

Comparing elite and non-elite newspaper
use of government press releases in Taiwan

By

Min-li Hung

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Most research shows that the news media are major sources of information forming public opinion. Furthermore, the mass media are the major information channels transmitting knowledge about government to their important publics. In other words, media, government and the public are closely linked. The relation between the government and the media is an interactive one, as Glick (1966a) explains:

. . . the dissemination of political information is the product of a "system" in which government and media usually play mutually-supporting and interacting roles (P.1)...

. . . Government and press are part of a communication system. They interact (P.13).

Siebert (1960) classified government's relation to communication under four headings: government as a restrictive agency, as a regulating agency, as a facilitating agency and as a participating agency. In addition to these four philosophies suggested by Siebert, government plays a "news source" role in the government-media relationship. According to McCamy (1939), "the government publicity man is a part of the machinery by which the citizen is given the miscellany of fact and opinion which constitutes his news." Paletz and Entman (1981) said that reporters are instructed to cultivate sources such as government information offices.

To create a positive public image, the government, like the business community, makes use of public relations tools such as speeches, staged events, press releases, brochures, audio-visual presentations, telephone information programs, exhibits and more. Press releases seem to be the major method for reaching publics. For newspapers, press releases are one of the most important news sources because media

receive a large number of press releases every day, and because they perform an important function in the news-gathering process (Blyskal and Blyskal, 1985).

Press releases were preferred by the publicist as the most convenient and the fastest way to reach the public. Understandably, government officials prefer to dispense information through press releases in the hope that journalists will use or rewrite them, or reporters can, at least, interview the relevant government officials on the basis of stories in the press releases. Even though some studies conclude that most press releases were discarded by the journalists (Harris, 1961), reporters routinely rely on government press releases as a source of news (Nimmo, 1964; Glick, 1966b; Kaid, 1976; Polk, 1975; Hale, 1978; Martin and Singletary, 1981; Vanslyke Turk, 1986).

Differences Between Elite and Non-elite Newspapers

As far as the elite sources in the United States are concerned, press releases from the government make certain types of useful information easily available to reporters (Brown et al., 1987). Yet research has found patterns of different usage based on the type of newspaper receiving the press release. For example, because of economic constraints, few newspapers can afford correspondents in major news centers in America, let alone throughout the world (Donohue and Glasser, 1978). This increases dependence on news releases, but does not ensure their use. Many press releases are rejected by local or weekly newspapers (Ziekle, 1968). Furthermore, Schabacker (1968) concluded that press release use will be "limited" in weekly newspapers compared to metropolitan newspapers. On the other hand, because local, weekly, or low circulation newspapers can afford only small staffs and minimal equipment, there is widespread concern that they rely too heavily on verbatim press releases and "filler" material to

cover their newsholes. According to the criteria of elite media by Merrill (1968), local and weekly newspapers are non-elite newspapers compared to the metropolitan newspapers. Use of press releases in Taiwan might be expected to be similar to the United States.

As in the United States, preparing press releases and sending them to the media is one of the major jobs for government information offices in Taiwan (China Year Book, 1988). In this country, the press is considered much closer to the American tradition and practice than is the press of any Asian nation, with the possible exception of Japan (Clayton, 1971). Newspapers in the United States, however, enjoy a greater press freedom than do Taiwanese newspapers, which are subject to much government control (Clayton, 1971; Lowenstein, 1975).

This study will examine the differences in use of government press releases by two newspapers in Taiwan, one elite and one non-elite. The study examines coverage of government and how government press releases are treated by two daily newspapers, the United Daily News (an elite paper and the most famous independent metropolitan-circulated newspaper in Taiwan), and the Taiwan Times (a non-elite and non-metropolitan newspaper).

Purpose of the Study

Although it does not have a long history in Taiwan, the press plays an important role in the Chinese people's lives. With a nationwide literacy rate of 90 percent and a rate of readership even higher than their total circulation, newspapers are a prime news source for Taiwan citizens.

The rationale of this study is based on the fact that little research has been conducted to examine the way the newspapers treat or process the press releases issued by the government. According to Rivers, Miller, and Gandy, the existing studies fail to "bring together studies of the government with studies of the media" (Rivers, et al., 1975). Although studies on the issue of gatekeepers in Taiwan help us to understand the internal and external factors at work explaining the role of reporters and editors in the selection of news stories (Luh, 1982), there has been no research focusing on the way government press releases are treated and comparing the difference in treatment between elite and non-elite newspapers.

The purpose of this study is two-fold:

- (1) To examine the patterns of use of press releases from different levels of government by newspapers in Taiwan, and
- (2) To study differences in acceptance, editing and printing of press releases between an elite and a non-elite newspaper in Taiwan.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gatekeeping Theory

The term gatekeeping was coined by Kurt Lewin. Lewin (1947) described the process by which a news item moves through certain communication channels functioning as "gates." He explained that gates are governed either by unbiased rules or by "gatekeepers." In Lewin's definition, a gatekeeper is an individual or group "making the decision between the 'in' and 'out'." A more clear explanation about gatekeepers was provided by Schramm (1960). He said that people who govern the gate of communication flow have the ability to decide whether the information should be received, rejected, or transmitted with changes. They are people who decide whether or not a news item is put in the newspaper. Gatekeepers decide a news item is "good" or "bad" according to their own values and beliefs.

In 1950, White applied the gatekeeper concept to the journalistic study of how wire editors selected a small number of items from many items. He found that only 10 percent of the wire press releases were accepted by editors. White reconfirmed Lewin's statement that editors (gatekeepers) selected news according to their own experience, attitudes, and expectations about the news (White, 1950).

In the past two decades, gatekeeping or news-selection activities have attracted considerable interest mainly because of their potential for revealing the nature of "news values" applied by the media (Jublian, 1951; Ross, 1962; Schabacker, 1968; Ziekle, 1968; Polk, 1975; Sachsman, 1976; Hirsch, 1977). These studies have indicated that the majority of press releases are rejected by gatekeepers because they:

1. lack local interest,
2. lack news significance, or
3. attempt to gain free advertising.

Most of the studies of daily newspaper coverage have concentrated heavily on the analysis of "output", i.e., what appears in the newspapers, with little concern for "input," such as the news releases as the sources of news. The gatekeeping phenomenon has been examined extensively by many researchers. Generally speaking, the socialization of gatekeepers, the news values and biases of individual gatekeepers, and the process of gatekeeping are the three major categories into which gatekeeping studies can be placed (Abbott, 1986).

Mass communication scholars believe that people rely on the media as their primary source of information on important social or political events. For example, Atkin suggests that the mass media are the most important element in the political socialization processes (Atkin, 1981). Cohen (1963), however, makes the distinction that "the media may not be very effective in telling people how to think, but are very effective in telling people what to think about." The gatekeepers play an important role in the political communication process. McCombs and Shaw (1972) observe that "In choosing and displaying news, the editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping the political reality."

Government Press Releases as News Source

There is an interrelation between government and mass media in modern societies. In recent years, researchers have studied the relation between government and press. There are relatively few studies, however, examining both access to government news by the press and the production and use of press releases.

Journalistic techniques, press releases, leaks, and conferences are commonly used by government officials. Press releases from public relations practitioners are one of the major news sources (Hynds, 1977). As Keir said, reporters have accepted the

government public relations function as a necessary part of covering government activities (Keir, 1966). Only after receiving many press releases from various government departments can reporters have an idea of the activities of government. In most cases, reporters simply use or rewrite these press releases, or follow up on the stories by interviewing the officials involved.

Newspapers do use the political news releases and these releases will influence the coverage of news, although reporters are reluctant to admit the value of government press releases. Scores of content analysis studies show that the news releases are used at least in part in news stories and that news releases from politicians and governments are one of the major news sources. Cutlip (1962) stated that the news gathering function of the press cannot be separated from the publicist. He found that publicists are responsible for 35 percent of newspaper coverage. Sigal (1973) examined the sources of the front pages of the Washington Post and the New York Times over the period 1949 to 1969. He found that these two newspapers depended on information obtained at press conferences for almost one-fourth of their front page stories; another 18 percent came from press releases provided by government information officials. Bagdikian said that the reporters rely on the information provided by the governments (Bagdikian, 1972).

Although political news is influenced by press releases, studies suggest that political gatekeeping may differ from other forms. Some studies suggest that there is a higher acceptance rate for political press releases. According to Nimmo, the media used 41 percent of the press releases received from information officers of the federal government in 1964. Glick found that 22 percent of the articles about two departments (State; Health, Education and Welfare) in two metropolitan dailies followed, completely or partly, the handouts provided by these executive agencies (Glick, 1966b).

Kaid (1976) studied the newspaper treatment of a candidate's news releases, concentrating on the method with which news editors dealt with them. She found that 18 out of 26 press releases (69 percent) from one candidate were covered by at least one newspaper, but in eight of the eighteen cases the press releases were accepted only by one. This study also indicated that only 31 percent of the press releases were ignored. Sachsman (1976) focused on the influence of press releases on news coverage in San Francisco area. He obtained the agreement of 11 environmental reporters in the San Francisco area to list the sources of press releases which they received over an eight-week period. Among a total of 1,300 press releases, 566 came from government agencies, 315 from industrial organizations, 234 from academic and civil groups, and 229 from environmental groups. These 11 reporters also pointed out that they kept 268 out of 1300 press releases and wrote news stories based on the 192 of these 268 press releases which they thought were useful (Sachsman, 1976). Many political gatekeeping studies have also focused on the newspaper treatment of court press releases. In his study of California press releases, Hale (1978) stated that the mean performance of ten California newspapers was to report 28 (20 percent) of the 139 California supreme court decisions, but 88 (63 percent) for the court releases (Hale, 1978).

Newspapers seem to be becoming more reliant on government releases. In a study of how Pennsylvania newspapers treat state-government releases, Martin and Singletary found that 118 (59.2 percent) out of 199 state government press releases were published at least once (Martin and Singletary, 1981). Vanslyke Turk (1986) examined the effect of state-government press releases on newspaper coverage. This study particularly attempted to measure the influence of Louisiana's state government Public Information Officers (PIOs) upon newspaper coverage. She concluded that the PIOs were successful in their media subsidization effort. Half of their news releases and other information

handouts were used by the newspapers, and almost half of the news stories written about these state agencies included information provided to journalists by the PIOs. Hence, Louisiana's daily newspapers were more likely to use public relations information in their published stories than they were to discard them.

