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**To Answer, or Not to Answer—
That is the Question of the Hour:
Image Restoration Strategies and Media Coverage of
Past Drug Use Questions in the Presidential Campaigns
of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush**

Shari Veil

Abstract

This study analyzed the relationship between image restoration strategies and media coverage, specifically, the image restoration strategies utilized by Bill Clinton in 1992 and George W. Bush in 1999 in response to questions of past drug use and the ensuing media coverage during the respective campaigns. A literature review of political apologia and image restoration strategies is presented, followed by potential explanations for the extensive media coverage of the drug issue. Articles published in 7 newspapers during the respective political campaigns were retrieved and textually analyzed to determine the candidates' image restoration strategies. The reported presidential comments were then critically analyzed to demonstrate the potential influence of image restoration strategies on the media coverage of the drug questions.

Introduction

During their respective campaigns, Bill Clinton in 1992 and George W. Bush in 1999 used multiple image restoration strategies when questioned about past drug use. Their responses to these questions provide interesting examples for political communication research and analysis. Future political candidates and their staffs may find it useful to review notable candidates' strategies and the influence of these strategies on media coverage when developing rhetoric to promote and protect the candidate's political image.

Trent and Friedenber (2000) describe one's political image as how voters perceive a candidate or elected official. This perception is based on "a candidate's personal traits, job performance, and issue positions" (Denton & Stuckey, 1994, p. 7). Once an image has been established, strategies may be required to protect that image. Brinson and Benoit (1996) recognize that "when a reputation is threatened, individuals and organizations are motivated to present an image defense: explanations, justifications, rationalizations, apologies, or excuses for behavior" (p. 30). Sellnow, Ulmer, and Snider (1998) agree, "[Individuals] must engage in a discourse with their public that provides an adequate justification for whatever actions are under scrutiny" (p. 62).

It is in this discourse that political candidates may utilize apologia or image restoration strategies to defend their image against overzealous questions and accusations. While candidates cannot dictate the media's coverage of certain issues, by taking into account other potential influencers, one can analyze media Speaker and Gavel, Vol 42 (2005) www.dsr-tka.org/

coverage and determine if image restoration strategies can also influence the media.

Research Questions

To determine the potential influence of image restoration strategies on media coverage, three relevant research questions were asked.

- RQ1) What image restoration strategies were utilized by Bill Clinton and George W. Bush in response to questions about past drug use?
 RQ2) Was there a difference in the amount of media coverage of the drug issue pertaining to the candidates?
 RQ3) Is there a relationship between the image restoration strategies utilized and the media coverage of the candidates' responses to questions of past drug use?

To investigate these questions, a literature review of political apologia and image restoration strategies is presented, followed by potential explanations for the extensive media coverage of the drug issue. Retrieved articles are then textually analyzed to determine candidates' image restoration strategies. Finally, the media coverage in correlation to the image restoration strategies used is analyzed to provide implications of the study and offer suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Apologia and Image Restoration Strategies

A respectable body of research on political apologia has developed over the years, spanning the decades between Sam Houston's speech of self-defense in the House of Representatives in 1832 (Linkugel & Razak, 1969) and President Clinton's 1999 self-defense in the Monica Lewinsky scandal (Kramer & Olson, 2002). While the majority of political apologia research has focused on single speeches, as in Nixon's 1952 "Checkers" speech (Vartabedian, 1985) and Edward Kennedy's 1969 "Chappaquiddick" address (Ling, 1970), more recent research has concentrated on the progressive apologia of individuals facing a crisis, such as the multiple messages of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal (Kramer & Olsen, 2002). Another body of apologia discourse has focused on corporations going through crisis (Benoit, 1995; Benoit & Brinson, 1994; Brinson & Benoit, 1996; Hearit, 1995; Seeger & Ulmer, 2001). According to Benoit (1997), "The basic options are the same for both individual and corporate image repair efforts" (p. 177).

