the rating, the more credible the publication is considered.

from both parties, was statistically significant (d.f.=133, $p < .02$), with Democrats giving it a 16.75 mean index and Republicans a 15.27 mean index. Republicans rated Forbes, Fortune and Insight significantly more highly than did Democrats, while Democrats indicated higher perceptions of credibility for Atlantic Monthly, Newsweek and Time. The significant differences in ratings between parties may be seen in the credibility components reported in Table 23.

A Democratic House PS who ranked Congressional Quarterly most highly in this category commented on some of the magazines generally rated as more credible by his colleagues than by Republicans:

Newsweek and Time are laughingstocks--they are hollow shells of their former selves, trading accuracy and relevance for shameless sensationalism and hucksterism in an effort to recapture their old markets.

This sentiment may be shared to some degree by his colleagues, as reflected in the moderate credibility index levels given these two magazines by Democratic respondents.

Cross-tabulations of the frequency distribution of forced-choice magazine credibility responses by political party yielded mixed results. When the five most frequently chosen magazines (Congressional Quarterly, The Economist, U.S. News, National Journal and Newsweek) were analyzed, a significant statistic resulted (chi square=13.95, d.f.=4, $p < .004$). However, the validity of the chi square was questioned because of too few observations in several cells.

On the other hand, when the two magazines with the most observations and adequate cell counts (Congressional Quarterly and The Economist) were analyzed by cross-tabulation, an insignificant chi square statistic resulted (chi square=1.36, d.f.=1, $p<.243$). Nevertheless, the frequency distributions among magazines, using the stricter credibility measure, indicate that the preferences by party generally reflect the results shown in Table 23 (see Table 24).

The congressional body variable yielded a few significant differences regarding magazine credibility. With cross-tabulation, no significant chi squares were forthcoming from any of the frequency distributions, however.

Two credibility indices had significantly different means with respect to House and Senate: Congressional Quarterly and Fortune. House staffers gave CQ a mean credibility index of 18.62; Senate staffers rated it 17.68 (d.f.=143, $p<.04$). Fortune received a mean rating of 13.21 from the House and 12.00 from the Senate (d.f.=36.3, $p<.01$). Significant component ratings for Fortune resulted under "accuracy" (HMean=3.51, SMean=3.15, d.f.=117, $p<.03$), "completeness" (HMean=3.35, SMean=3.00, d.f.=117, $p<.03$) and "trustworthiness" (HMean=3.48, SMean=3.11, d.f.=115, $p<.05$). Congressional Quarterly differed significantly under "trustworthiness" (HMean=4.71, SMean=4.41, d.f.=146, $p<.02$). The only other statistically significant difference by

Table 24. Distribution of Most Believed Magazines by Political Party*

Magazines	Democrat		Republican	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Atlantic Monthly	4	(3)	0	(0)
Business Week	1	(.7)	0	(0)
Cong'l. Quarterly	50	(36)	34	(24)
Forbes	0	(0)	0	(0)
Fortune	0	(0)	0	(0)
Insight	0	(0)	1	(.7)
National Journal	5	(4)	5	(4)
New Dimensions	0	(0)	0	(0)
Newsweek	5	(4)	4	(3)
The Economist	6	(4)	8	(6)
Time	2	(1)	1	(.7)
U.S. News	1	(.7)	13	(9)
Other	0	(0)	0	(0)
Total	74	(53)	66	(47)

* N=140

congressional body fell under "bias" for Insight magazine (HMean=1.99, SMean=2.50, d.f.=128, $p<.03$).

Staff position was found to make little difference for magazine credibility. With regard to frequency distribution of the forced-choice measure responses, no statistically significant differences were found. The majority of respondents in each position reported being most inclined to believe CQ.

Four significant differences in means were found under "trustworthiness" and "accuracy," three of them between AAs and PSs. Under accuracy, PSs and AAs rated The Economist in

statistically different ways (PSMean=3.84, AAMean=3.45, d.f.=87, $p<.05$). They rated The Economist differently for trustworthiness, as well (PSMean=3.94, AAMean=3.54, d.f.=84, $p<.04$). These same two positions differed on the trustworthiness of CQ, but in the opposite direction (PSMean=4.55, AAMean=4.77, d.f.=103.2, $p<.04$). Press secretaries rated New Dimensions more highly than did LDs in a statistically meaningful way with respect to trustworthiness (PSMean=2.61, LDMean=2.05, d.f.=44.3, $p<.04$). No other statistical differences between means were found regarding magazine credibility as a function of position on staff.