Conversely, studies in 1970s found a high rejection rate for weekly newspapers. Ashley studied the press releases from Kentucky's state public information offices and found that only 6.7 percent of the news items and 10.4 percent of the pictures were printed by the nine prestigious weekly newspapers (Ashley, 1968). Polk et al. concluded that 33 out of 50 newspapers in Wisconsin printed no publicity releases from senators in a survey period of two weeks and only 17 out of 50 small weeklies printed news releases from Wisconsin's third Congressional district (Polk, 1975). These findings provided a conclusion that press releases are minimally successful in being used by weekly newspapers. The effectiveness of press releases was questioned for weekly newspapers.

For those small circulation media such as local and weekly newspapers, "local interest" was found to be the most important factor in whether press releases were accepted by reporters (Sellers, 1953). Compared to national dailies, local and weekly newspapers are classified as non-elite newspapers. It seems that the non-elite newspapers reject the majority of press releases because of no local interest. One possible reason to explain why the weekly newspapers ran fewer releases is that weeklies did not have enough space to run releases.

According to Nimmo (1964), Public Information Office (PIO) releases are one of the major news sources for reporters, but different newspapers rely on government press releases in different degrees. That is, the national and local newspapers will treat the press releases differently in terms of the elite and non-elite newspapers.

Generally, national or large-circulation newspapers are considered as elite newspapers. Merrill (1968) affords some criteria for identifying the elite press. He stated that the elite press must be separated from the government either politically or ideologically.

. . . All newspapers (of any political system) which reflect the philosophy of their governmental system and try to present serious, educational reading are not only responsible to their society, but are members of the elite press--or they are climbing into that select fraternity.

Assuming that a nation's sociopolitical philosophy determines its press system, and undoubtedly it does, then, it follows that the nation's leading and most prestigious papers are socially responsible and form the elite (1968, p. 100).

To clarify, Merrill states that elite papers show concern toward serious news and views, and desire to influence opinion leaders. He notes that elite newspapers have economic diversity, but they also have enough money for good printing, a well-educated staff, news agencies, and correspondents. Moreover, they have a sizeable circulation.

The elite press is after readers of discernment and influence. Most elite newspapers realize that their readership will probably be small, but they know that it is usually patient, sapient and prestigious (1968, p. 101).

Hence, according to Merrill, the elite press should have these characteristics: 1) they cover government news well; 2) they should have either a large circulation or a special elite readership with small circulation; 3) they are financially stable, and 4) they operate in a literate and well-educated population area.

Much research has concentrated on the national and local press to investigate the elite and non-elite newspapers. Those studies have found that the elite newspapers rely heavily on routine sources, especially on government press releases.

The New York Times and Washington Post are two elite newspapers on the list suggested by Merrill (Merrill, 1968). Sigal's study (1973) of news sources and news-gathering channels show that over a 20-year period most front page stories in the New York Times and Washington Post relied heavily on government officials as their routine sources. Fifty-eight percent of items came from routine governmental channels of news gathering such as press conferences, press releases, and official proceedings. He also found that officials accounted for more than three-fourths of all news sources.

In conclusion, national, large-circulation newspapers use more press releases than local, small-circulation newspapers. That is, the elite newspapers accept more press releases than non-elite newspapers do.

Changes in Content

Journalists do not always use press releases as received. They reject some of the press releases which are useless, and change others to fit the news space. Fitzpatrick (1949) stated that the government press releases competed with the news space available.

The major concern of studies about the press handling of releases is the manner in which papers reproduce the content of such releases and the fairness of the play. The highest expectation of governments who send the press releases is that the press releases could be printed "verbatim" by newspapers. As Kaid (1976) states, in dealing with a candidate's press releases, there is a tendency to either print them verbatim (or with only a few omissions) or to reject them altogether.

Similar studies have reconfirmed the method with which press releases are handled by gatekeepers. Martin and Singletary (1981) examined the way newspapers treated state-government releases based on an "all or none" principle.

News length is also a point of difference between news releases and news stories. In general, press releases will be shortened before printing. When editors need to omit a part of a release, they usually drop the last paragraph (Kaid, 1976). A study of press releases from the California Supreme Court found that the story mean is 1.85 inches, which is only 21 percent of the mean of Supreme Court press releases (Hale, 1978). The correlation between release length and story length for individual newspapers ranged from .414 for the newspaper with the smallest circulation to a high of .609 for the largest paper with the greatest circulation (Hale, 1978).

In comparison with the length of news stories not from press releases, the length of news stories from press releases is shorter. Aronoff found that the story length from public relations sources is 33.64 column inches, whereas from the reporters themselves it is 96.43 column inches (Aronoff, 1976).

Rewrites seemed a major method of incorporating press releases. Rewriting was generally done to clarify or to make a story fit into the available space (Dunn, 1973). Because of economic considerations, local or small-circulation newspapers cannot employ staffs as large as those of national-circulation newspapers. Based on this, the study of Martin and Singletary (1981) supposed that the small papers will rewrite press releases before the publication more than the large papers do. However the hypothesis that "small papers would rewrite news releases" was not supported by this study. When verbatim publications were crosstabulated with newspaper circulation, there was no distinction found based upon circulation size. That is, the non-elite newspapers did not print press releases "verbatim" more than the elite newspapers (Martin and Singletary, 1981).

News Gathering and News Source Between Elite and Non-elite Newspapers

As noted earlier, elite newspapers are more likely to use government press releases than are non-elite newspapers. Culbertson (1975) concluded that 54 percent of all stories of the New York Times and Washington Post had used news from "officials" and "spokesmen," even though they did not admit it. He also examined differences among the local or state newspapers and national newspapers on news sources and found that the news sources of local or state newspapers were more "veiled" than those of national newspapers.

Another study of differences between news sources used by elite and non-elite newspapers was suggested by Brown et al. in 1987. They found that most front-page stories came from routine channels and government officials heavily used as news sources. The result of their study indicated that 31 percent, or almost one-third, of all sources of front-page news stories related to the U.S. government and more than half related to some government body. Interestingly, they found that local newspapers tended to rely less on routine news-gathering channels than did the New York Times or Washington Post.

Brown et al. also found that stories in local newspapers were noticeably different from those in national newspapers. Their important findings were:

1. Local newspaper stories had fewer U.S. government sources.
2. National newspapers included less state or local news in their stories.
3. Local newspapers tapped more non governmental sources of news.

This study also concluded that national newspapers utilized the routine channels for reporting news about government (63.3 percent), politics (57.5 percent), the economy (73.9 percent), and health (71.4 percent). On the other hand, local newspapers

used the routine channels only for news regarding government (50 percent), crime (54.6 percent), and the economy (100 percent). Hence, Brown et al. concluded that local newspapers performed better than national newspapers did.

Circulation size may also be an indicator of the use of public relations releases. Stone and Morrison found that the lower a newspaper's circulation, the more public relations materials it contained (Stone and Morrison, 1976). Soloski (1986) found that 356 stories (56.3%) out of 632 in the medium-sized newspapers came from government sources, including state government (56 stories), city government (190 stories), county government (101 stories), and federal government (9 stories).

Geographical location is another indicator of use of press releases. The geographical concentration in terms of published H-E-W stories was striking according to Glick in 1966. Washington and Philadelphia alone published almost half (97) of the total number (206) and more than half (1,097) of the total column inches (1,992). The Washington press alone published more than one-third of the stories and almost half of the column inches. The Washington press coverage ratio was higher than that of Philadelphia because the Federal government was treated as "local" (Glick, 1966b).

Martin and Singletary (1981) maintained that there was no difference in terms of location. In other words, according to these two researchers the receiving rate and the carrying rate were the same.

Summary

The following is a summary of the findings of the previous studies:

1. Government sources have become a routine news source for reporters.
2. The majority of government press releases are rejected by the press.

3. Because of newshole limitations, most government press releases will be significantly rewritten or shortened by the press before publication.

4. Based on the studies of Sigal and by Brown et al., elite newspapers seem to rely more heavily on government sources than non-elite newspapers do.

6. Although the non elite newspapers use fewer press releases than elite newspapers do, the non-elite press is more likely to use the press release verbatim.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study concentrates on four research questions:

1. To what extent do newspapers in Taiwan use the government press releases?
How many government news items relate to government press releases?
2. To what extent are the news releases reproduced and published verbatim as news items?
3. How many news items are produced from rewritten press releases?
4. Are there any differences between elite and non-elite newspaper treatment of press releases?

Based on the evidence from previous studies and the research questions, the following hypotheses are offered.

Ho.1: The majority of press releases issued by all levels of central government organizations will be rejected by the UDN and the TT.

Subhypothesis 1.1: Elite newspapers will have a higher acceptance percentage of press releases than non-elite newspapers.

Ho.2: With regard to press releases used by papers, typewritten press releases will be accepted more often than handwritten ones will.

Because it was felt that a typewritten press releases might more important than a handwritten one, it might be expected that the typewritten press releases will be expected to be used more.

Ho.3: With regard to press releases used by papers, press releases issued in the same letterhead and format will be accepted more often than those not in the same letterhead and format.

In general, each government organization has its own letterhead and format for the press releases. It might be expected that the press releases using same letterhead and format will be accepted more by papers.

Ho.4: The average length of all government news items carried by the TT will be longer than that of the UDN.

Ho.5: The average length of government news items based on government releases will be shorter than those not based on government press releases.

Subhypothesis 5.1: Government news items based on government press releases and carried solely by one newspaper will be shorter.

Ho.6: With regard to total government news items based on the press releases and carried by either or both of the two newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher mean verbatim score.

Subhypotheses 6.1 and 6.2 made the same prediction for both the subset of items based on news releases and printed by both newspapers, and the subset of items based on news releases and printed by only one of the two papers.

Ho.7: With regard to the total government news items based on press releases and carried by either or both of the two newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher mean on the light editing score (fewer phrases will be slightly altered).

Subhypotheses 7.1 and 7.2 made the same prediction for both the subset of items based on news releases and printed by both newspapers, and the subset of items based on news releases and printed by only one of the two papers.

Ho.8: With regard to the total government news items based on press releases and carried by either or both of the two newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher similar meaning score (fewer changes in meaning).

Subhypotheses 8.1 and 8.2 made the same prediction for both the subset of items based on news releases and printed by both newspapers, and the subset of items based on news releases and printed by only one of the two papers.

Ho.9: With regard to the government news items based on press releases and carried by UDN, the average length of the original press releases will be significantly shortened.

Ho.10: With regard to the government news items based on press releases and carried by TT, the average length of the original press releases will be significantly shortened.

Ho.11: The UDN will be more likely to shorten press releases than the TT.

Ho.12: The UDN will add concluding paragraphs to the government news items from press releases more often than the TT will.

