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Whose Line is it Anyway? Examining the Media's Coverage of Cabinet Secretaries' Speeches

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Whose Line is it Anyway?
Examining the Media's Coverage of Cabinet Secretaries'
Speeches

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Abstract

Previous research suggests that politicians and the press spin news stories through their remarks and coverage of remarks to their own benefit — but is this also true for remarks made by Cabinet Secretaries? For this project, I compared remarks given by DHS Secretaries with newspaper articles about those remarks. I find that Secretaries' ability to shape issues is initially limited by the press; however, Secretaries succeed in conveying their message eventually. This is important because citizens should know what government officials are saying and what those statements mean; therefore, media coverage of those statements should be critical and accurate.

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I. Introduction

Articles or segments in the news are frequently referred to as “stories” and a great amount of scholarship in political science and media studies has gone towards sketching what goes into the formation of a news “story.” How its narrative arc develops, how it reflects and differs from what actually happened, and what it is that is likely to become a story in the first place. One question that has been neglected, especially in the realm of American politics, is “who is the story-teller?” This question is particularly pertinent to politics and the law because the gap between the two would-be narrators — Cabinet Secretaries (or more broadly speaking, politicians) and journalists — is potentially great, as are the possible consequences of such a gap that is communicated to the public. My project examines this issue in order to better illustrate the potential gap between competing narratives and narrators, as well as demonstrate the importance of president Cabinet Secretaries in American governance. First, however, it is helpful to consider a case study.

On May 1, 2005, North Korea test fired a missile into the Sea of Japan, causing a great amount of anxiety in an already tense region. Two days later, The Washington Times reported on a range of responses from government and non-government officials around the world; including two press conferences in Washington held by President Bush’s Press Secretary Scott McClellan and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, respectively. The first of the two press conferences held by Press Secretary McClellan had a relatively soft message about the importance of continuing the Six-Party Talks with North Korea. The press conference held by Secretary of State Rice, however, had a much different tone. Rice in her conference, rather than focus on diplomatic measures such as the Six-Party Talks, chose to allude to the United States’ “significant deterrent capability of all kinds in the Asia-Pacific Region (Sammon May 3, 2005).”

In of itself, an administration not properly coordinating its message is not particularly interesting. Different government officials, all seen as presenting the definitive view of the president, hold near simultaneous and sometimes contradictory press conferences. What made this story interesting is who received top billing in the article by The Washington Times. Out of all the government and non-government officials involved in the Six-Party Talks and other negotiations with North Korea, the official that received the most coverage in the article, was quoted first, and even the only one to be mentioned in the headline was Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (Sammon May 3, 2005).

Perhaps some will argue that Secretary Rice received so much attention because the remarks she gave to the press were the most confrontational and referenced a possible new and aggressive course of action on the part of the United States. While Press Secretary McClellan spoke of the importance of continuing negotiations, Secretary Rice warned of possible military actions. While other policy experts analyzed the threat of the newly test-fired missiles, Rice made threats of her own. In short, one could argue that what Rice said was more news-worthy on account of her comments being the most provocative. However, to interpret the story as such and leave it at that is to ignore a larger point: the fact that the press decided to cover Secretary Rice's press conference at all. On the one hand, it would seem difficult to imagine a Cabinet Secretary, even the Secretary of State, as having greater insight on what policy options the president is thinking than the president's own Press Secretary. On the other hand, one must also consider if the journalist at The Washington Times was not on to something. Rice, due to her position as Secretary of State, was uniquely positioned to influence the United States' policy towards North Korea in the wake of the missile launch. So while Secretary Rice may not have had any special insights as to what President Bush was thinking between May 1st and May 3rd,

she did not necessarily have to — she knew what she, as an important formulator of American foreign policy, was thinking and that was enough for her to hold a press conference (Sammon May 3, 2005).

There is a second aspect of Rice's press conference that differentiates it from other quotes found in the article: Rice's remarks were inherently intended to be heard by two audiences. The first audience is one shared by all Cabinet Secretaries whenever they make a public statement: the American people. For this audience, Secretary Rice played something of the role of impromptu spokesperson for the President, cluing Americans as to how the United States would react to North Korea's non-compliance. The second audience that Rice was addressing in her remarks was the government of North Korea. In this case, Secretary Rice took on the role of America's chief ambassador and her remarks served as a not too subtle warning to North Korea of America's military power in the region (Sammon May 3, 2005).

The title of "Secretary of State" enabled Condoleezza Rice to inhabit both of these roles simultaneously and also credibly in a way that few others in American government (arguably, only the president) can. As the top official in the State Department, Condoleezza Rice can inform the public and other states about not only what current foreign policy is, but also provide a hint as to what it will be in the future, for she was not only an advisor to the President, but her office allowed her to take action herself. Considering the important role Condoleezza Rice had in crafting American foreign policy, and then considering the influence that other Cabinet members must have in their respective fields, it would seem of great importance to understand precisely what a Cabinet Secretary is articulating when he or she speaks. One might argue that this can be accomplished by reading a newspaper. After all, the Times article made Secretary Rice's position quite clear.

Or did it? In many ways, the article only gave the readers part of the story. It was likely not a verbatim transcript of Rice's remarks at the press conference she held and nor should we expect it to be. However, the article does not tell us which of Secretary Rice's comments did and did not get reported and it does not tell us for which reasons which quotes were selected to print (Sammon May 3, 2005).

This project seeks to answer the question of what are the differences, if any, between the way the Secretaries themselves characterize their viewpoints and how their positions are defined by the media. Currently, there is no research that examines this possible gap. Right now, one who wishes to be informed about the policies of American government can pick up a newspaper, but there is no way to determine how well an article conveys the Secretary's intended message since there are many styles of coverage. A word-for-word transcript of what the Cabinet Secretary said, without any analysis whatsoever may not strike us as particularly useful; while a story that is distorted to heighten political conflict seems outright damaging. Clearly, there is a range of news-reporting that falls between these two extremes but we have no idea where along this spectrum most reporting on Cabinet Secretaries falls. Currently, we have Secretaries being featured and quoted in stories but no real academic understanding of how accurate these stories are or even what it is that makes a story or a quote more likely to be printed. For instance, we do not know if Rice added any qualifiers in her remarks about U.S. deterrence capabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region; what she said in her speech before and after making the remarks; or even if an observer attending the press conference in person would likely interpret the remarks as the being the main thrust of the press conference. Such knowledge would be important for a citizen to remain truly informed, but what the article ultimately leaves the reader with is a handful of

non-contextualized sentences that convey the impression that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was making a thinly veiled threat towards North Korea (Sammon May 3, 2005).

As will be discussed next, in the literature review, there is often more than a kernel of truth to the press coverage. However, over time, it is possible for the media to present American policy and actions as being very different than from what is occurring in reality. This problem is compounded by the limited resources that are inherent in journalism: namely, limited space. Many different stories compete for a slot on a half-hour news show and for printing space in a newspaper. Therefore, misleading or otherwise insubstantial stories are counter-productive on two counts. First, they are unhelpful in themselves for being misleading or vapid. Second, they take up space that a better quality news story could occupy. If concerned citizens are relying on the media to keep them abreast of political developments, this is no small problem.

It is possible that the coverage of Cabinet Secretaries will be different. Perhaps because American Cabinet Secretaries are apolitical in the sense that they are never truly running for office — they serve at the pleasure of the President — then some of the more superficial and conflict-oriented nature of the coverage they receive will be absent where it otherwise would not have been. Perhaps the press, in some ways, recognizes the complex role Cabinet Secretaries have in any administration and the coverage, as a whole, reflects that complexity. It is even possible that the Cabinet Secretaries themselves are great manipulators of the press and are able to convey their message to their intended audience even in sound bite form. However, without further research, all of this is mere speculation.

While some of these differences may seem a bit obscure, or hard to connect to any actual story, I want to reiterate that they can have real consequences. So let's return to the article published in The Washington Times on May 3, 2005. Secretary Rice, along with several other

members of the Bush Administration and public officials from the around the world are giving public statements in response to recent actions taken by North Korea. A reporter, covering the events is trying to determine a way to synthesize comments made by an American Secretary of State, the President's Press Secretary, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and a German foreign minister. The reporter is drawn not only towards Secretary Rice's comments, but a handful of particular comments she made at a press conference and not towards many more comments that she also likely made. Perhaps the quoted comments were the most memorable in a long press release. Perhaps Rice's larger intended message to the North Korean government was lost upon American audience. Maybe the issue was so salient (North Korea is launching missiles) that journalists were not as keen on some of the subtleties of diplomatic speech. Or maybe even the journalists portrayed Rice's view fairly and accurately — we do not know (Sammon May 3, 2005).

What we do know is that the journalist would have us believe that Secretary Rice gave a hard line towards North Korea in referring to American deterrence capabilities (Sammon May 3, 2005). What journalists tell us, however, is only half of the stories; with the public very rarely hearing the entirety of the second story as told by Cabinet Secretaries. The very existence of multiple stories, or alternatively, multiple takes on the same story, invariably leads to some messages and themes getting picked up while others never make it to public and remain as rhetorical left-overs. This study is about those left-overs: what they are and why they exist. In the next section, I will explain the theoretical groundwork for looking for them.