Opinion Journal Credibility

Political party was once again the most fruitful of the independent correlates when examined as a function of opinion journal credibility. This was true for both nonparametric and parametric analysis. Table 25 shows the frequency distribution, by party, of observations under the stringent forced-choice credibility question. The cell counts for Human Events and Nation mirrored each other in accordance with their ideological perspectives. The observations within the National Review and New Republic categories also went in the expected ideological directions. It is believed a true political difference is illustrated here.

Table 25. Distribution of Most Believed Opinion Journals by Political Party*

Opinion Journals	Democrat		Republican	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Commentary	2	(2)	1	(1)
Human Events	0	(0)	7	(8)
Nation	8	(8)	0	(0)
National Review	11	(13)	19	(22)
New Republic	25	(28)	13	(15)
Progressive	2	(2)	0	(0)
Other	0	(0)	0	(0)
Total	48	(54)	40	(46)

* N=88

Table 26 gives the means of credibility ratings of opinion journals by party and the significance (t) test results. New Republic earned a high index rating from both sides of the aisle (DMean=11.51, RMean=11.06, d.f.=113, N.S.). From there on, partisanship prevailed. Republicans rated Human Events and National Review significantly more highly than did Democrats, while Democrats gave significantly higher ratings to Nation and Progressive. Commentary received a 10.59 mean index from Republicans and a 9.91 from Democrats, a statistically insignificant difference.

Differences between parties became readily evident with respect to credibility components of opinion journals, as seen in Table 26. Concerning "bias," Democrats rated Nation and Progressive significantly more favorably than did

Table 26. Mean Credibility Ratings of Opinion Journals by Political Party and Significance (t) Test Results*

Opinion Journals	Bias	Completeness	Accuracy	Trustworthiness	Index
<u>Commentary</u>					
GOP (N=45)	2.00	2.66	2.98	2.93	10.59
Dem (N=51)	2.06	2.46	2.69	2.50	9.91
p	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	.04	N.S.
<u>Human Events</u>					
GOP (N=54)	1.75	2.62	2.98	2.89	10.34
Dem (N=53)	1.75	2.10	2.28	2.08	8.33
p	N.S.	.008	.001	.0002	.005
<u>Nation</u>					
GOP (N=49)	1.58	2.18	2.34	2.38	8.42
Dem (N=57)	1.98	2.50	3.05	2.98	10.54
p	.01	N.S.	.0002	.004	.001
<u>National Review</u>					
GOP (N=60)	1.92	2.88	3.40	3.55	11.87
Dem (N=64)	1.68	2.24	2.52	2.37	8.88
p	N.S.	.0005	.0000	.0000	.0000
<u>New Republic</u>					
GOP (N=57)	1.98	2.70	3.13	3.18	11.06
Dem (N=67)	2.16	2.77	3.25	3.22	11.51
p	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
<u>Progressive</u>					
GOP (N=48)	1.52	2.13	2.24	2.22	8.21
Dem (N=53)	1.90	2.42	2.98	2.82	10.17
p	.01	N.S.	.0001	.003	.0006

* Components: 1-5 scale; Index Range: 4-20; The higher the rating, the more credible the publication is considered.

Republicans. In contrast, Republicans regarded Human Events and National Review as significantly more complete in their reporting than did Democrats. Republicans rated Human Events and National Review as significantly more accurate, whereas Democrats gave higher accuracy ratings to Nation and Progressive. Republicans considered Commentary, Human Events and National Review to be significantly more trustworthy, while Democrats rated Nation and Progressive significantly higher on trustworthiness.

A press secretary in each party commented on the credibility of opinion journals. A Democratic House PS wrote, "New Republic is biased, but its [sic] an accurate bias. That is to say, it has a very distinct point of view-- but I usually agree with that point of view." A Republican House PS wrote, "Journals of opinion need not be accurate to be good reading. They ought to be provocative." Thus, readers may accept bias or other elements that weaken a publication's "credibility." However, readers may use those sources anyway, either because they agree with the perspective or because they wish to stimulate thought.