Ho.13: The UDN will drop the last paragraph from press releases more often than the TT will.

Ho.14: The UDN will obtain more additional information from the entities issuing the release than the TT will.

Ho.15: The UDN will add words which cause a change in meaning more often than the TT will.

Ho.16: The UDN will add more background information to press releases than the TT will.

Ho.17: The reporters of the UDN will incorporate more personal opinions into the government news items than the TT reporters will.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to compare the press releases received and used by elite and non-elite newspapers. It includes three parts: 1) an analysis of government press releases from central government agencies, 2) an analysis of government news items appearing in elite and non-elite newspapers, 3) an analysis of gatekeeping performances by both newspapers.

To examine the different uses of government press releases by elite and non-elite newspapers, content analysis was used. Berelson defined content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952, P. 18). Content analysis can be applied to the study of the contents of any book, magazine, newspaper, individual story or article, motion picture, etc. (Budd et al., 1967). Three basic criteria should guide any content analysis study: objectivity, a systematic approach, and theoretical relevance (Holsti, 1969). Wimmer and Dominick enumerate four uses for content analysis: describing communication content, comparing media content to the "real world," testing hypotheses of message characteristics, and assessing the image of particular groups in society (Wimmer and Dominick, 1987).

The main elements of the communication process are the source, the message, the channel, and the receiver. A content analyst studies the "message" part, enumerates the basics of the message, and makes deductions about the source and the receiver. In the present study, a content analysis is appropriate both to examine the way newspapers use government press releases as news sources and to compare the performance of elite and non-elite newspapers.

Analysis of Press Releases from Government Organizations

Analysis of press releases from government agencies was undertaken to show which level of government the releases came from and what subject matters they contain.

Method for gathering press releases from government agencies

Press releases from central government organizations were collected during the period May 1 through June 9, 1990. To identify the departments of the national government, a 1990 list of government organizations at different levels was used. This list is published and renewed each year by the Information Office of the Executive Yuan. According to this list, there are 95 central government organizations altogether. By making phone calls or by writing letters to these organizations, 544 press releases from 37 different central government organizations were obtained. There are three reasons for analyzing press releases of only 37 organizations out of 95. First, even though there are 95 organizations, some seldom if ever issue press releases to the media. For example, the Planning Commission for Recovery of the Mainland said that it did not send any press releases to the media during that time. Second, some departments sent press releases to the media through the main information offices of their ministry. For example, the Department of the National Treasury sent press releases to the media through the information office of the Ministry of Finance. Third, some organizations did not respond to the author's letter, and so the author does not know if they produced any press releases during that period.

Definition of press releases

Government press releases are those materials that governments routinely send to the media. These materials include all press releases, including news stories, booklets, pamphlets, or brochures.

Types of central government organizations

In general, there are three different levels of governmental organizations under the administrative system of the Republic of China: central, provincial, and local. The Republic of China Constitution provides for a central government with a cabinet and five branches. The five branches--the Executive Yuan, the Legislative Yuan, the Judicial Yuan, the Examination Yuan and the Control Yuan--are the highest organs for administration of the nation (China Year Book, 1988). The cabinet also includes eight ministries of the Executive Yuan (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Legal Affairs), and the ministries of other Yuan and other related commissions, offices, and organizations.

Categories and operational definition for the press releases from central government organizations

Operational definitions were used to place the messages into coding categories. Each press releases collected from the government agencies was analyzed according to the following six variables: 1) government level of press releases, 2) subject of press releases, 3) whether the release was published or not, 4) whether it was typed or handwritten, 5) whether it was on official letterhead and format or not, 6) length of press release.

Government level of press releases Each news item was placed in one of the following categories, according to its level in the national government organization:

1. Low level government

This level of organization includes the various departments, offices under main ministries, bureaus, commissions, and Yuans.

2. Medium level government

This level of organization includes eight ministries, commissions, and bureaus of the Executive Yuan, and the ministries for other Yuans.

3. High level government

This level includes the National Assembly and five Yuans--the executive Yuan, the Legislative Yuan, the Judicial Yuan, the examination Yuan, and the control Yuan.

4. Office of President

Subject matter of press release This category was constructed to determine what the content of news items was. Each news item could belong to more than one category.

1. Speech of officials

This category refers to a speech of officials on public occasions, meetings, festivities, celebrations, and ceremonies.

2. Official functions

This category includes official activities, functions, and the scheduling of officials.

3. New policy announcements

This category refers to changed policies or to new policies announced by officials.

4. Statistics or research data

This category refers to the statistics announced by governments.

5. Routine meeting minutes

This category includes commission meetings of the National Assembly, and commission meetings of the Legislative and the Executive Yuan.

6. Interviews

This refers to reporter interviews of officials regarding particular issues.

7. Routine press conference minutes

This category refers to what officials or spokespeople mentioned at a routine conference.

8. Proclamations

This category includes proclamations of new policy or of official functions, new officials of the organization, explanations of official functions, etc.

9. Responses

This category refers to official responses or reactions to particular subjects.

10. Inform upcoming activities

This category refers to news that informs of something beforehand.

11. People

This category refers to news that describes officials' backgrounds or personal reactions to issues.

12. Politics

This category refers descriptions of changing government position, resigning the cabinet, etc.

13. Other

This item represents those press releases not fitting any of the other twelve categories.

Classification by whether or not the press release was printed To determine whether or not the press releases were used by newspapers, the relation between

articles and releases was measured. Each article could fall into one of the four following situations:

1. Only the United Daily News carried this press release.
2. Only the Taiwan Times carried this press release.
3. Both the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times carried this press

release.

4. Neither the United Daily News nor the Taiwan Times carried this press release.

Typed or handwritten releases Because it was felt that a typewritten press release might be more important than a handwritten one, each release was classified on this characteristic.

Letterhead of releases Because it was felt that press releases on letterhead might be judged to be more important, this characteristic was coded.

Length of press release As mentioned, it was difficult to measure the length of press releases by row-inches because press releases were written or typed on different sized paper, in different fonts. Moreover, some press releases were handwritten by spokespeople instead of typed. Therefore, the length of press releases was measured in terms of words.

Analysis of the Releases that Appeared in Each Newspaper

An analysis of the content of press releases used by newspapers is necessary for this study in order to examine how many news items based on the press releases and the subject matters the government news items contain.

Selection of newspapers

According to Lin (1976), the purposive sampling method involves the use of judgment on the part of the researcher. The samples for this study are government press releases received by Taiwan's the United Daily News and Taiwan Times, elite and non-elite newspapers in Taiwan.

In determining the sample for this study, circulation and location were considered as two variables.

Circulation is an indicator reflecting the popularity and influence of a newspaper. According to statistics, the total daily circulation of Taiwan newspapers was approximately 3,500,000 in 1988 and the United Daily News is one of the largest-circulated newspapers (China Year Book, 1988). The United Daily News had a circulation of more than 1,000,000 copies in 1988, compared to a circulation of 12,000 copies in 1951, when the press was established. The United Daily News is a part of a publishing group including the Economic Daily News, Min Sheng Pao (newspaper), World Journal (in New York), the Liengking Publishing Corporation. Undoubtedly, the United Daily News is now the most influential independent newspaper on the island. It is famous not only because of its large circulation but because of its authority and influence (Parker, 1982).

Today, the United Daily News is one of the elite newspapers in Taiwan. According to Merrill (1968), the United Daily News is "the most famous independent newspaper in Taiwan. It often criticizes the government" (P. 244-246). Jacobs (1976, P. 781) writes of the News:

If I could read only one Taiwan newspaper, it would be the United Daily News. The newspaper emphasizes domestic news and publishes excellent commentaries and analyses which give insight into Taiwan's political process. Furthermore, the United Daily News reporters consistently ranked at the top of the press corps in knowledge, analysis, and independence--attributes which their reporting reflected (P. 781).

Compared with the United Daily News, the Taiwan Times is a non-elite newspaper with a circulation one half that of the United Daily News. It will be recalled that location is another indicator of whether a newspaper is elite (Merrill, 1968). Because Taiwan is a small island with a population of 20 million in 1989, and an area of 36,169 square kilometers, the main news center is its capital, Taipei. In Taiwan, most corporate offices of newspapers like the United Daily News are located in Taipei. The United Daily News publishes newspapers that serve the whole island, whereas the Taiwan Times serves mainly southern Taiwan. Even though the Taiwan Times has set up a Taipei news center to report news events happening there, it still encounters some pressures when competing with other Taipei newspapers, pressures arising from the need to meet deadlines, and the small number of reporters. These problems are compounded because the newspaper is published outside of Taipei and has to serve other cities as well. Under Taiwan's unique condition, the Taiwan Times is considered a non-elite newspaper, not only because of its relatively small circulation, but also because of its location, Kaohsiung, in southern Taiwan.

Both newspapers publish 24 pages daily.

Definition and selection of government news

This study analyzed the content of the governmental coverage offered by the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times during the period from May 2 through June 11, 1990. Every single edition published during this period was analyzed for content. During this period, only news mentioning the central government was counted and analyzed. News refers here to reporting facts or events. It usually begins with the phrase "news from (some city)," for example, "news from Taipei" or with "(the name of reporter) reports from Taipei." There are two characteristics for defining central government

news. First, the sources of national government news are national government offices or national government officials. Second, the content of national government news concerns official functions, activities, minutes of meetings, policy announcements, politics, speeches or proclamations from national governments or officials (spokespeople of national governments). In short, all news related to national governments or national government officials is defined as national government news in this study.

Categories and operational definition for the government news

Each item of central government news was numbered. A total of four variables were used to evaluate each news item. The variables include: 1) government level of news story, 2) subject matter of news stories, 3) whether the government story is based on a press release, 4) length of news stories. Variables 1, 2, and 4 already have been described (p. 21-23); only variable 3 is operationalized below.

Classification by whether or not the government story is based on releases To determine whether or not the media chose to use a certain press release and to find out the difference in terms of performance between different newspapers, the relation between articles and releases was measured. Each article could fall into one of the six following situations:

1. The article was carried solely by the United Daily News, and no press releases were related to it.
2. The article was carried solely by the United Daily News, and one or more press releases were related to it.
3. The article was carried solely by the Taiwan Times, and no press releases were related to it.

4. The article was carried solely by the Taiwan Times, and one or more press releases were related to it.

5. The article was carried by both the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times, and one or more press releases were related to it.

6. The article was carried by both the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times, and no press releases were related to it.