II. Literature Review

The introduction of this paper alluded to the inherent difficulty in studying just about anything related to Cabinet members, and especially their relationship with the media, at this time. However, existing scholarship does allow one some insight into the dynamics of this important connection.

Research that directly studies the Cabinet's relation with the media, and more specifically printed media, is virtually non-existent, as is research on Cabinet Secretaries in general. However, there is research that exists that is about politicians, in general, and there is no reason to believe that the ways in which Cabinet Secretaries attempt to portray and convey their messages differs greatly from the ways in which other politicians do. Therefore, most of the research that is relevant to this project is about how politicians generically deliver their desired statements to the public. In particular however, this study will base itself on how the executive branch interacts with the press. The reasoning behind this decision is that Cabinet Secretaries are not only a part of the Executive Branch, but they are also similar to the President in that they are singular figures that head specific sub-section of the executive branch. As single heads, as opposed to a member of the House of Representatives or the Senate, they gain a certain authority and presumed expertise that members of Congress are frequently denied (Polsby 1978, 15-17). Fortunately, there is some available research that touches on these government-media relationships.

It is important to understand how members of the President's Cabinet operate as part of the larger administration, especially in the case of messaging. The book *Spin Control* speaks to this issue indirectly by examining the White House Office of Communications. While the Office of Communications is a separate entity from the Cabinet, it does ensure that the administration's

messages are successfully conveyed. Cabinet Secretaries, as part of the administration, presumably would have a role in how that message is conveyed. The research conducted in *Spin Control* supports this line of reasoning. In contrast with the White House Press Office, the Office of Communications is a proactive organization that seeks to set the media narrative and agenda, with a focus on the messages' long-term success. Assuming that the Office of Communications is properly doing its job, it would then reason that when Secretaries attempt to convey a message to the public, they do so either in a coordinated effort, or at the very least they will likely consider long-term narrative goals when conveying their message and will try to fine-tune their messages for public and media consumption as the narrative continues (Maltese 1994, 1-27).

Perhaps most significantly, *Spin Control* also lends this research a much-needed working definition for the word "spin." Spinning a story involves not only influencing what administration officials are saying, but also manipulating what the media says about those officials. Applying spin — at least from an administration's standpoint — typically involves using persuasive methods to get reporters to play along and say that the administration's portrayal of a news story is the correct one. This can be accomplished through direct persuasive means, such as rhetoric or sending surrogates, or by making the reporters' jobs easier through convenient press releases and regular briefings (Maltese 1994, 215-216). While *Spin Control's* definition of spin focuses on the administration's ability to change how a story is portrayed, it is also established that members of the media also have tremendous ability in shaping the nation's political discourse by choosing which questions to ask, which stories to cover, and ultimately (at least in theory) how those stories are covered at all (Maltese 1994, 14-15).

A second essential definition — that of the word “framing” — is taken from *Media Politics: A Citizen’s Guide*. Framing is similar to spin in the sense that both connote that there is some effort being made by an individual or party to change how a story or event is to be perceived. However, framing differs from spin on two important counts. The first is that while spin inherently involves using different methods of persuasion to convince the media to convey a particular story, framing is more specific in that it refers to shaping perceptions of something by highlighting certain aspects while ignoring or downplaying others. At a detailed level, this can be accomplished through changes in wording, while on a large scale it can be done by simply focusing on different aspects of a story. This also leads to the second important difference; framing is unavoidable while spin is not. This is because when a Cabinet Secretary is crafting a speech or a journalist is writing a story he or she will have to choose to use certain language as opposed to a different parsing. Therefore, it would be nonsensical to ask “if” a speech or article is being framed; while it would be legitimate to ask “if” a story is being spun. With framing, the relevant question is always “how” and never “if.” This is not to suggest that framing is done thoughtlessly or without intention. Indeed, research suggests that politicians and members of the media put a great deal of thought into how a story should be framed. However, it does mean that framing, in of itself, is not particularly noteworthy, whereas this is not the case for spin (Iyengar 2007, 219-221).

The book *Politicians Don’t Pander* has something of a misleading title, in that its authors early on admit that politicians do, in fact, pander. Their argument however is that politicians pander in different ways than we commonly think that they do. For example, the stereotype of the “windsock politician” veteran and cynical politician that changes his or her position whenever it is believed that doing so will garner more votes or broader support is largely non-

existent. The pandering does not come in the form of politicians having different positions for different audiences; rather, the pandering comes in the form of how those positions are expressed to different audiences (Jacobs 2000, 3-15).

This pandering is the result of nearly every elected official being pulled by two desires. The first desire, the one that is often associated with the cynical “windsock politician” is the desire to win re-election. The second aim of nearly every politician is to pass policies that they believe in (Jacobs 2000, 9-15). Therefore, the ideal piece of legislation for these elected officials, then, is a law that they both support on an internal level and is also popular with their constituents. However, such an ideal situation does not always readily exist and it is the rarity of this situation that makes pandering to the voting public necessary. So while a politician is unlikely to change his or her own personal views at any given instant, even if their views are largely at odds with those of their constituents; he or she is likely to change the way they discuss the issue publicly based on the voters’ views of it. The question then is how does the media cover the politicians’ views of an issues and how they cover issues and debates about them in general (Jacobs 2000, 9-12).

First, the media tends to cover debates about issues in a horse race fashion, with the focus being on which side of the issue is winning at any given moment. This horse race style of coverage also comes at the expense of more substantial coverage that could be delivered regarding the issues instead. However, this coverage of the issues in the frame of “who is winning at the moment” is not entirely the fault of journalists. Indeed, it often seems prompted by the politicians themselves when they change their rhetoric in a way that is about public support, or is obviously an attempt to garner further public support. It is easy to see how such a style of coverage can lead to a sort of feedback loop where the politicians frame an important

issue in the horse-race style of strategic terms, as opposed to the more substantive national coverage on the part of the press, which only leads to more strategic framing by the politicians. It is also conceivable that the members of the media, themselves, begin by first covering the debate in terms of strategic coverage, which leads to elected officials to speak of the debate in strategic terms in order to be presented as “winning” and having the public’s support (Jacobs 2000, 27-74).

Ultimately, *Politicians Don’t Pander* suggests that both politicians and members of the media will frame the story and that this framing will further result in spin and counter counter-spin attempts by both sides to their own benefit: with the media aiming to portray the issue in terms of exciting, spectator-style horse-race coverage, with politicians seeking to take advantage of this method of coverage by showing themselves or their side to be “winning” the race. So while it is difficult to say which side will first frame an issue or debate in terms of a strategic frame, it rarely will matter, since both members of the media and of government will attempt to take advantage of that opportunity, when it does occur (Jacobs 2000, 3-74).

Spin Cycle offers a unique look inside the operations of the President’s Press Secretary. While the Press Secretary and Cabinet Secretary perform largely two different functions, there are some similarities between the two positions in that Cabinet Secretaries do, at times, find themselves to be acting as the President’s spokesperson. As such, it is reasonable to expect that they have similar strategies in terms of messaging and articulating the President’s and administrations policy goals. *Spin Cycle* specifically follows the actions taken by Clinton’s Press Secretary Mike McCurry as he attempted to keep the administration on message and the president’s image clean throughout his tenure (Kurtz 1998, 1-49).

The overall impression given by *Spin Cycle* is, in some ways, similar to that of *Politicians Don't Pander* in that it depicts both the government and the media as engaged in a constant game of spin and counter-spin. As mentioned in *Politicians Don't Pander*, however, is the fact that this spin largely comes in the form of how the press Secretary will present the issue, not in the substance of the issue itself. Notably, there were some exceptions. At one press conference, President Clinton was asked by a reporter about his views on issuing an apology for the United States' former practice of slavery. Clinton, who was not aware that this was a new piece of legislation and had not previously given the question much thought, said that the issue was an important one and that it was something he would have to consider. McCurry then spent a considerable amount of time in preparing to answer questions about this issue. He predicted that it would be a major topic of inquiry at the next press conference and planned accordingly. As it turned out, the press did not ask any questions about the proposed apology that night and McCurry did not have to address the issue until he was later interviewed on CNN and stated that Clinton was not yet ready to support such legislation, which in turn caused Pat Buchanan to accuse McCurry of backpedalling from the President's earlier position (Kurtz 1998, 1-13).

While this may seem to be a legitimate position on the part of Buchanan, Kurtz argues that he had actually missed the whole point. There was no White House position, or at the very least, no official White House position until McCurry was interviewed on CNN and stated that the President was not going to support the law. Up until that point, the "official White House Position" was an offhand remark and series of delaying actions and rhetorical sleights-of-hand until the actual view was formed (Kurtz 1998, 11-13).