Position on staff yielded several statistically significant differences with respect to credibility of opinion journals, primarily between AAs and PSs. Press secretaries, in every case, gave publications the higher rating. The Human Events credibility index was one such

instance (PSMean=10.23, AAMean=8.23, d.f.=68, $p<.03$). Four instances occurred regarding "completeness." Human Events received a 2.63 rating from PSs, while AAs gave it a 2.00 (d.f.=72, $p<.01$). Nation earned a 2.67 rating from PSs, whereas AAs rated it 2.03 on completeness (d.f.=68, $p<.005$). Press secretaries gave National Review a 2.83; AAs, a 2.37 (d.f.=82, $p<.05$). For New Republic, PSs rated its completeness at 3.04; AAs, 2.49 (d.f.=80, $p<.01$).

Under "accuracy," PSs rated Human Events at 2.95, while AAs gave it a 2.33 rating (d.f.=71, $p<.02$). National Review received a 3.27 accuracy rating from PSs, whereas it earned a 2.79 from AAs (d.f.=81, $p<.03$). The only statistically significant difference between PS and LD ratings of opinion journal credibility appeared regarding the accuracy of National Review (PSMean=3.27, LDMean=2.76, d.f.=76, $p<.04$).

Only one significant difference occurred between respondents from the House and those from the Senate. Human Events, in terms of accuracy, received a House rating of 2.79; it received a 2.17 Senate rating (d.f.=96, $p<.03$).

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

The two general hypotheses tested in this study were partially supported. With respect to the first hypothesis--that congressional staff differ in publication use in terms of political party affiliation, House/Senate service and staff position--several conclusions may be drawn.

First, the most significant of the three variables was political party. Publication use as a function of party resulted in 14 statistically significant t-tests out of 24 total t-tests. The publications most read by members of each party tended to differ in accordance with ideological perspectives usually attributed to those publications. Although both parties read the Washington Post most frequently--giving support to previous findings that the Post is read by virtually all of Washington officialdom (Weiss, 1974; Linsky, 1986; Phil Kent, personal communication, 1989)--Republican staffers' second choice of the Wall Street Journal and Democrats' second choice of the New York Times indicate definite ideological preferences, especially as far as each of these two newspapers' editorial page is concerned. With magazines, Congressional Quarterly apparently meets many of the content needs of Republicans and Democrats alike, providing useful information about politics and the status of

legislation in Congress; however, second choices again indicate possible ideological considerations as a function of political party--Republicans chose U.S. News and World Report, Democrats chose Newsweek. The same influences held true for opinion journal usage; Republicans most frequently read the conservative National Review, Democrats the more liberal New Republic. These findings for congressional staff also reflect those reported by Weiss (1974) concerning members of Congress.

Second, position on staff was found to have some, but limited, significance regarding frequency of publication use. Press secretaries generally reported reading more publications more often than those in the other two positions, probably indicating a need to survey the environment beyond Congress. Legislative directors seemed to generally read the least of the three positions, perhaps indicating their need for more specific, policy-related information. LDs may also have less time for mass media, having to devote much more time than AAs and PSs to congressional committee reports, the Congressional Record, technical reports and so forth. The reading preferences of AAs indicated a mixture of seeking Washington and congressional news, as well as scanning the political horizon. The data seem to point to these conclusions, which stem from the initial hypothesis.

Third, the house of Congress in which one serves correlated very little regarding publication usage. Staffers on both sides of Capitol Hill have essentially the same media habits, at least with respect to print media. House and Senate staff seemed to have about the same publication preferences; it appears political party affiliation overrides the potential impact of the congressional body in which one works.

The second general hypothesis--that congressional staff differ in perceptions of publication credibility in terms of political party, congressional body and staff position--was supported along basically the same lines as the media use hypothesis and lacked support in the same areas as above.

As a function of party affiliation, the newspapers and magazines read most often are not necessarily those publications regarded as most credible. Political party is the most important correlate of the three examined here in terms of rendering statistically significant results for credibility. While both parties read the Washington Post most frequently, Republicans rated their second most frequently read newspaper, the Wall Street Journal, as the most credible newspaper. Democrats treated their second-choice newspaper under frequency of reading, the New York Times, the same way--they rated it the most credible newspaper.

Party affiliation correlated less with the credibility ratings of the two top-rated magazines. Both parties gave Congressional Quarterly, followed by National Journal, the highest credibility ratings. However, the most distinct differences between ratings by party occurred with respect to Newsweek, Time and Insight. Party was a quite significant correlate of opinion journal credibility ratings, too. Republicans rated National Review highest; Democrats rated New Republic highest. Other opinion journals were rated by party members in expected ideological directions. However, New Republic was the second most highly rated opinion journal by Republicans in terms of credibility.