Analysis of The Gatekeeping Performed by Each Newspaper

Analysis of the gatekeeping performed by the newspapers was necessary for this study in order to determine if the newspaper changed the press releases before publication and if there was any difference in gatekeeping between elite and non-elite newspapers.

Categories and operational definition for the gatekeeping performed by newspapers

In accordance with the hypotheses presented in Chapter 2, 16 variables are defined and operationalized: 1) degree to which releases appear verbatim, 2) degree of light editing or less, 3) degree of different meaning, 4) degree of similar meaning, 5) paragraph organization, 6) adding concluding paragraphs, 7) dropping the concluding paragraphs, 8) seeking of additional information from government units involved in the releases, 9) seeking of additional information from other sources, 10) adding words to change meaning, 11) adding background information, 12) adding reporters' opinion/analysis, 13) adding local content, 14) length of news items, 15) UDN shortened releases, 16) TT shortened releases.

Degree of verbatim The original press releases were compared with the articles published to determine what percentage of the articles was printed verbatim from the press releases. In this research, we applied the method used by Martin and Singletary (1981) to examine this question:

We count the number of complete sentences appearing in the newspaper article that were identical to the press releases, and divided the identical (verbatim) sentences by the total number of sentences in the article (P. 94).

The formula was modified slightly to count phrases instead of sentences in order to consider differences in Chinese language structures. This yielded the following:

$$\frac{\text{Number of phrases (in news article) identical (verbatim) to the press release}}{\text{Total number of phrases in the news article}} \times 100$$

By using this formula, we were able to decide the extent to which the published articles had changed from the original press releases. That is, the higher the verbatim score the news item has, the more phrases came from press releases "verbatim." For example, if the news item has a score of 100, it means that it comes completely from a press release.

Degree of light editing or less In general, reporters or editors rewrite press releases into news articles so that they will fit the news space. Reporters or editors often add or drop one or more word without changing the original meaning of the press releases. This is also called light editing.

With the characteristics of the Chinese language, we will use the following guidelines to determine whether a phrase has been light edited or not. Any phrase which includes any of the following light editing changes, or is not changed at all, is counted.

1. Reporters use the press release verbatim (word for word, not changing any words).

2. Reporters omit or add prepositions from original press releases to news articles.

3. Reporters omit, add, or change the title or name of the subject (name of ministers or name of organizations etc.), but the meaning is not contrary to the meaning (or concept) of the press release.

For example, the meaning of "the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chien Fu, said . . ." is the same "Chien Fu said . . ." or "Our minister of Foreign Affairs, Chien Fu, said. . . ."

4. Reporters change, add, or omit adjectives or adverbs, but the meaning is not contrary to the meaning of the press release.

5. Reporters change verbs, but the meaning is not contrary to the meaning of the press release.

For example, the meaning of "said" is the same as "pointed out" or "stated."

6. Reporters change the written language into the spoken language from original press releases to news articles.

7. Reporters divide one sentence into two or more, but the meaning is not contrary to the original meaning of the press release.

For example, the meaning of "the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chien Fu, said that our country will establish diplomatic relations with an African country" is the same as "Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chien Fu, said, we will establish diplomatic relations with an African country."

We apply the same formula used to measure verbatim phrases to decide what percentage of a news article's phrases has been only lightly edited. The formula is

Number of phrases with light editing or less

X100

Total number of phrases in this article

By using this formula, we were able to decide the extent to which the published articles had been changed from the original press releases. That is, the higher the score this news item is, the more sentences come from press releases with only a few changes. For example, if this news item has a score of 100, it means that all phrases are "almost" the same as the phrases on the press releases.

Degree of different meaning In some instances, reporters change the meaning from the press release. According to the characteristics of the Chinese language, the following guidelines are used to determine whether phrases of the news article are different from those of the press release.

1. Reporters quote word, phrase, or sentence, and the meaning is contrary to that of the press release.

For example, a sentence appearing in press release is "The President is wise." However, the reporters use a quote and say "The President is 'wise'."

2. Reporters change the titles of departments or of officials.

For example, the meaning of "the President of the Republic of China" in the news article is different from "our national president" in the press release.

3. Reporters change the verbs such that the meaning is contrary to the meaning of the press release.

4. Reporters change or add adjectives or adverbs such that meaning is contrary to the meaning of press releases.

For example, the meaning of "a crisis of air pollution. . ." in the news article is different from "a deadly crisis of air pollution. . ." in the press release.

The formula is

$$\frac{\text{Number of phrases related to the press release for which the meaning is different}}{\text{Total number of phrases in this newspaper article}} \times 100$$

By using this formula, we were able to decide the extent to which the published article had changed the meaning of the original press releases. That is, the higher score this news item has, the more phrases differ from the press releases. For example, if this sentence has a score of 100, it means that this news item is "completely" different from the press release in meaning.

Degree of similar meaning Rewriting is the most common method that reporters use to transform press releases into news articles. Rewriting refers to a reporter's changing the structure of a sentence, but the meaning and original idea come from the press release. To determine the extent of rewriting, we count the complete sentences appearing in the newspaper article from the press release, and divide the number of sentences with the same meaning by the total number of sentences in the article. The formula was to count the sentences in order to consider the whole meaning of a sentence.

$$\frac{\text{Number of sentences related to the press release with the same meaning}}{\text{Total number of sentences in the newspaper article}} \times 100$$

By using this formula, we were able to determine the percentage of sentences in the news article that were taken directly from the press releases. That is, the higher

score this news item has, the more sentences come from the press releases in meaning. For example, if this news item has a score of 100, it means that all sentences in this news item come from the press releases, either in meaning or in wording.

Paragraph organization In some instances, reporters changed the paragraph arrangement to make the news articles look different from the press release. It is necessary to determine if the paragraph order or numbers in the news article is the same as the press release or not. A "YES" or "NO" was coded to indicate this.

Adding concluding paragraphs According to Kaid (1976), when editors need to add or omit one paragraph to fit news space, they always add a final or drop the final paragraph. A "YES" or "NO" was coded to indicate if reporters added a concluding paragraph in the news article.

Dropping the concluding paragraph A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate if reporters dropped the last paragraph from the press release.

Seeking of additional information from government units involved in the releases
It is necessary to determine whether reporters obtained further information not appearing in the original press release from the officials or organizations issuing the release. A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate whether this happened.

Seeking of additional information from other sources It is necessary to determine whether reporters obtained further information not appearing in the press release from other sources. A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate whether this happened.

Adding words to change meaning In some cases, reporters introduced supplementary terms (however, but, although, on the other hand, . . .) into the news article and thus changed the press release's meaning. A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate whether this happened..

Adding background information It is necessary to determine whether reporters cite any background information (e.g. the previous statistics; an analysis of the news background. . .) to help readers understand. A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate whether this happened.

Adding reporters' opinion/analysis It is necessary to determine whether reporters incorporated their opinions or analyses into the article based on the press release. A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate whether this happened.

Adding local content It is necessary to determine whether reporters incorporated local content or information into the articles based on the information contained in the press release. A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate whether this happened.

Length of news items It is difficult to measure the length of news items by row-inches because the newspapers use the different fonts to print news items. Therefore, the length of news items were measured in terms of words.

UDN shortened releases It is necessary to determine whether UDN shortened press releases before printing. A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate whether this happened.

TT shortened releases It is necessary to determine whether TT shortened press releases before printing. A "YES" or "NO" was circled to indicate whether this happened.

Reliability Check

A reliability check had to be conducted to ensure that different coders measuring the same material would arrive at similar results and conclusions (Wimmer and Dominick, 1987).

Holsti's formula (1969) for determining reliability in terms of percentage agreement was applied to this research:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2} \times 100$$

In this formula, M is the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree. N1 and N2 refer to the total number of coding decisions by the two coders.

Before the actual coding procedure was begun, the author conducted a pilot study. In this study, ten press releases printed as stories from both the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times were coded by two graduate students of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Iowa State University. In total, coders needed to code 20 news articles (10 for the United Daily News and 10 for the Taiwan Times) and 10 press releases. Coders understood the Chinese language well and were not allowed to see others' coding results during the coding time.

The intercoder-reliability result, not including the ID number of the item, which newspaper carried it, the date of the item, which page the item appeared on, by coder A and coder B, coder A and coder C, and coder B and coder C are as follows:

For coder A and coder B, N1 (coder A) = 480, N2 (coder B) = 480, and M = 425. Therefore,

$$\text{reliability} = \frac{2(458)}{480 + 480} \times 100 = 95\%$$

For coder A and coder C, N1 (coder A) = 480, N2 (coder B) = 480, and M = 428.

Therefore,

$$\text{reliability} = \frac{2(428)}{480 + 480} \times 100 = 89\%$$

For coder B and coder C, N1 (coder B) = 480, N2 (coder C) = 480, and M = 419.

Therefore,

$$\text{reliability} = \frac{2(432)}{480 + 480} \times 100 = 90\%$$

The categorization system constructed was accepted because of the high percentage of intercoder reliability.

Computing Data

Each item was coded on the coding sheet. The SPSS-X (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) computer subprogram was employed to analyze the data. Statistical tests included Chi-square and T-tests. All results were tested at a significance level of 0.05.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

This study compares how central government organization press releases were used by an elite and a non-elite newspaper in Taiwan, the United Daily News (UDN) and the Taiwan Times (TT). The findings are based on an analysis of UDN and TT news articles taken from press releases issued by central government organizations.

There were two stages in this study. First, a total of 544 press releases issued by national government organizations in Taiwan from May 1 through June 9, 1990, were collected and analyzed. Second, 40 consecutive issues of both the UDN and TT were analyzed, focusing on the extent of different use patterns the two newspapers. A total of 1719 national government news articles were found in these issues; 1042 national government news articles were carried by the UDN and 677 by the TT. The relation between press releases and government news items used by the UDN and the TT is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Relation between press releases and government news items used by the UDN and TT

	From releases		Not from releases	Total
	Solely	Both		
UDN	51	68	923	1042
TT	29	68	580	677
Total	80	136	1503	1719

Analysis of Press Releases from Government Organizations

The analysis of press releases from government organizations will be presented as the distribution of press releases on subject matters, government levels, typewritten or handwritten, and same letterhead and format or not. Furthermore, hypotheses 1, 2, 3 also will be tested in this section.

Subject matter of press releases

The 544 releases contained a total of 601 subject matters; each press release might have more than one subject. Table 2 indicates that the subject "official functions" had the highest percentage (61.6 percent), and "proclamations" (12.9 percent) and "routine meeting conference" (10.3 percent) received the second and third highest percentages of subject matters.