While this may initially appear to be applicable only to White House Press Secretaries, whose job it is to distill information to press on terms favorable to the president, there are a

couple of concepts here that applicable to Cabinet Secretaries. The first applicable concept is that McCurry tried to predict what the media would ask about and attempted to find ways to minimize the focus on such unfavorable questions while redirecting the press to more favorable issues. While the question and answer format of a press conference makes such predictions difficult to discern, especially in the case in which a press or Cabinet Secretary prepares for questions that are never asked, this is not the case for speeches and press releases which are delivered and distributed without the prompting of a specific question by the press. That is to say, it might be hard to predict what questions a press Secretary would prepare for in a press conference since the questions he or she worked on might simply not be asked; however, in the case of a speech or press release, the content of the text precedes and all questions (at a given conference or event) and as such, such preparation is not dependent on questions from members of the media. It is less reactive. This is important for the speeches and press releases made by Cabinet Secretaries because a speech or press release may touch on multiple issues or ideas of varying importance and salience. Therefore, if the Cabinet Secretary wishes to get his or her message out to the public through the press, one might expect he or she to have as simple a message as possible — one that touches on as few points as possible. On a related note, we might expect new stories about “simpler stories” (simpler in the sense that it touches on fewer issues) to be more consistent and in line with the Secretaries’ goals than relatively more complicated ones (Kurtz 1998, 1-32).

Unfortunately, at this point in time, views from inside the Cabinet are rare. However, there are a number of resources that offer a glimpse into how the Cabinet operates and, of particular interest to this project, how Cabinet Secretaries interact with the media. While I will not be looking specifically at former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich’s press releases and

speeches in my project, or those of any other Labor Secretary, his notes in the book *Locked in the Cabinet* offer a rare look inside what a Cabinet Secretary is thinking when crafting policy and his or her attempts to articulate that policy to the public. Reich himself does not come off as naturally media savvy. He required extensive training on how to effectively schmooze with Senators during his confirmation hearing and he had trouble resisting reverting to his professorial mode, especially if he believed he had the right answer and he was being confronted by someone who was challenging that answer. However, over the course of his term, he does learn some tricks of the media trade and is able to speak on them (Reich 1997, 37-51).

For instance, Reich ran into trouble a couple of times where his statements were interpreted to be those of the Clinton administration. In one particular instance, Reich inserted two sentences containing his newly coined phrase “corporate welfare” at the end of a speech. He considered the speech to be unremarkable and boring so he concluded that the two sentences would not be particularly controversial. However, the final two sentences made national headlines as journalists from across the country talked about the administration’s tough new stance on corporate welfare and what should be done about it. While the reviews of the new policy were largely positive, Reich found himself in some trouble as others in the administration thought that he was intentionally trying to set President Clinton’s policy (Reich 1997, 208-214).

In yet another instance, Reich publicly defended Clinton’s State of the Union Speech even though it was clear that the speech touched on few of the issues and viewpoints that he considered important. While Reich himself considered his remarks canned, but necessary, to be a good team player, the press eagerly tried to figure out the conspiratorial reasons behind his spin. This led Reich to remark that the media would have spun the story no matter what he said. Had he been critical of the president, it would have been at the behest of Clinton to show that he

still listened to liberals. Had he said something else, the counter-spin would be yet a third thing. So while Reich does (perhaps unsurprisingly) admit that even mundane statements can be canned or spun, he also specifically mentions the large counter-spin that the press often puts on a story (Reich 1997, 71-72).

Finally, it is also important to consider what roles Cabinet Secretaries can play within an administration and *Presidential Cabinet Making* looks at this very question. Secretaries can fill a number of roles in the Cabinet based on the President's or an administration's precise needs. A policy generalist is a Secretary whose political career typically starts at the campaign, legal level, or otherwise is not directly connected to the position to which they are appointed. A liaison Secretary, on the other hand, can almost be considered the inverse of a generalist and is chosen precisely because of his or her connections to the field with which he or she is working. Lastly, a specialist is typically a Cabinet Secretary that is an expert (usually in the academic or theoretical sense) in their field (Polsby 1978, 19-20).

The overall message from all of these sources appears to be that both politicians — including members of the President's Cabinet will spin and counter-spin a narrative for the own ends. The question is now how successful are the Cabinet Secretaries and members of the media at making their spin part of the accepted narrative.

III. Methods

The goal of this research project is to determine the relationship between what the Cabinet Secretaries say and the press says that they say. In order to properly understand this relationship, I first had to examine sources from both the Secretaries and the media. I needed to

look at the story at its source — in this case, the Cabinet Secretary — and look at it again at its end, the story as it appears in a newspaper.

Before I could begin my examination, I had to first establish the parameters of the research. While I would ideally hope to be able to analyze the messaging of every Cabinet Secretary, time and other resource constraints prohibit this from being a realistic option. With this in mind, the best candidates for further study were the Secretaries of Homeland Security. They are the heads of a recently established department, which means that it is possible to study the public statements of all of the Secretaries in this department. Additionally, the function of the Department of Homeland Security is too important to be neglected by a President, regardless of the President's partisan leanings or personal beliefs. The current political climate, in particular, guarantees that DHS is going to be a priority of any administration, which means that Secretary of Homeland Security is likely an important player in pushing for and developing public policy. This importance is further compounded by the fact that the policies of DHS are equally important to all Americans in a way that those proposed and carried out by the Departments of Veterans' Affairs, Agriculture, and Interior are not. Port and border security, disaster preparation and relief, and counter-terrorism operations are important around the country

Additionally, studying Homeland Security allows me to examine three different Cabinet Secretaries from both of the major parties and held by both men and a woman. The Department of Homeland Security website also has an archives section with many of the Secretaries' public remarks that organized chronologically, making it relatively easy to find articles and information related to them (DHS Speech Archives 2012, <http://www.dhs.gov/ynews/speeches/>)¹.

¹ At the time of this paper's publication, the archived public remarks made by Secretary Ridge and Secretary Chertoff have been taken down from the DHS website, although the archives still contain remarks made by Secretary Napolitano. Fortunately, I had saved copies of all of examined remarks prior to their deletion and they will be accurately cited in the remainder of this paper.

Once I decided which departments and which Secretaries to observe I then determined how exactly they were to be observed. Secretaries speak publicly in a variety of contexts. They are interviewed on network and cable news channels, deliver addresses to the public, go on talk shows on both the radio and television, offer press releases, write editorials, and even occasionally speak on the campaign trail. While they are delivering a message in each of these instances, the tone and content of the message can vary depending on the context of the speech and the medium through which it is delivered. For the purposes of this research, I needed to get as undistilled a message from the individual Secretaries as possible in order to ensure that I could best differentiate between the Secretaries' voices and messages and how it is relayed by the media. If it was difficult to distinguish the message and voice of the Secretary from that of the journalists that are covering them, it would have been a difficult task to measure differences in tone with any accuracy and confidence.

Therefore, the best medium for this research's design is to examine the Secretaries' speeches and press releases. In both cases, when the Secretary speaks, he or she is allowed as much time as he or she needs and is also the sole focus of attention. He or she is typically able to spend time crafting his or her message and fine-tuning it as much as deemed necessary beforehand and can even deliver it as pleased. This varies from a strict interview format where a Secretary's message can be shaped by the phrasing or content of a question before the Secretary is able to shape the issue his or herself. Nor does the Secretary have to contend with another powerful personality potentially vying for the focus of attention during the interview process. Even during question and answer sessions after a speech or press release, the focus is firmly on the Secretary who is typically given as much time as he or she deems fit to answer a question and is typically not interrupted by reporters while attempting to do so. Furthermore, a Secretary can

end a post-speech question and answer session early without it being particularly noteworthy, while a truncated interview is more likely to draw more, and more negative, media attention. Additionally, speeches and press releases vary from editorial columns where the Secretary's message may need to be truncated due to space constraints. Finally and from a more pragmatic standpoint, transcripts of press releases and speeches given by Cabinet Secretaries going back to 2002 are readily available at the Department of Homeland Security's website and are easily obtainable (DHS Speech Archives 2012, <http://www.dhs.gov/ynews/speeches/>).

I also needed to determine what portion of the media I was examining for comparison of messaging with the Cabinet Secretary. Determining which part of the media to examine and to compare against the Secretaries' speeches and press releases was not without some complications. In this case, I was not interested in how partisans view Secretaries as one can make a reasonable prediction that the Secretaries' messages will be conveyed differently based on the political differences between the Secretary and the political commentator, so further analysis here is unnecessary. Additionally, I needed there to be actual reporting and analysis in the message delivered by the journalist. Saying that "the Secretary of Homeland Security gave a speech today" with no appraisal of the content is not very interesting and does not make proper news reporting so much as it acts as direct message delivery for the Secretaries. With this in mind, I chose to base the media's response on articles written about the speeches and press releases found in The Washington Post and The New York Times. These papers have a reputation for giving detailed, unbiased, and consistently high quality coverage of political developments. Furthermore, newspapers have the added advantage of being the simplest medium to work with, because the words can be read as is, without having to worry about tone, mumbled words, allotted air time, and pregnant pauses made by the reporter. This is not to say

that newspaper articles are toneless documents that do not need to be read with a deft eye, but the added time inherent to the creation of written work means that, to a degree, there is less randomness and fewer moving parts associated with newspaper articles than there are in other forms of the media. Lastly, as with the speeches and press releases made by the Secretaries, newspaper coverage of Cabinet Secretaries is also readily available on a number of online databases and therefore easy to obtain. Specifically, I made use of the database *LexisNexis* (www.lexisnexis.com) to find and obtain all of the relevant articles about speeches given by the Secretaries of Homeland Security.