Staff position correlated significantly with some credibility ratings. PSs tended to rate publications as more credible than did those in the other two positions, especially more than AAs. This finding may indicate that AAs are more skeptical of the news media. It may be explained by the fact that PSs often have worked in the news media before joining a congressional staff and thus trust the product of their former colleagues. LDs seemed to differ little from AAs and PSs insofar as rating publication credibility, bearing in mind that LDs read mass publications less overall. A Republican House LD commented:

Often, certain articles or publications are consulted simply to get a different or unique perspective on one issue or subject and may not reflect whether its bias, trustworthiness, or accuracy had any impact on choosing that one publication.

This comment indicates that LDs may search for mass-mediated information in a directed manner or on an as-needed basis.

Congressional body was, once again, an almost insignificant independent variable. In only a few instances did house of Congress significantly correlate with a publication's credibility rating.

Therefore, of the three independent variables examined in this study in relation to print media use and credibility, political party was the most significant. Some significant results were found as a function of staff position. The body of Congress in which one works was discovered to have little statistical significance for frequency of use or perceived credibility of publications.

Implications

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of specific publication usage and the perceived credibility of those publications. These findings also add to the understanding of the print media behavior of an important specialized population, congressional staff. Senior staffers do in fact tend to read publications for reinforcement; that is, they read material that reinforces existing beliefs and ideologies. This finding supports the work of Weiss (1974) and others.

A higher response rate would have helped increase the confidence put in the findings. No matter what the rate of

participation in a survey, anything less than 100 percent poses self-selection problems. In order to validly generalize from a sample to an entire population, the sample must be randomly drawn so as to accurately reflect the characteristics of the population in a representative and proportional manner. Even with a random sample, significance tests on sample data still yield only probabilities that the results hold true for the population. Thus, in the present study, it may be said that the most probable correlate of the frequency of publication use and perceptions of publication credibility is political party. This statement holds for the actual sample, which may not truly represent the characteristics of the population of study. On the other hand, the findings here indicate a fairly strong probability that political party is an important variable with respect to print media use and credibility for congressional staff.

While these findings may generally hold for the population of congressional staff, the same conclusion may not be true for the public at large. Thus, a need exists to examine specific publication usage and perceived credibility among the general population.

Causation is another matter. This study has operated at the level of identifying correlations. There appears to be a fairly strong correlation between political party affiliation and the publications chosen for most frequent use, as well as with perceptions of the credibility of various publications.

Attributing causation is impossible at this stage; indeed, causation is not addressed here. The present research findings will not allow it to be said that affiliation with a particular political party causes one to perceive certain publications as more or less credible or to prefer reading certain publications over others. Nor can it be said that reading or perceiving particular publications in a certain way will make someone a Republican or a Democrat. However, with respect to congressional staff, the publications read most frequently and perceptions of publication credibility appear highly correlated with the political party with which staffers are affiliated.

Finally, congressional staff are regarded as an important and influential specialized population. Further study of congressional staff should be undertaken, specifically of their media behavior across media to include broadcast media and additional print sources. Their media usage, perceptions of credibility, and strategies for selecting media sources and content should be explored, as well as examination of how mediated information is incorporated into the legislative/policy process in order to further the understanding of the media/politics linkage.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Congressional Staff Questionnaire



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Dear Key Congressional Staffer:

I'm conducting research on the use of print media by top Congressional staff, and I need your help.

You are one of a select group of Hill staffers who is being asked about your print media use. In order that the results truly represent the thinking of top-level staff, it's important that every questionnaire be completed and returned. So, your response is very important.

College of
Communications

School of
Journalism

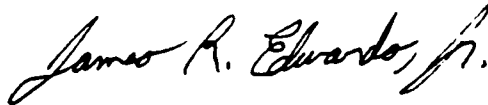
I would appreciate your taking a few minutes right now to complete and return this questionnaire in the accompanying envelope. You may be assured of complete confidentiality and of the significance of your participation.

The results of this research will help Members of Congress, staffers, publishers, and scholars to better understand "information overload" and mass media usage on the Hill. If you'd like a copy of the results, enclose a business card in the return envelope.

Please take a moment right now to respond. It's important that I receive all completed questionnaires no later than November 30.

Thanks for your cooperation!