In contrast, Table 2 also shows the emphasis on the subject matters of press releases run by newspapers was, in descending order, official functions (44.6 percent), routine meeting conference (19.2 percent), and proclamation (16.9 percent). A Chi-square test indicates that there is a significant difference between the proportion of topics sent by government and topics printed by the newspapers.

Table 3 shows the differences between the use patterns and the contents of press releases for each newspaper. The subjects "official functions" (58.8 percent), "new policy announcements" (19.6 percent) and "proclamations" (13.7 percent) were the highest three subjects covered by the UDN solely. For the TT solely, the subjects "official functions" (55.2 percent), "proclamations" (24.1 percent) and "statistics" (13.8 percent) were the three most covered categories. For those subjects carried both by the UDN and the TT, the subject "routine meetings" received the highest percentage (35.3

percent), and "official functions" (29.4 percent) and "proclamations" (16.9 percent) were the second and third most frequently covered subjects. A Chi-square test shows that there are significant differences in patterns of use between papers and between sole or joint use.

Governmental level of press releases

Table 4 shows that 544 press releases were issued by different levels of government organizations. A total of 148 (27.2 percent) out of 544 press releases were accepted and 396 (72.8 percent) were rejected by the two newspapers. From among the former press releases, 51 were printed solely by the UDN, 29 were printed solely by the TT, and 68 were printed by both (Table 1).

Regarding the distribution of press releases issued, Table 4 also shows there were 101 (18.6 percent) issued by low-level government organizations; 330 (60.7 percent) from medium-level government organizations; 67 (12.3 percent) from high-level government organizations; and 46 (8.5 percent) from the office of President.

Ho.1: The majority of press releases issued by all levels of central government organizations will be rejected by the UDN and the TT

Subhypothesis 1.1 predicted that the elite newspapers will have a higher acceptance percentage of press releases than non-elite newspapers.

Earlier studies showed agreement that the majority of political press releases were rejected by newspapers. Furthermore, the non-elite newspapers reject more political press releases than the elite newspapers do. Considering the similarity of newspapers in Taiwan to the United States, it is expected that that the majority of government press releases were rejected by newspapers in Taiwan.

Table 2: Overall subject matters of press releases distributions

Subject matters	Used by papers		Not used by papers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Speech	3	2.0	14	3.5	17	3.1
Official function	66	44.6	269	67.9	335	61.6
New policy	20	13.5	32	8.1	52	9.6
Statistics	9	6.1	22	5.6	31	5.7
Routine meeting	29	19.6	27	6.8	56	10.3
Interview	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.2
Press conference	3	2.0	3	0.8	6	1.1
Proclamations	25	16.9	45	11.4	70	12.7
Responses	2	1.4	5	1.3	7	1.3
Inform	6	4.1	17	4.3	23	4.2
Politics	1	0.7	2	0.5	3	0.6
Total	148	110.9	396	110.5	544	110.6

Note: Chi-square method test on a collapsed version of this table shows the p-value is less than 0.05 (Chi-square = 158.5216.) This indicates that is a difference between topics of releases sent by government and topics printed.

Table 3: Overall distribution of subject matter of press releases and newspapers use pattern

	UDN solely		TT solely		Both		Reject		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Speech	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	4.4	14	3.5	17	3.1
Official function	30	58.8	16	55.2	20	29.4	269	67.9	335	61.6
New policy	10	19.6	2	6.9	8	11.8	32	8.1	52	9.6
Statistics	2	3.9	4	13.8	3	4.4	22	5.6	31	5.7
Routine meetings	3	5.9	2	6.9	24	35.3	27	6.8	56	10.3
Interview	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.2
Press conference	1	2.0	1	3.4	1	1.5	3	0.8	6	1.1
Proclamations	7	13.7	7	24.1	11	16.2	45	11.4	70	12.9
Responses	1	2.0	0	0.0	1	1.5	5	1.3	7	1.3
Inform	4	7.8	1	3.4	1	1.5	2	0.5	3	0.6
Politics	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.5	2	0.5	3	0.6
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	51	113.7	29	113.7	68	107.5	196	107.5	544	110.6

Note: A Chi-square test shows that the p-value is less than 0.05 (chi-square score = 54.0692.) Indicating that there is a different pattern for releases that were used solely by one paper, jointly, or rejected by both.

Table 5 tests the difference between level of government and the use or rejection of press releases. Results show that only the majority of releases from high-level government organizations and the office of President were accepted, while the majority of press releases issued by low and medium-level government organizations were rejected. A Chi-square test showed that the results are significantly different between low and high-level government organizations. Therefore, the hypothesis that the majority of releases would be rejected at all levels is not supported.

Table 6 shows that the majority of press releases from all levels of governments were rejected by the UDN. On the other hand, Table 7 also shows a result of Chi-square test that the majority of press releases from all levels of governments were also rejected by TT.

Table 8 shows the result of a Chi-square test that the United Daily News does not have a higher percentage of acceptance of releases than the Taiwan Times. Thus, hypothesis 1.1 that the elite newspapers will have higher acceptance rate of releases was rejected.

To explain why the hypothesis that the majority of government press releases would be rejected by newspapers was not supported, it is necessary to describe the context of Taiwan's central government organizations. In the context of national government organizations of the Republic of China, low-level and medium-level government organizations are engaged in executing policies designed or declared by high-level government organizations including, of course, the Office of President. Therefore, press releases from the high-level governments will be more likely to be used than those from low levels by reporters because these releases contain more key policies and decisions. However, since most central government organizations are located in Taipei, the capital and the most important news center, reporters can gather information about

these organizations without the help of press releases. Even though the Taiwan Times is located far from Taipei, it still has many reporters covering the central government organizations news in Taipei. This explains why the majority of press releases at all levels would not be accepted by either the UDN or the TT. Furthermore, Table 8 also shows that the United Daily News still did not use more releases at all levels of government than the Taiwan Times. This finding is opposite to our basic hypothesis that the elite newspapers will rely more heavily on the press release than the non-elite newspapers.

Table 4: Government level of press releases and use patterns of the newspapers

	UDN Solely		TT Solely		Both		Reject		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Low level	8	7.9	8	7.9	12	11.9	73	72.3	101	18.6
Medium level	29	8.8	15	4.5	16	4.8	270	81.8	330	60.7
High level	6	9.0	1	1.5	27	40.3	33	49.3	67	12.3
President office	8	17.4	5	10.9	13	28.3	20	43.5	46	8.5
Total	51	9.4	29	5.3	68	12.5	396	72.8	544	100.0

Chi-square = 89.94103

P-value = 0.0000

Table 5: Government level of news releases by use or rejection by UDN and TT

	Used by paper		Not used by papers		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Low level	28	27.7	73	72.3	101	18.6
Medium level	60	18.6	270	81.8	330	60.7
High level	34	50.8	33	49.2	67	12.3
President office	26	56.5	20	43.5	46	8.5
Total	148	27.2	396	72.8	544	100.0

Chi-square = 52.29245
P-value = 0.0000

Typewritten and handwritten press releases

A total of 544 releases were issued by governmental organizations. Among these 544 press releases, 475 (87.3 percent) releases were typewritten and sent to reporters, while 69 (12.7 percent) were handwritten.

Ho.2: With regard to press releases used by papers, typewritten press releases will be accepted more often than handwritten ones will.

Table 6: Government level of press releases and the use pattern by the UDN

	Low		Medium		High		President office		Total	
	No.	%.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Accepted by press	20	19.8	45	13.6	33	49.2	21	45.6	119	21.8
Not accepted by press	81	80.2	285	86.4	34	50.8	25	54.4	425	78.2
Total	101	18.6	330	60.7	67	12.3	46	8.5	544	100.0

Chi-square = 57.96540
P-value = 0.0000

Table 7: The government level of press releases and the use pattern by the TT

	Low		Medium		High		President Office		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
accepted by papers	20	19.8	31	9.3	28	41.7	18	39.1	97	17.8
Not accepted by papers	81	80.2	299	90.7	39	58.3	28	60.9	447	82.2
Total	101	18.6	330	60.7	67	12.3	46	8.5	544	100.0

Chi-square = 56.79650
p-value = 0.0000

Studies suggested that the majority of press releases were discarded by newspapers because they are not written in a style appropriate for the medium (Ross, 1962). Therefore, for those releases used by papers, the typewritten press releases would be expected to be used more.

Table 9 tests the difference between the handwritten and typewritten press releases and the use pattern of press releases. A Chi-square test showed that the results are not significantly different between handwritten and typewritten press releases used by newspapers.

Letterhead and format of press releases

In general, each government organization has its own letterhead and format for the press releases; for example, the size of paper usually is same. Among 544 press releases, 466 (85.7 percent) were issued in the same format, while 78 (14.3 percent) had different letterheads and format. It expected that the press releases

Table 8: The difference on accepting releases between UDN and TT

	Accepted		Rejected		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
TT	97	17.8	447	82.2	544	50.0
UDN	119	21.9	425	79.1	544	50.0
Total	216	19.8	872	80.2	1088	100.0

Note: This table tests each releases whether either used or rejected by papers, so the total number is 1088. Chi-square test on this table shows the p-value is large than 0.05 (chi-square = 2.6112.) This indicates that the elite newspapers did not have a higher acceptance percentage than the non-elite newspapers.

Table 9: Comparison of use of handwritten or typewritten news releases by the UDN and TT

	Typewritten		Handwritten		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Accepted by papers	134	28.2	14	20.3	148	27.2
Rejected by papers	341	71.2	55	79.7	396	72.8
Total	475	87.3	69	12.7	544	100.0

Chi-square = 1.52958
p-value = 0.2162

Table 10: Letterhead and format of press releases and use patterns by newspapers

	Same format		Not the same format		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Accepted by papers	131	28.1	17	21.8	148	27.2
Rejected by papers	335	71.9	61	78.2	396	72.8
Total	446	85.7	78	14.3	544	100.0

Chi-square = 1.04612
p-value = 0.3064

using the same letterhead and format will be used more by newspapers.

Ho. 3: With regard to press releases used by papers, press releases issued in the same letterhead and format will be accepted more often than those not in the same letterhead and format.

Table 10 tests the difference between the letterhead and format of press releases and the use or rejection of press releases. A Chi-square test showed that the results are not significantly different between the letterhead and format of press releases and the use pattern of use of press releases.

Analysis of Government News

The analysis of government news articles will include the distribution of subject matters, length of stories and extent to which press releases are altered. Hypotheses 4, 5, 6, are analyzed in this section.