Having determined and outlined the parameters for my research, it is now possible to present the research proper. I will need to first determine what the Secretaries themselves are saying. What is the main message that they are trying to convey in their speeches and other public remarks? What themes do they touch on? What examples do they bring up? How do they frame the big issues? It is important to specifically do this step before looking at any of the articles about the speeches so as to not disqualify results by “peeking” at the final message — that conveyed by the newspapers — and through confirmation bias, conclude that the Secretaries were trying to communicate that message the entire time. While it is true that there is a risk of confirmation bias by reading the speeches and press releases before the articles, it is more likely that the journalists will not cover every aspect and sub-theme of a speech, given the typical disparity between speeches given by Cabinet Secretaries and articles written about them. I am more likely to catch this difference if I read the “intended” message first as opposed to the conveyed message.

Looking at so many articles proved to be a difficult process to distill with any sense of confidence early on in the research process. In order to account for this, I actually read through

the public statements given by the Secretaries several times. The first time was skim-through to ensure that remarks were given by the Secretary and that they were not simply a press release issued by the department or some other individual. I then read-through the remarks again to determine what subjects the Secretary was speaking about: disaster relief operations, what the Secretary hoped to get in that year's budget, where and how the department needed to move forward, or what new programs the department was initiating. Depending on the length of the remarks, I would typically find between two and five "subjects" per set of remarks; though often some would emerge as more dominant subjects than others within and between the public statements.

The last major read-through I would do for each set of public statements was looking for the theme of the remarks. To put this another way, I was looking for the thread that held all of the subjects together. If I could answer why the Secretary was talking about both terrorism and chemical infrastructure or hurricanes and gas stations, then I likely found a theme. The theme of the article (and there was usually just one) typically encompassed the message the Secretary hoped to communicate to the public, while the subjects were examples or the cause for the Secretary to address a particular issue in the first place.

After I read through the Secretaries' public remarks, I organized them into clusters of three to five remarks. These clusters were remarks given over the course of a short time period (usually around a week) where the speeches and press releases were about the same themes and/or subjects. These would become more important later on, when I began comparing messages sent by the Secretaries and by the media. It allowed me to see how the Secretary crafted his or her message over time as events unfolded; new information was released; and how

the Secretary, the media, and possibly other public figures offered different viewpoints on the same series of events.

Parallel processes took place on the media end of the research, although this occurred only after I was finished with the Secretaries' research to ensure that there would be a lower chance of confirmation bias. I searched for the articles by taking the date that the public statement was given and adding a week. Every article about the Secretary in The Washington Post and New York Times was a candidate for further research. As with the Secretaries' remarks I read through these articles several times. The first time was to ensure relevance to my sample of articles. While the journalists covered a number of public remarks given by the respective Secretaries of Homeland Security, I am only interested in those articles that are directly about the speeches and remarks that I have already examined. This is because even if the Secretary was speaking about the same general theme or topic, even if it's also through the medium of the speech or press release, without a transcript of what the Secretary said it is impossible for me to compare what the Secretary said to what the journalist said he or she said. I then read the article again looking for what subjects it touched on and I read through them a third time to examine themes.

Once this was done, I would then attach articles with remark clusters if possible. This was done if the article made reference to any remark of any speech or press release in a given cluster. This allowed me to compare what the Secretaries said to what the journalists wrote on a cluster-to-cluster (as opposed to an remarks-to-article) basis and track the development of the narrative on the media side and eventually compare it and the changes that it underwent to the narrative as formed by the DHS Secretary. It allowed me to effectively zoom out and examine

how the remarks and media narrative changed over time and account for how different spins and counter-spins altered the final product

These methods have been selected carefully to ensure the best and most useful results possible when determining what it is the Secretaries of Homeland Security say, the press conveys that they say in newspaper articles, and the chief similarities and differences are between the two forms of media.

IV. Hypothesis

The existing research and literature suggests that both Cabinet Secretaries and the media will engage in some form of spin. The way in which spin may be engaged will differ on the two parts, however.

While it is expected that Cabinet Secretaries will attempt to spin their stories in ways that are similar to politicians, it is again important to emphasize the form that the spin is expected to take. This is not the stereotypical “windsock” style of pandering where a politician holds one view before holding another, contrary, view, but rather the Secretaries are expected to frame their issues in different ways. For example, one might expect a Secretary of Homeland Security to frame the issue of border security differently to different audiences or differently if there recently was a spike in violence at the border. One would not expect the Secretary to have two different positions on the issue of border security, but it would be reasonable for one to have the expectation that the Secretary would talk about the issue differently to different audiences in different circumstances. Similarly, one might expect to frame an issue differently depending on how that issue is being portrayed by the press.

The literature also suggests that both Cabinet Secretaries and the media will each side try to change the story's narrative to fit their own ends. A Cabinet Secretary may do so to forward some policy goal while a reporter may try to spin a story so that it is more exciting or better fits with the reporter's understanding of how the story fits into the bigger picture. As the narrative progresses, both sides are likely to play on those expectations as they apply spin and counter-spin. By the end, it may very well be difficult to determine which party effectively owns the story.

This leads to the final hypothesis that suggests that a story that makes it to the public will end up having a resemblance to what the Secretaries are attempting to communicate in their speeches and press releases, but some of what they say will ultimately be distorted by the press. To put it another way, one can expect to find the Secretaries successful in conveying their broader themes to the public but have less success in communicating their subjects. This would be because the Secretaries are more likely to repeat their themes over the course of a narrative arc, while the subjects would only be discussed in a handful of particular speeches.

V. Data and Analysis

While the end goal of this research project was to compare and contrast the messages of Cabinet Secretaries with how that message is portrayed by journalists in print media, it quickly became apparent that the research could be broken down into its component parts — what the Secretary of Homeland Security says, and what the journalists say — and indeed, looking at the project on a smaller scale would likely facilitate later efforts in trying to parse out and properly interpret the data and convert that in findings. With this in mind, the findings are organized into three different subsections. The first section focuses on the findings of the Secretaries' speeches

and other remarks, the second on how conveyed message sent by the media, and the last and largest sub-section will look at the actual differences between what the two groups communicate.

The Secretaries' Lines

In the initial readings of the speeches and other prepared public remarks given by the Secretaries, there were a few common subjects and perhaps even some themes that were occasionally repeated. This is where organizing the speeches and remarks into clusters, as described earlier, became so important. Overall, I found four unique clusters within my universe of archived speeches and public remarks. It should be noted that not every speech and remark was formed into a cluster. Some were disqualified because there simply were not enough other public remarks made by the Secretary in a short amount of time whereas in other instances, the speech in question was not particularly related to any other public remark in a short time span. In a way, one could think of the entirety of the data as a radio where these clusters are radio stations, by changing the station to just the right frequency, I could get a more clear understanding of what the Secretaries' views and attempted narrative was on any given subject was without the interference of static in the background.

The first major finding was that speeches made about the same issue over a short time frame did tend to follow similar themes and have a similar overall message. When Secretary Ridge spoke about the threat of Anthrax attacks in late October 2001, it was invariably with the idea of informing the public about what information the government was prepared to release and attempting to keep the nation calm as a threat emerged to the mail system (Ridge Oct 22, 2001). There were times when this message was articulated more or less cogently — there were days when there simply was not much new information on an aspect of the investigation to report and

there was little in the way of substantial news or breakthroughs to report to the nation. Even so, the attempt to keep a coherent narrative was kept and the same themes were struck repeatedly (Ridge Oct 29, 2001).

This was especially true when the situation on the ground was not developing so quickly. In March 2006, Secretary Michael Chertoff gave a series of speeches about Hurricane Katrina (Chertoff March 6, 2006 National Association of Counties Legislative Conference). This was not the first cluster of speeches he had given about the aftermath of the storm and the relief and rebuilding efforts that followed, but what made this set different from the previous ones was how much later it occurred. By this point in time, the scope of the damage of Katrina and the other hurricanes that followed was fully realized, as was the inadequacy of the initial government response. To be sure, others brought up both points in the immediate aftermath of the storm, but the additional time had allowed Chertoff to form his own narrative regarding FEMA and Homeland Security's response to the storms (Chertoff March 9, 2006).