Sincerely,



James R. Edwards, Jr.
Project Director

330 Communications Building / Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-0330 / (615) 974-5155

CONGRESSIONAL STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

- I. An important purpose of this study is to learn more about how top Congressional staffers use print media in their jobs to stay informed. Below are three lists of different kinds of publications. Please mark how frequently you use any of these publications in the course of your job as sources of information about national and political affairs.

- A. About how often do you usually read the following newspapers?
(Circle a number for each paper)

Key: 1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Every issue

<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New York Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>USA Today</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Post</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u> _____	1	2	3	4	5

If you could use ONLY ONE newspaper from this list, which ONE newspaper would you choose?

NAME ONE: _____

- B. About how often do you usually read the following magazines?
(Circle a number for each magazine)

Key: 1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Every issue

<u>Atlantic Monthly</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Business Week</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>CQ Weekly Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Forbes</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Fortune</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Insight</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Dimensions on the News</u>	1	2	3	4	5

Key: 1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Every issue

<u>Newsweek</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>The Economist</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Time</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>U.S. News and World Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u> _____	1	2	3	4	5

If you could use ONLY ONE magazine from this list, which ONE magazine would you choose?

NAME ONE: _____

C. About how often do you usually read the following journals of opinion?
(Circle a number for each journal)

Key: 1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Every issue

<u>Commentary</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Human Events</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Nation</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Review</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Republic</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Progressive</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u> _____	1	2	3	4	5

If you could use ONLY ONE journal from this list, which ONE journal would you choose?

NAME ONE: _____

- II. Another important part of this study is to learn more about the credibility of print media. Below are four scales for each of the publications listed. Please indicate your estimation of how biased, complete, accurate, and trustworthy you think each publication is. Skip any publication with which you don't feel familiar enough to rate it.

Newspapers:

- A. Rate these newspapers from 1 to 5 on how biased or unbiased each is. (Circle a number for each paper)

	BIASED			UNBIASED	
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New York Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>USA Today</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Post</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u> _____	1	2	3	4	5

- B. Rate these newspapers from 1 to 5 on how complete or incomplete each is in its reporting. (Circle a number for each paper)

	DOESN'T TELL WHOLE STORY			TELLS WHOLE STORY	
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New York Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>USA Today</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Post</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u> _____	1	2	3	4	5

C. Rate these newspapers from 1 to 5 on how accurate or inaccurate each is.
(Circle a number for each paper)

	INACCURATE			ACCURATE	
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New York Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>USA Today</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Post</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u>	1	2	3	4	5

D. Rate these newspapers from 1 to 5 on how trustworthy or untrustworthy each is
in its reporting. (Circle a number for each paper)

	NOT TRUSTWORTHY			TRUSTWORTHY	
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New York Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>USA Today</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Post</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Washington Times</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u>	1	2	3	4	5

If you received conflicting reports from these newspapers, which one
newspaper would you be most inclined to believe?

NAME ONE: _____

Magazines:

A. Rate these magazines from 1 to 5 on how biased or unbiased each is.
(Circle a number for each magazine)

	BIASED			UNBIASED	
<u>Atlantic Monthly</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Business Week</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>CO Weekly Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5

	BIASED			UNBIASED	
<u>Forbes</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Fortune</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Insight</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Dimensions on the News</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Newsweek</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>The Economist</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Time</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>U.S. News and World Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u>	1	2	3	4	5

B. Rate these magazines from 1 to 5 on how complete or incomplete each is in its reporting. (Circle a number for each magazine)

	DOESN'T TELL WHOLE STORY			TELLS WHOLE STORY	
<u>Atlantic Monthly</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Business Week</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>CO Weekly Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Forbes</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Fortune</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Insight</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Dimensions on the News</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Newsweek</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>The Economist</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Time</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>U.S. News and World Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u>	1	2	3	4	5

C. Rate these magazines from 1 to 5 on how accurate or inaccurate each is in its reporting. (Circle a number for each magazine)

	INACCURATE			ACCURATE	
<u>Atlantic Monthly</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Business Week</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>CO Weekly Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Forbes</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Fortune</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Insight</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Dimensions on the News</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Newsweek</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>The Economist</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Time</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>U.S. News and World Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other _____</u>	1	2	3	4	5

D. Rate these magazines from 1 to 5 on how trustworthy or untrustworthy each is in its reporting. (Circle a number for each magazine)

	NOT TRUST- WORTHY			TRUST- WORTHY	
<u>Atlantic Monthly</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Business Week</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>CO Weekly Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Forbes</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Fortune</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Insight</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Journal</u>	1	2	3	4	5

	NOT TRUST- WORTHY			TRUST- WORTHY	
<u>New Dimensions on the News</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Newsweek</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>The Economist</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Time</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>U.S. News and World Report</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u>	1	2	3	4	5

If you received conflicting reports from these magazines,
which one magazine would you be most inclined to believe?