Subject matters of government news items

Table 11 shows the distribution of subject matters of government news by both newspapers. The items totalled 2222 subject matters of 1719 government news items. Both newspapers devoted the greatest percentage (41.3 percent) of their coverage to "official function," from among 13 subject categories; they devoted the second greatest percentage (21.5 percent) and third greatest percentage (19.7 percent) of their coverage to "politics" and "responses" respectively.

Length of government news items

Ho.4: The average length of all government news items carried by the TT will be longer than that of the UDN.

Compared to the United Daily News, there are fewer reporters of the Taiwan Times covering central government news. It is expected that the length of news items by the Taiwan Times will be longer than the United Daily News in order to fill the news space.

The average length of all government news items carried by the TT is 567.13 words, and by the UDN is 527.23. The results of the T-Test groups shown in Table 12 indicate that the average length of government news items by the TT is not significantly longer than the UDN: the p-value of 0.116 is greater than 0.05 .

Ho.5: The average length of government news items based on government releases will be shorter than those not based on government press releases.

Subhypotheses 5.1 predicted that the government news items based on government press releases and carried solely by one newspaper will be shorter.

According to Aronoff (1976), the stories from public relations sources will be shorter than those from reporters themselves. Thus, it is expected that the government news items not based on press releases will be longer than those based on releases in terms of newspapers in Taiwan.

The mean length of all government news items based on releases was 650.31, and for news not based on releases was 527.51. T-test group results shown in Table 13 indicate that the average length of news items based on releases was significantly longer than for news items not related to releases. This result is opposite what had been predicted. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

Tables 14 and 15 show T-test results comparing length of stories based on

releases to those not based on releases for each newspaper separately. In both cases, the mean length of articles based on releases is longer. Thus, the subhypothesis also are rejected.

Table 11: Overall subject matters of government news printed in the UDN and TT including both items based on news releases and those not based on news releases

Subject matters	UDN		TT		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Speech	20	1.9	16	2.4	36	2.1
Official functions	429	41.2	281	41.5	710	41.3
New policy	78	7.5	51	7.5	129	7.5
Statistics	38	3.6	46	6.8	84	4.9
Routine meetings	90	8.6	82	12.1	172	10.0
Interview	26	2.5	18	2.7	44	2.6
Press conference	16	1.5	12	1.8	28	1.6
Proclamations	46	4.4	35	5.2	81	4.7
Inform	83	0.0	65	9.6	148	8.6
People	51	4.9	29	4.3	80	4.7
Politics	254	24.4	116	17.1	370	21.5
Other	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1
Total	1349	129.5	873	129.0	2222	129.3

Note: In this table, the "other" could be omitted because only one news item related to it. A chi-square test shows that the p-value (0.258) is large than 0.05 (Chi-square = 11.7766.) There is no significantly difference between news subjects carried by either UDN or TT.

Table 12: T-test for the difference of average length of government news by two newspapers

	(N=)	Mean	Standard Error (SE)
TT	667	567.1329	26.838
UDN	1042	527.2265	19.738
Prob. = 0.116			

Table 13: T-test for the difference of average length of government news items by the UDN compared for whether or not they were based on a government press releases

	(N=)	Mean	Standard Error (SE)
Based on releases	216	650.3194	36.663
Not based on releases	1503	527.5117	17.478
Prob. = 0.000			

Table 14: T-test for the difference of average length of government news items by the UDN compared for whether or not they were based on a government press releases

	(N=)	Mean	Standard Error (SE)
Based on releases	119	656.6134	56.239
Not based on releases	1122	542.5660	22.644
Prob. = 0.03			

Table 15: T-test for the difference of average of length of government news items by the TT compared for whether or not they were based on a government news releases

	(N=)	Mean	Standard Error (SE)
Based on releases	97	642.5979	43.842
Not based on releases	580	554.5121	30.437

Prob. = 0.05

Gatekeeping Performed by Each Newspaper

The highest expectation of a government issuing press releases would be that the releases could be used verbatim, without changing a word. According to Martin and Singletary (1981), there is an "all or none" tendency to either print them "verbatim" or rewrite them "completely." Because of a shortage of staff, non-elite newspapers would be expected to print more press releases verbatim than elite newspapers. Even when they do edit releases, non-elite newspapers would be expected to change them less than elite newspapers.

Degree of verbatim use

Verbatim was defined as use of each phrase of a press release word for word. There were no cases in which either newspaper ran a government news release with no change in any phrase. As Table 16 shows, the UDN made changes in every phrase of 54

(45.3 percent) out of the 119 government press releases used, while the TT made changes in every phrase of 40 (41.2 percent) out of 97 press releases used.

Ho.6: With regard to total government news items based on press releases and carried by either or both of the two newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher mean verbatim score.

Subhypotheses 6.1 and 6.2 made the same prediction for both the subset of items based on news releases and printed by both newspapers, and the subset of items based on news releases and printed by only one of the two papers.

In Table 17, the mean verbatim score of all government news releases carried by the TT was 24.74; and 16.85 for the UDN. The difference is significant.

Table 18 indicates that the mean verbatim score in government news releases carried solely by the TT or the UDN still shows a significant difference: the p-value of 0.015 is smaller than 0.05.

Table 19 shows the result of T-test pairs for news releases that both papers ran. Results indicate that the mean verbatim score in government news releases carried by the TT is not significantly higher than that for the UDN.

The results suggest that the non-elite newspapers will use the press releases verbatim more than the elite newspapers, except for those press releases carried by both newspapers. Table 20 indicates that the *majority* of press releases carried by both newspapers came from the high level organizations or the office of President. One possible explanation for why there is no difference on verbatim score between those press releases both carried is that these releases are the most important ones and reporters are more careful to carry them.

Degree of light editing or less

Light editing was defined as only changing some prepositions and adjectives, but retaining the original meaning of press releases. Results (Table 21) show only 7 news items from releases had no phrases that changed beyond light editing; 78 news items had changes in every phrase that went beyond light editing.

Table 16: The distribution of verbatim scores for all government news items carried by either the UDN and the TT or both and related to press releases

	All		UDN		TT	
	No.	%	No.	%	NO.	%
0	94	43.5	54	45.3	40	41.2
1 - 9	22	10.1	16	13.4	6	6.2
10 - 19	18	8.3	10	8.4	8	8.3
20 - 29	12	5.6	8	6.8	4	4.1
30 - 39	11	5.1	9	7.5	2	2.0
40 - 49	14	6.9	6	5.1	8	8.3
50 - 59	12	5.6	6	5.1	6	6.2
60 - 69	8	3.7	2	1.7	6	6.2
70 - 79	10	4.6	3	2.5	7	7.2
80 - 89	8	3.7	4	3.4	4	4.1
90 - 99	7	3.3	1	0.8	6	6.2
100	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	216	100.0	119	100.0	97	100.0

Note: A higher score means fewer changes from each phrase of the press releases, while a low score means much change from releases; a score of 100 means the news stories came completely from the press release.

In terms of government news releases carried by the UDN; Table 21 shows that 4 news items from press releases were carried verbatim or with only light editing; 40 news items were changed completely in wording in every phrases.

In terms of government news releases carried by the TT, 3 news items from press releases were verbatim or with only light editing change; 38 news items contained more substantial editing changes in every phrase.

Table 17: T-test for the difference of means of the verbatim score, light editing or less score, and similar meaning score in terms of total government news items carried by either or both newspapers

	(N=)	Mean	Standard Error (SE)
(Verbatim score)			
TT	97	24.7423	3.057
UDN	119	16.8487	2.223
Prob. = 0.019			
(Light editing or less score)			
TT	97	29.7010	3.387
UDN	119	23.2353	2.669
Prob. = 0.13			
(Similar meaning score)			
TT	97	62.2680	3.714
UDN	119	57.2017	3.204
Prob. = 0.151			

Table 18: T-test for the difference of means of the verbatim score, light editing or less score, and similar-meaning score in terms of government news items carried solely by the UDN or TT and related to press releases

	(N=)	Mean	Standard Error (SE)
(Verbatim score)			
TT	29	37.1034	5.967
UDN	51	22.1569	3.799
Prob. = 0.015			
(Light editing or less score)			
TT	29	46.1396	6.708
UDN	51	31.3333	4.600
Prob. = 0.032			
(Similar meaning)			
TT	29	83.7586	5.579
UDN	51	66.0588	4.844
Prob. = 0.012			

Ho.7: With regard to the total government news items based on press releases and carried by either or both of the two newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher mean on the light editing score (fewer phrases will be slightly altered).

Subhypotheses 7.1 and 7.2 made the same prediction for both the subset of items based on news releases and printed by both newspapers, and the subset of items based on news releases and printed by only one of the two papers.

Table 17 shows the mean light editing score for all government news releases carried by the TT and related to press releases was 29.70; the same score was 23.23 for the UDN. The difference is not significant.

Table 18 indicates that the mean light editing scores in a government news releases carried solely by either the TT or the UDN do show a significant difference: the p-value of 0.032 is smaller than 0.05.

Table 19 shows the result of T-test pairs for news releases that both papers ran. Results indicate that the mean light editing score for government news releases carried by the TT is not significantly higher than that for the UDN.

These results suggest that the Taiwan Times will not tend to be different in the extent to which it edits news releases, except for those press releases it alone carried.

Degree of similar meaning

In general, reporters rewrite press releases. A similar meaning score was developed to measure the extent to which meaning of the press release was changed in news stories. In no case was it found that the printed version of a story based on a news release had changed its meaning in every phrase (Table 22). The meaning of 63 (29.4 percent) of news releases was completely retained when printed.

Table 19: T-test for the difference of means of verbatim score, light editing or less score, and similar meaning score in terms of government news carried by both the UDN and TT and related to press releases

	(N=)	Mean	Standard Error (SE)
<i>(Verbatim score)</i>			
TT	68	20.5249	4.192
UDN	68	12.8676	2.570
Prob. = 0.066			
<i>(Light editing or less score)</i>			
TT	68	26.3676	5.451
UDN	68	17.1618	2.973
<i>(Similar meaning score)</i>			
TT	68	50.5588	4.117
UDN	68	60.5882	7.998
Prob. = 0.145			

Table 20: Government levels of press releases and use either solely by newspapers or by both newspapers

	Low		Medium		High		President Office		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
By only one paper	16	57.1	44	73.3	7	20.5	13	50.0	80	54.1
By both papers	12	42.9	16	26.7	27	79.5	13	50.0	68	45.9
Total	28	18.9	60	40.5	34	23.0	26	17.6	148	100.0

Chi-square = 24.59150
p-value = 0.0000

For the UDN, the meaning of 32 (26.9 percent) of the news items showed no change in meaning. The corresponding figure for the TT was 31 (32 percent).