Specifically, Chertoff brought up the following points in each of speeches and remarks in the March 2006 cluster. FEMA and Homeland Security did a lot of things right in preparing for the storms. Katrina was a very unusual storm due to its sheer power and size, as well as how quickly other powerful storms followed. Some things can and need to be improved upon for future hurricane seasons — usually communications between the different organizations between DHS as well as greater ease of cooperation between federal and local levels of government (Chertoff March 6, 2006 Veterans of Foreign Wars). Perhaps the biggest and most prominent theme struck on in every speech in this cluster, however, was the idea that everyone: the federal and local governments, businesses, and ordinary citizens have a role in preparing themselves for the next big storm or the next big disaster. This last point was less surprising because, as will be

discussed shortly, “preparedness” was one of Chertoff’s favorite words and concepts as DHS Secretary. In some instances, it was mentioned so directly that “preparedness” was listed as both as theme and a subject of a speech (Chertoff March 6, 2006 National Association of Counties Legislative Conference).

There are a couple of other interesting findings from the clusters. One is that the question and answer sessions that follow a speech are less likely to follow the Secretary’s narrative than the speech itself. This should not be surprising. A journalist that is asking a question can focus in on a particular fact of an issue that makes it difficult for the Secretary to gracefully — and some cases, even ungracefully — provide their own narrative spin on the answer, or explain how one additional piece of information or another fits into their conception of the bigger picture. What was perhaps more surprising were the questions themselves. They typically were follow up questions that related to something specific said within the remarks. Journalists would occasionally ask the Secretary to give his or her opinion on a piece of legislation that was related to the speech. For instance, Chertoff was once asked about what he thought about a legislative proposal to separate FEMA from DHS, since they dealt with two different types of disaster responses (natural as opposed to terrorism). While in some ways the question was about something not contained in within the speech itself, it was also a natural extension of Chertoff’s ideas in his earlier remarks (Chertoff March 9, 2006).

Developing situations seem to make controlling the narrative during the question and answer session more difficult for the Secretary because there is so little information that is certain, and if the development is uncommon, as the Anthrax threat in October 2001 was, then even information that is known for certain by officials is likely to be completely new to the public. As such, many of Secretary Ridge’s question and answer sessions in the wake of the

anthrax attack were a series of technical questions that could not obviously be related to the narrative of the government's response to the outbreak (Ridge October 25, 2001). These sessions tended to look more disorganized in comparison to speeches and answered questions given after a situation ceases to develop so quickly (Ridge October 29, 2001).

The second interesting finding to emerge from the clusters was that certain themes appeared not only across clusters, but also across Homeland Security Secretaries. This theme was "preparedness." As Secretary, Michael Chertoff began to use the word and to refer to the concept early on and often. Even in non-clustered remarks, Chertoff would often frame some issue or aspect of an issue in terms of preparing — the federal government's role in preparing and in cooperating with the state and other local officials, as well as the part that businesses and private citizens had. This theme was brought up in issues ranging from disaster relief, to securing chemical and electrical infrastructure, to port security. Preparedness, and to a lesser extent, prevention, was everything (Chertoff March 6, 2006 Veterans of Foreign Wars). It would be one thing if preparedness was merely a catch-phrase, buzz word, or concept used by one Secretary, but it actually showed up as a theme several times for Secretary Napolitano (Napolitano April 27, 2009) and Secretary Ridge (Ridge, February 24, 2003). Napolitano touched on the thematic importance of preparation when enumerating steps the federal government was taking in dealing with H1N1 and additional steps that ordinary citizens could take to stay healthy and hinder the spread of the virus (Napolitano April 29, 2009 Testimony). Ridge wrote of the importance of citizens being properly prepared for an attack or disaster by staying informed and purchasing an emergency kit with supplies to last for several days. Not only did he offer some pragmatic advice on how to do this, but he also argued that it was the duty of citizens to do so if they wanted to help the nation in case of disaster (Ridge February 24,

2003). This theme would become more salient post-Katrina, when preparedness took on a newfound importance embraced by Chertoff, but the concept was not created by him. Indeed, the idea of preparedness being important pre-dates both Chertoff and Hurricane Katrina (Chertoff March 8, 2006).

This is interesting because it suggests that there are certain indispensable aspects of being a Secretary of Homeland Security. Just as DHS is too important of a department to be ignored by any President, there are certain responsibilities, concepts, and mindsets that are essential to any DHS Secretary. While perhaps this should not be surprising, it is still interesting to see Secretaries articulate these concepts and mindsets so clearly.

Next, we will look at the results of studying the articles found in New York Times and The Washington Post. It is apparent that Cabinet Secretaries do have clear themes and narratives that they try to express over the course of an issue's or subject's news life cycle. The question is how the media's narrative arc looks in comparison. Does it mirror the narrative and themes as expressed by the Secretaries or does it contradict them? Does it acknowledge the Secretaries' attempts to establish a narrative at all? What role do the question and answer sessions play for journalists? Finally, do journalists pick up on these themes that appear common across Secretaries?

The Media's Lines

While data collection for newspaper articles mirrored that of the Secretaries' remarks insofar that the articles were grouped into clusters and were closely read multiple times, there were a few important differences between the two that are worth noting.

The first major difference is that it was surprisingly more difficult to come across newspaper articles that were mostly devoted to the coverage of the DHS Secretaries and that breadth of the coverage was difficult to predict. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Tom Ridge, the first Secretary of Homeland Security, generally got the most press coverage as he tried to define the role of the new department in the wake of September 11th and a number of anthrax attacks (Ridge February 25, 2003). What was more surprising was how sparse the coverage of subsequent Homeland Security Secretary public remarks was. Despite giving daily updates and other briefings on the course of the H1N1 outbreak in 2009, Janet Napolitano received relatively little coverage and when she did, it was often shared with other experts, officials, and other various sources (McNeil April 27, 2009). Similarly, when Michael Chertoff spoke about chemical plant security in the Spring of 2006, he did not find himself or his remarks making headlines and being reprinted in newspapers; in fact, in one cluster, Chertoff actually gave more speeches and remarks than there were newspaper articles about his remarks, whereas every other cluster had more or an equal amount of articles to remarks (Lipton March 22, 2006).

This, in turn led to my previously mentioned revision in determining which articles were to be chosen for my sample. Initially, I hoped to only study articles that featured the Secretary's name in the headline, as these articles would likely have the most written in them about the named Secretary. When this method of article selection failed to provide a sufficient number of articles in a few cases, I expanded the universe of articles for those clusters to not only include the Secretary's name in the headline, but whether or not the Secretary was listed as a "person" in the article according to Lexis-Nexis. These "person articles" were subject to the same standards as the headline articles and proved to be academically interesting in their own right, because the

journalist would often condense the Secretary's and the administration's viewpoints down to a select few sentences.

The second interesting aspect in analyzing newspaper articles was taking into account how short they are in comparison to the speeches and remarks that they cover. A typical speech from a Cabinet Secretary was several thousand words long and was typically dominated by the Cabinet Secretary in question, even when the remarks were split with an undersecretary or the head of another department in the DHS umbrella. Newspaper articles, on the other hand, rarely broke the 1500 word mark and their coverage of the Secretaries was often divided between the Secretaries themselves, the President's spokesperson, other government officials, businessmen, and college and university professors. Therefore, there was a fairly large gap in pure volume of words between what the Secretary said in their speeches and what was reported about the Secretaries in the reports².

The newspaper articles, as a whole, seem to depict Cabinet Secretaries differently from how one might expect them to be portrayed. The literature on the Executive branch tells us that Secretaries can serve many different roles in the President's Cabinet ranging from a liaison to policy expert (Polsby 1978, 15-17). Given the importance of the position, a President is also very unlikely to give Homeland Security very little direction. The department is simply too important for the President to ignore (Laffin 1996, 550-551). So it is reasonable to conclude that regardless of whether or not the Secretary was chosen as a specialist or as a liaison, the Secretary of Homeland Security is important enough that his or her views will be reflective of the President and the administration. Perhaps, because of the Secretary's capacity as a de facto spokesperson for the President on certain policy issues we might also expect that the Secretary would dominate

² See Appendices for comparisons between the Secretaries' speeches and the articles about them.

coverage of Homeland Security issues where the administration was actively involved (Borelli 2002, 13-19).

The extent to which this actually occurred varied from article to article, and to an extent, from Secretary to Secretary. Articles that featured Tom Ridge tended to be mostly about Tom Ridge and his views on Homeland Security and what the Department's role would be in the administration. This makes sense, since Tom Ridge, as the first DHS Secretary would be instrumental in shaping and defining the department and outlining what authority that the DHS Secretary would possess. In many ways, the coverage of Tom Ridge fit a lot of the expectations about the coverage of Secretaries in general. When the press reported on his remarks, they recognized Tom Ridge as representing the President, but also captured that Ridge was the speaker and not just any bureaucrat. Indeed, the newspaper articles made much of Ridge's life story and personal life (Gerhart November 12, 2001). He was reported as being a close friend of the President, which led to him having more influence in the administration than his initial position of Homeland Security Advisor gave him. Additionally, the articles would occasionally divorce Ridge's position in Homeland Security from some failing of the department (Mintz March 2, 2003). This was especially true early on, when Ridge had relatively little real power and he was at least somewhat reliant on his close relationship with the President in order to accomplish policy goals and effect any meaningful changes. In this cluster of articles, Ridge would be credited with the successes he effected under the bureaucratic circumstances, but was occasionally excused in the articles when the department encountered difficulties — such as the mistakes made during the response to the anthrax attacks against Senator Daschle and other postal workers — in its early years. Regardless of the tone or other particulars of the article,

Tom Ridge was almost invariably portrayed as a major figure in Homeland Security, and in national security, at a broader level (Gerhart November 12, 001).