NAME ONE: _____

Journals of Opinion:

- A. Rate these journals of opinion from 1 to 5 on how biased
or unbiased each is. (Circle a number for each journal)

	BIASED			UNBIASED	
<u>Commentary</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Human Events</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Nation</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Review</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Republic</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Progressive</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u>	1	2	3	4	5

- B. Rate these journals of opinion from 1 to 5 on how complete
or incomplete each is in its reporting. (Circle a number
for each journal)

	DOESN'T TELL WHOLE STORY			TELLS WHOLE STORY	
<u>Commentary</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Human Events</u>	1	2	3	4	5

	DOESN'T TELL WHOLE STORY			TELLS WHOLE STORY	
<u>Nation</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Review</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Republic</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Progressive</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u> _____	1	2	3	4	5

C. Rate these journals of opinion from 1 to 5 on how accurate or inaccurate each is. (Circle a number for each journal)

	INACCURATE			ACCURATE	
<u>Commentary</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Human Events</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Nation</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Review</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Republic</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Progressive</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u> _____	1	2	3	4	5

D. Rate these journals of opinion from 1 to 5 on how trustworthy or untrustworthy each is. (Circle a number for each journal)

	NOT TRUST- WORTHY			TRUST- WORTHY	
<u>Commentary</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Human Events</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Nation</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>National Review</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>New Republic</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Progressive</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other</u> _____	1	2	3	4	5

If you received conflicting reports from these journals of opinion, which one journal would you be most inclined to believe?

NAME ONE: _____

III. Finally, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself to help interpret the results. This information will be held in confidence and is solely for statistical purposes.

1. Congressional body you work for. (Circle one)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SENATE

2. The State your Member represents: _____

3. How long have you worked on a Congressional staff? .

_____ YEARS _____ MONTHS

4. Your sex. (Circle one)

MALE FEMALE

5. Years of education that you have completed. (List years; circle degree/s held)

_____ YEARS BA/BS MA/MS JD MBA PHD OTHER _____

6. Your present age: _____ YEARS

7. Which best describes your race or ethnic background? (Circle number)

- 1 BLACK
- 2 HISPANIC
- 3 ORIENTAL
- 4 WHITE
- 5 OTHER (specify) _____

8. What is your religious preference? (Circle number)

- 1 PROTESTANT
- 2 CATHOLIC
- 3 JEWISH
- 4 OTHER (specify) _____

9. What do you consider yourself to be? (Circle number)

- 1 DEMOCRAT
- 2 REPUBLICAN
- 3 INDEPENDENT
- 4 OTHER (specify) _____

10. Where would you place yourself on the following ideological scale? (Circle number)

VERY LIBERAL

VERY CONSERVATIVE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. What is your position in the office? (Circle title)

1. ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

2. LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

3. PRESS SECRETARY

**Thank you very much for your
cooperation!**

Additional comments:

Return to:

J. R. Edwards, Jr.
4650 N. Washington Blvd., #818
Arlington, VA 22201

VITA

James Roscoe Edwards, Jr., was born in Anderson, South Carolina, on April 7, 1958. He attended elementary and secondary schools in North Augusta, South Carolina, and was graduated from North Augusta Senior High School in May 1976. The following August, he entered Clemson University and transferred to the University of Georgia the following year, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech Communication in August 1980.

After serving as a substitute teacher in North Augusta schools, Edwards worked for U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond as staff assistant in 1981 and 1982. He again entered the University of Georgia with a teaching assistantship in September 1982 and began work toward a Master's degree, which was awarded in December 1983.

He served a one-year faculty appointment at Carson-Newman College in 1984 and 1985, worked in Atlanta for two years, and entered The Graduate School of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with a teaching associateship in September 1987. In June and July 1989, Edwards served as a special assistant/intern on the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and joined the staff of U.S. Representative John J.

Duncan, Jr., in August 1989 as press secretary and legislative assistant.

In August 1991, he became senior writer at the Republican National Committee. Edwards received the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in Communications in May 1992.

The author is a member of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and the Republican Communications Association (RCA). He serves on the RCA board. He is also a member of Kappa Tau Alpha national journalism honor society.