Ho.8: With regard to the total government news items based on press releases and carried by either both of the two newspapers, the government news items by the non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher similar meaning score (fewer changes in meaning).

Subhypotheses 8.1 and 8.2 made the same prediction for both the subset of items based on news releases and printed by both newspapers, and the subset of items based on news releases and printed by only one of the two papers.

Table 17 shows the mean similar meaning score of all government news releases carried by the TT and related to press releases was 62.26; the same score was 57.20

for the UDN. The difference is not significant.

Table 18 indicates that the mean similar meaning score in a government news release carried solely by either the TT or the UDN does show a significant difference: the p-value of 0.012 is smaller than 0.05.

Table 21: Distribution of light editing score in terms of all government news items carried by the UDN and the TT and related to press releases

	Total		UDN		TT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	78	36.0	40	33.6	38	39.2
1 - 9	27	12.5	21	17.6	6	6.2
10 - 19	19	8.8	8	6.7	11	11.3
20 - 29	15	6.9	9	7.6	6	6.2
30 - 39	10	4.6	9	7.6	1	1.0
40 - 49	12	5.6	7	5.8	5	5.1
50 - 59	17	7.9	11	9.2	6	6.2
60 - 69	4	2.3	1	0.8	3	3.1
70 - 79	13	6.0	3	2.5	10	10.3
80 - 89	9	3.7	3	2.5	6	6.2
90 - 99	5	2.3	3	2.5	2	2.1
100	7	3.2	4	3.4	3	3.1
Total	216	100.0	119	100.0	97	100.0

Note: A higher score means verbatim use or light editing or less only in phrases of press releases, while the low score means much change of press releases. A score of 90 means 90 percent of phrases in a releases showed no changes.

Table 19 shows the result of T-test pairs for news releases that both papers ran. Results indicate that the mean similar meaning score in government news releases carried by the TT is not significantly higher than that for the UDN.

These results suggest that elite newspapers do not change the meaning of press releases more, except for those that they alone printed.

Table 22: Distribution of similar-meaning score of all government news items carried by the UDN and the TT and related to press releases

	Total		UDN		TT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
1 - 9	23	10.6	11	9.2	12	12.4
10 - 19	24	11.1	15	12.6	9	9.3
20 - 29	14	6.5	11	9.2	3	3.1
30 - 39	14	6.5	8	6.7	6	6.2
40 - 49	15	6.9	8	6.7	7	7.2
50 - 59	15	6.9	8	6.7	7	7.2
60 - 69	13	6.0	9	7.6	4	4.1
70 - 79	15	6.9	9	7.6	6	6.2
80 - 89	7	3.2	4	3.4	3	3.1
90 - 99	13	6.0	4	3.4	9	9.3
100	63	29.4	32	26.9	31	32.0
Total	216	100.0	119	100.0	97	100.0

Note: A higher score means less change in meaning from press releases, while a low score means much change from press releases. A score of 90 means that the meaning of 90 percent of news stories retaining from press releases.

Difference in length between news items and press releases

Ho.9: With regard to the government news items based on press releases and carried by the UDN, the average length of the original press releases will be significantly shortened; Ho.10 also made the same prediction for the TT.

In general, studies have shown that press releases were shortened before printing (Hale, 1978). Results (Table 23) showed the length of a press release was shortened from an original 5106.76 words to a printed average of 656.61 words for the UDN. The average length of original press releases carried by TT is 5902.93 words, and the average length of news items based on press releases and carried by TT is 642.59 words. Thus, both papers significantly shortened press releases they used.

Table 23: T-test for difference of the average length for the original press releases and the government news items taken from press releases by the newspapers

	(N=)	Mean	Standard Error (SE)
Release		5106.7642	1060.922
	119		
UDN		656.6134	54.036
Prob. = 0.000			
Release		592.9300	1252.033
	97		
TT		642.5997	513.488
Prob. = 0.000			

Ho.11: The United Daily News will be more likely to shorten press releases than the Taiwan Times.

Table 24 shows that elite newspapers do not shorten releases more than non-elite newspapers.

Table 24: The difference of shortening releases between UDN and TT

	UDN		TT		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Shorten	78	65.6	65	67.0	143	66.2
Lengthen	41	34.5	32	33.0	73	33.8
Total	119	55	97	45.0	216	100.0

Chi-square = 0.432
p-value = 2.32

Dealing with press releases by reporters

Reporters not only rewrite press releases, but also add more information. Because of a smaller staff, it was expected that non-elite newspapers would add less information.

Ho.12: The UDN adds concluding paragraphs to the government news items from press releases more often than the TT does.

Table 25 indicates that the UDN did not add concluding paragraphs to the government news items from press releases more often than the TT did: the p-value of

0.9464 is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, we conclude that there is no difference between the UDN and the TT with respect to adding concluding paragraphs to news stories.

Table 25: The difference between the UDN and the TT on adding the last paragraph into the news items

	UDN		TT		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Add last paragraph to the news items						
Yes	63	53.4	50	51.5	113	52.3
No	56	46.6	47	49.5	103	47.7
Total	118	54.6	97	45.5	216	100.0
Chi-square = 0.00452						
p-value = 0.9464						

H0.13: The UDN will drop the last paragraph from press releases more often than the TT will.

Table 26 shows that the UDN did not drop the last paragraph from press releases more often than the TT did: the p-value of 0.6947 was greater than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, we may conclude that there is no difference between the UDN and the TT in terms of dropping final paragraphs from press releases.

Ho.14: The UDN will obtain more additional information from the entities issuing the release than the TT will.

Table 27 indicates that the UDN did not obtain further information from the government organizations issuing these releases more frequently than did the TT: the p-value of 0.3121 is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, we may conclude that there is no difference between the UDN and the TT in terms of obtaining additional information from government organizations issuing press releases.

Table 26: The difference between the UDN and the TT on dropping the last paragraph from press releases

	UDN		TT		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Drop the last paragraph						
Yes	79	66.4	61	62.9	140	64.8
No	40	33.6	36	37.1	76	35.2
Total	119	54.6	97	45.4	216	100.0
Chi-square = 0.15409						
p-value = 0.6974						

Ho.15: The UDN will add words which cause a change in meaning more often than the TT will.

Table 28 indicates that the UDN did not add more words changing meaning than did the TT: the p-value of 0.4924 is greater than the significance level of 0.005. Thus, we

may conclude that there is no difference between the UDN and the TT in terms of adding words causing differences in meaning.

Ho.16: The UDN will add more background information to press releases than the TT will.

Table 29 indicates that the UDN did not add more background information than the TT did: the p-value of 0.6510 is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, we may conclude that there is no difference between the UDN and the TT with respect to the adding of background information.

Table 27: The difference between the UDN and the TT on getting more information from the government source issuing the release

	UDN		TT		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Get information from government						
Yes	38	31.9	24	41.2	62	28.7
No	81	69.1	73	59.8	154	71.3
Total	119	54.6	97	45.4	216	100.0
Chi-square = 1.02164						
p-value = 0.3121						

Ho.17: The reporters of the UDN will incorporate more personal opinions into the government news items than the TT reporters will.

Table 30 shows that the reporters of the UDN did not in fact incorporate more personal opinions than the reporters of the TT did: the p-value of 0.8661 is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, we may conclude that there is no difference between the UDN and the TT in terms of incorporating personal opinions into government news items by reporters.

Table 28: The difference between the UDN and the TT on using words causing a different meaning

	UDN		TT		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Use supplementary terms						
Yes	2	1.7	3	3.1	5	2.3
No	117	90.3	94	96.9	211	97.7
Total	119	54.6	97	45.4	216	100.0
Chi-square = 0.47126						
p-value = 0.4924						

Table 29: The difference between the UDN and the TT on adding background information to the news items

	UDN		TT		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Add background information						
Yes	60	50.4	45	46.4	105	48.6
No	59	49.6	52	53.6	111	51.4
Total	119	54.6	97	45.4	216	100.0
Chi-square = 0.20463						
p-value = 0.6510						

Table 30: The difference between the UDN and the TT in adding personal opinion

	UDN		TT		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Adding personal opinion						
Yes	33	27.7	25	25.8	58	26.9
No	86	72.3	72	74.2	158	73.1
Total	119	54.6	97	45.4	216	100.0
Chi-square = 0.02843						
p-value = 0.8661						

Summary of Tests

The purpose of this study was to examine the pattern of press release use by elite and non-elite newspapers in Taiwan. A total of 544 press releases issued by different levels of government organizations and 1719 national governmental news items carried by the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times were coded and analyzed in this study. Seventeen hypotheses and some subhypotheses were tested by using the T-tests and Chi-square test.

	Hypothesis	Supported/ not supported
H1	The majority of press releases issued by all levels of central government organizations will be rejected by the UDN and the TT.	Not supported
H1.1	The UDN will have a higher acceptance percentage of press releases than the TT	Not supported
H2	With regard to press releases used by papers, typewritten press releases will be accepted more often than handwritten ones will.	Not supported
H3	With regard to press releases used by papers, press releases issued in the same letterhead and format will be accepted more than those not in the same format.	Not supported
H4	The average length of government news items carried by the TT will be longer than that of the UDN.	Not supported
H5	The average length of government news items based on government releases will be shorter than those not based on government press releases.	Not supported
H5.1	Government news items based on government press releases and carried solely by one newspaper will be shorter.	Not supported
H6	With regard to total government news items based on the press releases and carried by either or both of the two newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher verbatim score.	Supported
H6.1	With regard to the subset of items based on press releases and printed by only one of the papers, the government news items carried by the non-elite newspaper (TT) will have a higher verbatim mean score.	Supported
H6.2	With regard to the subset of items based on press releases and printed by both papers, the government news items carried by the non-elite newspaper (TT) will have a higher mean verbatim score.	Not supported

H7	With regard to total government news items based on the press releases and carried by either or both of the two newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher mean light editing or less score (fewer phrases will be slightly altered.)	Not supported
H7.1	With regard to the subset of items based on press releases and printed by only one of the papers, the government news items carried by the non-elite newspaper (TT) will have a higher mean light editing or less score (fewer phrases will be slightly altered.)	Supported
H7.2	With regard to the subset of items based on press releases and printed by both newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite newspaper (TT) will have a higher mean light editing or less score (fewer phrases will be altered.)	Not supported
H8	With regard to total government news items based on press releases and carried by either or both of the two newspapers, the government news items carried by the non-elite newspaper (TT) will have a higher mean similar meaning score (fewer changes in meaning.)	Not supported
H8.1	With regard to the subset of items based on press releases and printed by only one of the papers, the government news items carried by non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher mean similar meaning score (fewer changes in meaning)	Not supported
H8.2	With regard to the subset of items based on press releases and printed by both newspapers, the government news items carried by non-elite paper (TT) will have a higher mean similar meaning score (fewer changes in meaning)	Not supported
H9	With regard to the government news items based on press releases and carried by the UDN, the average length of original press releases will be significantly shorted	Supported
H10	With regard to the government news items based on press releases and carried by the TT, the average length of original press releases will be significantly shortened.	Supported
H11	The UDN will more likely to shorten press releases than the TT	Not supported
H12	The UDN will add concluding paragraphs to the government news items from press releases more often than the TT will	Not supported

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------|
| H13 | The UDN will drop the last paragraph from press releases more often than the TT will. | Not supported |
| H14 | The UDN will obtain more additional information from the entities issuing the releases than the TT will. | Not supported |
| H15 | The UDN will add words which cause a change in meaning more often than the TT will. | Not supported |
| H16 | The UDN will add more background information to press releases than the TT will. | Not supported |
| H17 | The reporters of the UDN will incorporate more personal opinions into the government news items than the TT reporters will. | Not supported |

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Key Findings and Discussion

Key finding 1: The majority of press releases issued by different level government organizations are not accepted by the United Daily News or the Taiwan Times. As the level of the government unit issuing the release rises, the acceptance rate also rises.