The expectation, when beginning the analysis of the newspaper articles, was that this would be the case with all of the Secretaries that were being analyzed — that the media would recognize the bureaucratic and symbolic importance of the Secretaries and their remarks and would feature and portray them in their coverage accordingly. While this was largely true for the articles that were about Tom Ridge, the articles about Chertoff and Napolitano featured a different portrayal of the Secretaries. Napolitano received almost as much coverage as Ridge but her coverage included many “person articles” whereas every Ridge article was a “headline article.” So while the quantity of coverage between the two Secretaries was comparable, the type of coverage that they received differed greatly. So while Tom Ridge was often the center of focus in his articles and was also portrayed as a major political figure; coverage of Napolitano tended to depict her in a relatively anemic light.

Napolitano’s coverage was particularly striking because some of her clusters coincided with the outbreak of H1N1, or “Swine flu.” Expectations were initially that Napolitano would get the bulk of her quality (from a data perspective) coverage during this period, since she made many public remarks, had taken something of a leadership position, and at the very least had become the voice of the administration regarding the virus. It would then follow that most coverage focusing on the administration’s response to Swine Flu would prominently feature Secretary Napolitano. This, however, was not the case. While news articles did comment on the fact that Napolitano had taken a leadership role and was the face of the administration in dealing with H1N1, they rarely mentioned what she said or what any of her actions were beyond the fact that she held daily public briefings. Indeed, while the newspaper articles frequently would allude

to things that Napolitano said in her public remarks, they rarely cited Napolitano as the source instead preferring to quote sentiments and remarks expressed by members of the Center for Disease Control or other medical experts (Harris April 28, 2009). One article specifically argued that the daily briefings, like those held by Napolitano, added to the panic “in an attempt to show they [government officials] are on the case. (Kurtz April 28, 2009)” The article then proceeded to cite and quote other media analysts on the media’s overblown coverage of Swine Flu, while not quoting Napolitano or any other government official. It was not that Napolitano’s expertise or professionalism was questioned in the H1N1 coverage, it was that she just was not mentioned much in the coverage all (Kurtz April 28, 2009).

The coverage of Michael Chertoff seemed to fall somewhere between that of Ridge and that of Napolitano. While Chertoff had the fewest articles written about him by far, the quality of his coverage was denser than that of Napolitano in the sense that he tended to be quoted a bit more on average as well as have a greater prominence in the articles in which he was featured. For example, when articles featuring Chertoff cited or quoted other sources, it was often in a way that it was in obvious reference to an earlier quote made by Chertoff or one of his other stated positions. In this sense, Chertoff’s coverage was closer to that of Ridge than to Janet Napolitano (Hsu March 22, 2006).

It is, however, important not to conclude too much based on these findings at this point. Chertoff may have received the least coverage in terms of the number of articles written about him, but he had few speeches that were archived around the time of Hurricane Katrina’s aftermath so this made it more difficult to compare crisis coverage than it would have been otherwise. Similarly, the speeches archived for Secretary Napolitano tended to focus more on briefings and official remarks as opposed to speaking events in front of a non-government

audience (Napolitano 2009). This does not necessarily mean that Chertoff made no public when he was arguing for tighter security with chemical or that Napolitano rarely, if ever, addresses non-government personnel or agencies directly, it just means that such speeches have not been archived and therefore cannot be procured.

Fortunately, there is still much that can be reasonably concluded from the articles about the Secretaries' speeches once they are compared to the speeches themselves. These findings will be discussed in the next sub-section.

Whose Line is it?

Making comparisons based on the two sets of narrative arcs provides some interesting results and some significant differences in interpretation, if only because it forces one to look at the broader picture in terms of what Cabinet Secretaries are likely hoping to accomplish when they speak.

Take the coverage of the first Homeland Security Secretary, Tom Ridge. When compared on an article-by-article basis, Tom Ridge is seen to be portrayed by the press in a positive manner. He is called a patriot by his peers and a self-made man by a staff writer of one of the papers (Gerhart November 12, 2001). Tom Ridge, if nothing else, succeeded in portraying a certain image of himself while in the office of Secretary of Homeland Security. Compare this with Janet Napolitano's image as portrayed by the media and you get a much different picture. According to the newspaper articles, Napolitano is the head of the administration's efforts to contain the spread of H1N1 and to keep the public healthy and informed throughout the course of the pandemic. However, her particular views, in some sense, were not any more noteworthy than any other health officials —where she and other members of the CDC found themselves

sending similar messages — or other members of the Obama administration. When a piece is written about her as a possible Supreme Court nominee, the praise is a bit more qualified. She is action-oriented, but her moderate views are described as being “all over the map (Thompson May 19, 2009).” On an individual basis, Tom Ridge seems to have received better coverage than Napolitano has. They had similar numbers of articles, but Ridge was more often the focus of the articles in which he was mentioned.

This, though, does not mean that Ridge was more successful than Napolitano in conveying a particular message, only that his public persona was more readily received by printed media than Napolitano’s was. In order to accurately judge the Cabinet Secretaries’ success at relaying their messages to the public, it is important to examine the articles from a thematic and qualitative point of view and not just a quantitative standpoint that focuses solely on how often the Secretary is mentioned and quoted.

Using this method it is possible to see that each of the Secretaries had roughly the same success when it came to effectively delivering their messages to the public. When examining the speeches and remarks delivered by the Cabinet members, some themes emerged more than others and through this it was possible to determine that these ideas were effectively the themes of the cluster. For example, both Ridge (Ridge February 24, 2003) and Chertoff (Chertoff March 9, 2006) often spoke about the concept of and the importance of “preparedness.” They would talk about what preparedness meant for federal and local governments, businesses, and individuals while also urging Americans to stay calm in the face of a national disaster. Napolitano would also repeat a version of the preparedness theme when giving public briefings about the course of the H1N1 virus. She would urge the public to take simple but prudent precautions like making sure to wash their hands and strongly consider staying home if they or

their children were sick. Newspaper articles occasionally picked up on this theme, but it was usually in oblique ways. Typically, those views would be quoted from someone other than Napolitano or the article would comment on a state of cautious optimism (Napolitano April 29, 2009 Remarks).

Similarly, Ridge got lampooned by the press following an incident where he recommended that people should acquire plastic wrap and tape in order to secure windows in the case of a bio-attack. While Ridge's intention seemed to be to encourage citizens to take responsibility for some of their own immediate security in case of disaster — and that having plastic wrap and tape on hand might be helpful to have in a survival tool kit — the story that got reported was that Ridge suggested that tape and plastic wrap would save Americans from terror. In his reaction to this coverage, which was then also covered, the press did record Ridge as speaking about the importance of being prepared and how everyone, even individual Americans, have a part in being prepared for disaster; but this read like the afterword to a story. Ridge got his message out eventually, but it was framed by his alleged gaffe (Mintz March 2). Similarly, Janet Napolitano's message of "cautious optimism" towards the end of the H1N1 breakout (Napolitano May 4, 2009) was actually conveyed in the articles that were about or featured Napolitano. However, this sentiment was not expressed by Napolitano in the articles, but rather, by members of the Center for Disease Control or other government officials who had remarkably similar views to the Secretary (McNeil April 27, 2009). So on the one hand, the Secretaries were often unsuccessful in that they were rarely portrayed as delivering all of their major talking points as determined through the clusters' themes. On the other hand, they could be considered successful in that their major themes made it to print anyway, despite their setbacks. In this sense, it is difficult to determine whether or not the Secretaries were actually successful in their

goals; if they got their message out on account of their efforts, or if the same would have happened anyway or happened only due to a lucky break.

At the very least, news media outlets rarely, if ever, outright contradicted what a Secretary said and in nearly every article one of the Secretaries' main points from one of the sets of remarks would be referenced at least obliquely. From this viewpoint, it would seem that Cabinet Secretaries can act as spokespersons for the President, though their causal role is ultimately questionable. That being said, even when Cabinet Secretaries were portrayed as individual actors and not a part of the administration, their words were often portrayed as being authoritative of government and particularly the President's policies.

The one exception to that rule, oddly, is the "bio pieces" about the Secretaries. Tom Ridge received one of these shortly after becoming the first Homeland Security Advisor and Napolitano also received one when Obama was seeking a replacement for Justice Souter on the Supreme Court. In both cases, but particularly with Ridge's, the Secretary's views, records, and presumed legal goals were contrasted with those of the President whom they served under. So Ridge was not initially faulted by the press when he had some difficulties as the first Homeland Security Advisor; rather, President Bush was faulted for giving Ridge too little actual authority and power in order to complete a difficult task and spent a good deal of coverage focusing on criticism of President Bush's policies (Gerhart November 12, 2001). Similarly, when there was speculation that Napolitano was being considered a Supreme Court nominee, the article focused on the ideological and policy differences between Secretary Napolitano and President Obama. While the article made little of these differences regarding Napolitano's current role as Secretary of Homeland Security, it did paint the picture that Napolitano and Obama were not united on all fronts (Thompson May 19, 2009).

Unity of message seems to be the big takeaway from this research, with Secretaries more likely to have their themes portrayed when another member of the administration or expert was shown as having similar views. While this goes a bit beyond the control of Cabinet Secretaries themselves, savvy administrations might be wise to invest extra time and effort in coordinating their message and trying to cite other policy experts that agree with them when possible, as other literature suggests they do (Kurtz 1992, 1-27). After all, when the Secretary's voice is just one among many, it is all the more important for the Secretary to have as many of those voices agreeing with him or her as possible in order to their message across. So perhaps Napolitano should be okay with not being credited for many of the things she said during her public briefings about H1N1, since here message — and presumably the administration's message along with it — was depicted by the press, anyway.

Similarly, Secretaries would do well to keep a consistent message when possible, but they should not necessarily expect that doing so will guarantee that their viewpoint will be fully portrayed. Again, the media very rarely outright mis-portrayed one of the Secretaries' viewpoints through either direct contribution or attributing to them a view that the Secretary did not have. So coverage of Chertoff's speeches did have some mention of the importance of preparedness, even if that particular set of remarks was not specifically or mainly about preparedness. Perhaps Chertoff should have been disappointed in this outcome, although there is reason to believe that he was not. If the preparedness was important enough for Chertoff to mention in some fashion in nearly every one of his addresses to the public, then he may not have particularly cared for which articles journalists ultimately decided to include them in. The important thing to Chertoff might have been that the public was reading about the importance of preparedness and chemical security for the nation (Chertoff March 9, 2006).

The converse to these rules would be to try to make the best of a bad situation when possible. For example, when Tom Ridge was mocked by some elements of the media for recommending that people buy plastic wrap and tape to protect themselves, rather than instinctually go on the defensive, as a less canny politician might have; Ridge simply rephrased the intended message which then got picked up by the media as part of Ridge's response to being mocked. Granted, Secretary Ridge likely would have preferred that his message on the importance of citizens preparedness be relayed by the press without having to be mocked first, but the press eventually ran the theme anyway (Mui March 8, 2003).

Further Findings

This, in turn, brings us back to the story of Secretary Rice. At the beginning of this paper we were presented with an article from The Washington Times that presented Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in a prominent manner. A reader of the May 3rd article would likely view Rice as strong, a leader in her field, and policy-maker in addition to being a representative of President Bush. From a certain standpoint, Condoleezza Rice is using the media well here. She is making headlines and getting the majority of the coverage. She is making bold statements. Her message is clear. The May 3rd article is a good one for Secretary Rice (Sammon May 3, 2005).

At a deeper level, however, the May 3rd article was an utter messaging disaster for the Bush administration. It featured two high-ranking officials offering conflicting narratives and downright contradicting each other. In a certain sense, it is unimportant as to whether or not Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice or if Press Secretary Scott McClellan was right, the important thing is that on May 3rd, The Washington Times reported that the Bush Administration

giving two different messages from two sources that should both know what administration policy should be. So while Condoleezza Rice and Scott McClellan respectively had clear messages to convey through the press; these messages were so immiscible to each other that it did not matter that one of the Secretaries got the headline and a majority of the coverage. The story that got out was that Secretary Rice made strong claims that may or may not be supported by the rest of the administration and by the President. This is not only important because in the immediate future, it sent an unclear message to American citizens and to North Korea — on an issue as touchy as American military action in the face of a nuclear armed North Korea — but it would hinder further efforts by the administration to present a unified message later on (Sammon May 3, 2005).

Perhaps that is the biggest take-away that can be made from this research: Cabinet Secretaries do not speak in a vacuum and they do not even speak on behalf of themselves. Media-savvy Cabinet Secretaries working for media-savvy administrations tend to work together with other administration officials when presenting a message to the media. This is possibly because the goal of creating a media narrative is the propagation of a particular message over time. From this point of view, it does not particularly matter how dramatically the message is delivered or even necessarily how well it grabs headlines. Secretary Napolitano's daily briefings during the H1N1 outbreak made very few headlines but contributed to the administration's overall message of cautious optimism and a general awareness for the need of practicing good sanitation when dealing with the flu. Napolitano herself was rarely mentioned directly in the context of the administration's reaction to H1N1, but this was not important. Napolitano's goal was not to generate headlines or even to deliver her own message; it was to convey the administration's message.

The results of the research would also seem to suggest that while Cabinet Secretaries are messengers and that they have an important and formative role in crafting their messages, they are not the chief generators of messages. Presidents and administrations are the ultimate agenda-setters and while Cabinet Secretaries are occasionally given some latitude in determining how messages are parsed, the overall message delivered by the administration must be unified and coherent. This would also seem to hold true for issues that are more Secretary specific. Tom Ridge and Michael Chertoff repeatedly made reference to the importance of preparedness, and all of its facets, throughout nearly all of their speeches. Tom Ridge spoke of the importance of having an organization capable of preparing for, in both response to and the prevention of, the next terrorist attack. He also spoke of how ordinary citizens could prepare themselves by assembling basic survival kits. Indeed, he continued this message even after he was lampooned by the media for recommending that Americans purchase tape and plastic wrap (Mui March 8, 2003). Later, Michael Chertoff spoke of the importance of the Gulf Coast preparing for future hurricane seasons post-Katrina. He spoke of the importance of preparing American ports. He talked about how it was important that Americans prepare themselves and said that it was a duty to do so in order that rescue workers could help only the neediest in storms and in other disasters. He talked about the importance of businesses securing America's power, chemicals and infrastructure (Chertoff March 6, 2006 Veterans of Foreign Wars). Just about every speech Ridge, Chertoff — and to a lesser extent Napolitano — gave was somehow connected to the importance of preparedness. From this standpoint, it is little wonder that the media eventually picked up on this message, as it was one of the themes that the Secretaries brought up in remark after remark.

In a way, then, the Secretary Rice article in The Washington Times remains an interesting case study for scholars because it still does portray the Secretary in a leadership position over other administration officials in a moment of high tension. However, it is not a case study in effective communication on behalf of the Bush Administration, with two distinct and contradictory messages coming from the White House as the added themes that emerged from others quoted in the article, including the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency Mohamed ElBaradei (Sammon May 3, 2005).

Another important difference between the Rice Article and stories examined in the research is that Rice article was a single article while research eventually dictated that the articles about the Secretaries' s remarks, and the Secretaries' remarks themselves, be looked at and profiled in terms of clusters in order to get the best idea of how media narratives work. So in this research, even in cases where Secretaries where unsure of their administration's position or new information dictated policy shifts and changes in rhetoric, these changes can also be observed over time and it is possible to see how journalists react to these changes in rhetoric and whether or not they pick up on the new and emerging themes that the Secretaries presented. The Rice article, however, is just a single data point and as such, cannot be truly representative of a true narrative. Indeed, North Korea is not mentioned in the headline of a Washington Times article again until the June 9, 2005 — over a month after the Rice article. Therefore, if one wishes to know what a Cabinet Secretary is likely trying to convey to the public, it is best to look at newspaper articles over time when direct sources are not available. A single report will likely not accurately portray the entirety of a Secretary's message, but articles viewed over time will allow for a fairly accurate approximation (Sammon May 3, 2005).

VI. Conclusion and Implications

The results of this research would suggest a few things if and when political scholars go on to further study Cabinet-media relations.

Repeated Themes

The first, and perhaps least surprising conclusion, is that media-savvy politicians are likely to repeat themes and the chief elements of their narrative over time. If a Cabinet Secretary finds an idea worth relaying to the public, it is likely that the idea will be conveyed repeatedly. These themes will not always be mentioned in the same proportions and sometimes one theme may be substituted for another if so necessitated by real-time events — as was the case with Napolitano, who focused a bit less on the theme of “preparedness” in general in favor of keeping the public up-to-date on the spread of H1N1— but such substitutions tend to be the exception and not the rule. Furthermore, Cabinet Secretaries may choose to emphasize certain aspects of one theme over another if the media has picked up on parts of the narratives and not others, or if the Secretary believes that their audience would be more receptive to some themes over others.