An important measure of the government's role as a generator of news is the extent to which the media are dependent upon formal statements and handouts for their information. As Glick explained "the mass media have become very dependent upon the federal government's public relations and information machinery and those who operate it" (1966a, p. 22).

In the context of national government organizations of the Republic of China, low level and medium level government organizations are engaged in executing the policies designed or declared by the high level government organizations including the Office of President. According to the analysis in this study, the majority of press releases issued by the low level and medium level government organizations were rejected (79.6 percent) by both newspapers. On the other hand, the majority of press releases issued by the five Yuans and the Office of President were accepted by both newspapers (Table 5).

Key finding 2: For all government news items based on press releases and carried by either the United Daily News or the Taiwan Times or both, the Taiwan Times (non-elite paper) has a higher mean verbatim score than the United Daily News (elite paper) has; however, there is no difference found in the mean light editing or less and similar-meaning scores.

As might be expected for a non-elite paper with a smaller staff, results in Table 17, Chapter 4, showed the Taiwan Times tended to print news releases exactly as they received them more than the United Daily News; however, the Taiwan Times does not

have a higher mean score in for light editing and similar-meaning scores for all government news items taken from press releases. This finding suggests that the non-elite newspaper such as the Taiwan Times will be more likely to use government press releases verbatim than the United Daily News.

Key finding 3: For government news items carried solely by the United Daily News or solely by the Taiwan Times and related to releases, the Taiwan Times has a significantly higher mean verbatim score and light editing or less score and similar-meaning score than the United Daily News has.

Results for news releases run solely by one paper or the other indicate significant differences between elite and non-elite newspapers indicating less change by the non-elite paper. This occurred despite the fact the United Daily News used more releases.

Key finding 4: For government news items carried both by the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times, there was no difference in verbatim score, light editing score, or similar-meaning score between the two papers

For government news items carried both by the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times, there was no difference in treatment of the press releases. Table 19, Chapter 4, indicates all the p-values are greater than the significance level of 0.05. Table 20 also shows that the releases carried by both papers came from high level government or the office of President. This finding suggests that releases printed by both papers might be more important, come from higher levels of organizations, and thus be less subject to change.

Key finding 5: The average length of government news items carried by the United Daily News and Taiwan Times and related to the press releases is not shorter than those items that are not related to a press release.

Research suggested that the length of news originally written by PR people is shorter than that written by newspaper staffs (Aronoff, 1976). It makes sense that the

news items taken from press releases would be shorter than those items generated by staff. According to the analysis in this study, the average length of government news items by the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times does not show a significant difference between those taken from press releases and those not. This finding suggests that the average length of government news items by elite and non-elite newspapers such as the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times taken from press releases will be longer than those not taken from press releases.

Key finding 6: The original length of the press releases was significantly shortened by both newspapers before publication; however, the United Daily News (elite newspaper) was not more likely to shorten releases than the Taiwan Times (non-elite newspaper).

Previous studies suggested that reporters will make press releases shorter before printing them. From this study, the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times both shorten press releases before printing. This is opposite to the expectation that the elite newspaper will be more likely to shorten releases.

Key finding 7: There was no difference between the elite and non-elite newspapers in terms of dropping the last paragraph from press releases, adding a last paragraph, obtaining more information from government sources, adding words causing a difference in meaning, adding more background information, and incorporating more personal opinions by reporters.

In general, the elite newspapers have more staff than the non-elite newspapers because the elite newspapers have enough money to support them. According to Jacobs, the United Daily News reporters consistently ranked at the top of the press corps in knowledge, analysis and indecency (Jacobs, 1976), in comparison with the Taiwan Times, the United Daily News was expected to provide more information to readers by using such strategies as adding a last paragraph to a release or dropping a last paragraph from a releases.

Furthermore, reporters of the United Daily News was expected to seek out and include more information from government, background statistics, or opinions of reporters themselves. According to the analysis in this study, the United Daily News were not different for any of these things. One explanation is that reporters in Taiwan regard covering political news as being so important that even non-elite newspapers will commit the resources necessary to handle these stories comprehensively.

Conclusion

Gatekeeping in mass media is viewed as including all forms of information control that may arise in decisions about message encoding, such as selection, shaping, display, timing, withholding, or repetition of an entire message or message component (Donohue et al., 1972). Because press releases have become one of the major news sources, gatekeepers exercise power not only by selecting press releases, but also by changing the content or adding more information.

This study examined differences in acceptance, editing and printing of press releases between an elite newspaper--the United Daily News and a non-elite newspaper--the Taiwan Times.

Results of this study showed elite newspapers do not have a different gatekeeping performance than non-elite newspapers in selecting government press releases and displaying them, except the non-elite newspapers will use the press releases "verbatim" more than elite newspapers.

One reason for the lack of difference may be geography. Kaohsiung (home of the Taiwan Times) is only five hours from Taipei, the location of the United Daily News and the major news center of Taiwan. Transmitting information around Taiwan is not a

difficult thing. Furthermore, the Taiwan Times has a news office in Taipei to cover government news.

A second reason is the importance of government news in Taiwan. As mentioned, government news is the most important news among all news topics. Government reporters are experienced in dealing with government officials and organizations, and will be very careful when receiving press releases, regardless of whether the paper is an elite or non-elite.

A third reason is that the definition of elite and non-elite newspapers in the United States is not agree to Taiwan's newspapers. In the United States, the national newspapers were considered as the elite newspapers compared to the local newspapers. In Taiwan, there is no significantly difference between local and national newspapers.

Implications for Future Study

In this study, two newspapers were selected and defined as the elite and non-elite newspapers. This limits the generalizability of the study. It would be very valuable to select more newspapers, especially lower circulation newspapers than the Taiwan Times, to compare the difference between newspapers' gatekeeping functions.

Since this study has examined how the newspapers treat central government press releases, it is recommended that differences in treatment between central government releases and the local government releases be studied.

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APPENDIX

Coding Sheet for Government Press Releases

	COLUMN
1. ID number of this press release	1-5
2. Date of this press release	6-11
3. Government level of this press release	12
1 = Low level government	
2 = Medium level government	
3 = High level government	
4 = President Office	
4. Subject matters of press releases	13-14
01 = Speech of officials	15-16
02 = Official functions	17-18
03 = New policy announcement	19-20
04 = Statistics or research data	21-22
05 = Routine meeting minutes	
06 = Interviews	
07 = Routine press conference minutes	
08 = Proclamations	
09 = Responses	
10 = Inform upcoming activities	
11 = People	
12 = Politics	
13 = Other	
5. Classification by whether or not the press releases was printed	23

1 = Only the United Daily News carried this press release

2 = Only the Taiwan Times carried this press release

3 = Both the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times carried
this press release

4 = Neither the United Daily News nor the Taiwan Times
carried this press release

6. Does this press releases be typed 24

1 = Yes

2 = No

7. Does this press release be issued in the same letterhead 25
and format?

1 = Yes

2 = No

8. Length of press releases 26-35

Coding Sheet for Government News

	COLUMN
1. ID number of item	1-4
2. Name of newspaper	5
1 = United Daily News	
2 = Taiwan Times	
3. Date of item	6-11
4. Government level of item	
12	
1 = Low level of government	
2 = Medium level of government	
3 = High level of government	
4 = President office	
5. Subject matters of item	13-14
01 = Speech of officials	15-16
02 = Official functions	17-18
03 = New policy announcement	19-20
04 = Statistics or research data	21-22
05 = Routine meeting minutes	
06 = Interviews	
07 = Routine press conference minutes	
08 = Proclamations	
09 = Responses	
10 = Inform upcoming activities	

11 = People

12 = Politics

13 = Other

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 6. Classification by whether or not the government news item is based on releases | 23 |
| 1 = The item was carried solely by the United Daily News, and no press releases were related to it. | |
| 2 = The item was carried solely by the United Daily News. and one or more press releases were related to it. | |
| 3 = The item was carried solely by the Taiwan Times, and no press releases related to it. | |
| 4 = The item was carried solely by the Taiwan Times, and one or more press releases related to it. | |
| 5 = The item was carried by both the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times, and one or more press releases were related to it. | |
| 6 = The item was carried by both the United Daily News and the Taiwan Times, and no press releases were related to it. | |
| 7. ID number of press release carried by newspaper | 25-30 |
| 8. Degree of verbatim | 31-33 |
| 9. Degree of light editing | 34-36 |
| 10. Degree of different meaning | 37-39 |
| 11. Degree of similar meaning | 40-42 |
| 12. Are the paragraph order or numbers of this item as same | 43 |

- as the press releases?
- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
13. Adding concluding paragraphs 44
- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
14. Dropped the concluding paragraph 45
- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
15. Seeking of additional information from government 46
- units involved in the release
- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
16. Seeking of information from other sources 47
- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
17. Adding words to changing meaning 48
- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
18. Adding background information
- 49
- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
19. Adding reporters' opinion or analysis 50
- 1 = Yes

2 = No	
20. Adding local content	51
1 = Yes	
2 = No	
21. Length of item	52-56
22. UDN shorten press releases	57
1 = Yes	
2 = No	
23. TT shorten press releases	58
1 = Yes	
2 = No	