“Default Themes”

The second conclusion that is suggested by the research, perhaps, should also not strike us as surprising is that Cabinet Secretaries —or at least Secretaries of Homeland Security — tend to mention a “default” set of themes in their speeches and press releases. There is a reason why the example of preparedness has come up so often in this paper; it’s because the Secretaries themselves brought up that theme, in some form, in nearly every speech that they delivered. Perhaps this is because that raising preparedness —encouraging citizens and private businesses

to become more prepared and advocating for laws that raise national preparedness — are so essential to the Secretary of Homeland Security’s job that it is nearly impossible to not raise the issue in some form when speaking. Or perhaps the issue or concept is so essential to the job of Secretary of Homeland Security that it makes little sense for the Secretary to speak about things that do not relate to the concept of preparedness. Regardless of the exact reason, this research suggests that Cabinet Secretaries, regardless of their party alignment, are likely to touch on concepts specific to their department in nearly every set of remarks regardless of the exact subject on which they are speaking. The only time where this becomes less apparent is when the Secretary must speak about an ongoing situation, where the need for particular information will partially overtake their tendency to speak about a “default concept.”

These “default issues” result in it being very difficult to tell whether or not a Secretary is applying spin, and in a way, nearly makes the question moot. For instance, when Ridge was criticized for recommending that Americans purchase plastic wrap and tape, he was able to spin the story by again mentioning the importance of all Americans — even ordinary citizens — being prepared in the face of the terror threat. So while Ridge spun the story in the sense that changed the emphasis from the specific things Americans do to be prepared (buying tape and plastic wrap), he returned to his larger point about the importance of preparedness regarding terror attacks (everyone has a role). In this way, Ridge was able to change the narrative and turn it away from his alleged gaffe, but he did so in a way that his overall message literally remained unchanged and the press soon reported on his insistence on the importance of being prepared. His message still got out eventually (Mui March 8, 2003).

It also has ramifications for how Secretaries frame their issues. It is true to a certain extent that Secretaries do change their message based on their immediate audience. Secretary

Chertoff's speech to chemical companies was differed from his public remarks about preparing for the 2006 hurricane season along the Gulf Coast, the major themes and frames remained the same: preparedness, preparedness, preparedness. The particulars of preparedness differed to an extent, since chemical companies do have different security concerns from Gulf Coast residents, but these differences really did not result in the issues being framed differently. The theme and framework was that preparedness was important for all Americans, be they working in the government, for businesses, or as private citizens (Chertoff March 6, 2006 Veterans of Foreign Wars).

The Bully Pulpit(s) of the Executive Branch

The third conclusion that this research suggests, and arguably the most important thing, is that when it comes time to ask "Whose line is it?" the answer to that question is that it is sometimes the Secretary's line, often the administration's, and very rarely the media's. The fact that Secretaries refer to the same concepts and arguments throughout many of their speeches and remarks already makes it so that journalists have a good frame of reference for what the Secretary will be speaking about. From there, all the Secretary must do is tailor their message to fit the particular occasion for speaking and the press will generally pick up on the differences and some of the subtleties of the Secretary's speech. The likelihood of the press accurately portraying what the Secretary says is only compounded when many other administration officials are attempting to convey the same message in a coordinated fashion. In instances where this occurred, with the response to the H1N1 outbreak standing out in particular, the conveyance of the Secretary's apparent intended message seemed more complete. For example, a one article neatly echoed Janet Napolitano's notion of "cautious optimism" while only really mentioning the

Secretary in passing. This is perhaps because Secretary Napolitano had been giving daily briefings to the press and the public on the progress of the H1N1 outbreak and several other members within the administration, notably Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius had also been speaking to the press and had given them a very similar message over time (McNeil April 27, 2009). This cautious optimism was so pervasive as the virus spread with little transmission and fewer fatalities that some in the media began to question what the initial media-induced panic about the flu was at all (Kurtz April 28, 2009).

It is surprising to find that the press did not openly push the Secretaries more in the articles. While this is not to say that the Secretaries were universally portrayed in a positive light, they were able to quickly establish some version of their story early on and succeeded in getting just about all of the major themes established in the speeches in the media articles, eventually. So while it is possible that the media did, in fact, attempt to apply spin and counter-spin to the Secretaries stories, they largely did not succeed in integrating that spin into part of the conveyed narrative over the long-term course of the story's arc.

These suggested conclusions from this research have some important ramifications. The first is that Cabinet Secretaries should not be surprised when some seemingly off-hand or minor remark takes over the whole story. For instance, when Secretary of Labor Robert Reich gave “a boring speech” which ended with a relatively small two sentence reference to the then new concept of corporate welfare, he should not have been surprised when corporate welfare became the talk of Washington and of headline news for the days and weeks that followed. Ignoring for the moment how attention-grabbing the phrase “corporate welfare” is, Secretary Reich should not have been surprised since speaking about corporate welfare in the context that he was in — that administration was on the defensive about its job and economic policies and the press by this

time had likely grown used to what a “typical Robert Reich speech” sounded like — that dropping the phrase corporate welfare was bound to attract attention. Therefore, Cabinet Secretaries and the administrations that they work for, do have some justification for being as obsessed over the detail in messaging that they are sometimes rumored to be, given how sensitive some members of the press are to changes in politicians’ tone and rhetoric (Reich 1997, 206-214).

The second major implication of these conclusions is that newspapers are good sources of giving the public the Cabinet Secretary’s, and perhaps even the administration’s story. So while the press will occasionally bring in other perspectives that may disagree with the Secretary or the administration at large, those that disagree likely lack the same resources that a Secretary has in getting their story out. Many politicians, and nearly all non-politicians, do not possess the same clout and presumed expertise that the Secretaries have in their respective fields. Nor are those who wish to present a message that is counter to the Secretary’s or the administration’s likely to have the same media access or other resources (for example, something equivalent to being able to coordinate with other members of the administration). So while the press by and large does a good job of accurately portraying the Secretaries’ intended message and points of views, those wishing to get similar coverage while presenting a message that is counter to the administration may be likely to receive less favorable, or at the very least less accurate coverage, simply due to the disparity of resources between the two groups. In short, this research may suggest that administrations and Cabinet Secretaries are at an advantage when it comes to public debate as shown through the press.

Finally, these findings do pose some questions about the media’s ability to effectively act as the public’s watchdog. This is because the press is ultimately limited in its ability to report on

messaging in the sense that it can only report on the messaging that the administration chooses to convey. So if the Cabinet Secretaries and administration are consistent in the messaging it can be very difficult for journalists to frame debate or larger issues. The coordinated message provides for little internal dissent and allows the administration to effectively choose how issues are discussed.

Overall, however, this research suggests that if the goal of a citizen or another individual is to get a fairly accurate portrayal of what a Cabinet Secretary's views and policies are, than the press in newspaper articles provide a good proxy for what the Secretaries, themselves, are saying their speeches. It also suggests that Cabinet Secretaries, for their part, are masters of forming media narratives that the press is likely to pick up, as well as subtly changing the narrative when events on the ground change or simply if another aspect of the narrative needs to be emphasized.

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Appendices

DHS Secretary Public Remarks Clusters			
Secretary	Number of Public Remarks	Date Range of Remarks	Primary Themes (not exhaustive)
Ridge (Cluster 1)	3	10/22/2001 to 10/29/2001	Government response to anthrax attacks. The importance of taking precautionary measures (preparedness). War on Terror is fought abroad and at home.
Ridge (Cluster 2)	3	2/24/2003 to 2/27/2003	Formation of DHS allows for better levels of preparedness at all levels of government. DHS workers making potential life or death decisions every day, but they are up to the task. Continued vigilance and security is essential.
Chertoff	5	3/6/2006 to 3/9/2006	The importance of establishing partnerships between federal and local gov'ts. Everyone has a role in preparing the nation for next potential disaster, including ordinary citizens and newspapers. Steps that federal gov't has taken in preparing for next hurricane season and for avian flu.
Napolitano	8	4/27/2009 to 5/6/2009	What the federal gov't has done in preparing for H1N1. Cautious optimism as threat is seemingly less than expected. What citizens can do to help slow or prevent the spread of the flu — mostly practice good hygiene.

Appendices (Continued)

Newspaper Articles Clusters			
Secretary	Number of Articles (NYT/Wash Post)	Date Range of Articles	Primary Themes (not exhaustive)
Ridge (Cluster 1)	4/3	10/25/2001 to 11/12/2001	<p>There are many unanswered questions about the anthrax outbreak.</p> <p>Ridge's life experiences make him ideal to lead HLS.</p> <p>Admin trying to work with public, but security is expensive and confusing at times.</p>
Ridge (Cluster 2)	2/2	3/2/2003 to 3/8/2003	<p>Ridge talks about the importance of being ready.</p> <p>Ridge's relationship with President Bush lends him clout when suggesting or enacting policies.</p> <p>Ridge faces many challenges as head of DHS and some worry that his position gives insufficient power to deal with them.</p>
Chertoff	3/1	3/16/2006 to 3/22/2006	<p>Chertoff trying to balance security of chemical plants and the challenges that industry faces.</p> <p>Government, businesses, and individuals need to have contingency plans for disasters.</p>
Napolitano	4/5	4/27/2009 to 5/19/2009	<p>Obama admin and Napolitano argue that closing U.S. border with Mexico will not stop flu.</p> <p>Gov't officials cautiously optimistic as spread of flu slows.</p> <p>What people can do to stay sanitary.</p>