In apologetic discourse, an individual can use several strategies to respond to image-damaging attacks. Ware and Linkugel (1973) posit these strategies include denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence. Denial involves the disavowal of "any participation in, relationship to, or positive sentiment toward whatever it is that repels the audience" (276). Bolstering requires reinforcement of "the existence of a fact, sentiment, object, or relationship that is

viewed favorably by the audience" (277). Differentiation changes the meaning of an event by separating the elements of that event from the larger context. Transcendence cognitively joins "some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship with some larger context within which the audience does not presently view that attitude" (p. 280).

Building on apologia discourse, Benoit (1997) offers five broad categories of image restoration strategies to use when one's reputation is under attack: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. Within each broad category, Benoit details variants of the "message options" (p. 178). Denial can be classified as simple denial or shifting the blame to another party. Evasion of responsibility includes the variants of provocation, defeasibility, accident, and good intentions. Provocation is used in claiming the accused was provoked into committing the offensive act. Defeasibility is used when stating there was not enough information available or the accused was unable to avoid the offensive act. The third variation is used in claiming the offensive act was an accident, and the fourth variation of good intentions is used in claiming the accused meant well in the act. Reducing offensiveness of the act includes bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking the accuser, and compensation. Benoit (1997) describes bolstering as "stressing good traits," minimization as claiming the act was not serious, differentiation as claiming the act was less offensive than other acts, transcendence as claiming there are more important issues than the offensive act, attacking the accuser as reducing the credibility of the accuser, and compensation as reimbursing the victim of the offensive act. Corrective action—a plan to solve or prevent a problem—and mortification—an apology for the act—do not have subcategories but are often used in conjunction with other image restoration strategies (p. 179). Sellnow, et al. (1998) contends that "individual strategies used to restore an image may interact with other strategies" (p. 69) and "one image restoration strategy can imply or combine with other strategies" (p. 71).

Benoit (1997) also addresses the issue of not responding. In identifying the options of redefining the attack, refocusing attention, and simply ignoring the issue, Benoit contends that an individual does not need to respond to accusations, although he notes that "if a charge is important to the audience," one "may well be forced to deal with that accusation" (p. 183). I posit that, by doing nothing, an individual is still responding. The individual is attempting to reduce the offensiveness of the act by responding with a message that the issue is not important enough for a response.

While it is true that, if the issue is not important it will likely go away, it is not the individual's perception of the issue but the public's that determines if a full-blown crisis will be avoided by ignoring the situation. As Benoit (1997) suggests, "The key question is not if the act was in fact offensive, but whether the act is believed by the relevant audience(s) to be heinous" (p. 178).

In furthering image restoration strategy discourse, I propose an additional option, ambiguity, that does not fall into Benoit's image restoration strategy. Ulmer and Sellnow (2000) offer advice that initially seems contradictory to standard crisis management practice. They contend that "ambiguity, when

viewed in the context of a crisis situation, enables organizations to strategically communicate seemingly contradictory messages to distinct audiences” (p. 146). By tailoring organizational ambiguity to image restoration strategies, an individual may be able to extend the life of certain strategies. Rescinding a denial delivered before all the facts are known may actually damage an individual’s image. Ulmer and Sellnow’s (2000) review of Weick’s (1988) explanation of “appropriate action” contends that organizations and individuals “limit their potential for coping with a crisis when they make a firm commitment to a single strategy” (p. 146).

Allowing the potential for coping with a crisis is not the same as deception, however. It is the intent of the ambiguity that can infringe upon ethics. Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2003) warn, “withholding information as a form of deception may deny individuals the ability to make informed judgments” (p. 235). Ulmer and Sellnow (1997) agree, “There exists an ethical obligation for those in positions of influence to provide the information to their constituencies that is necessary for making well-reasoned decisions” (p. 216). Nilsen (1974) labels this ability to make decisions “significant choice.” Ulmer and Sellnow (1997) contend that stakeholders should have the opportunity to engage in significant choice. The question addressed with the Clinton and Bush drug inquiries is whether there was an ethical obligation to answer the question. While this study does not examine the ethical implications of the image restoration strategies, crisis communication research suggests the quickest way to end a crisis is for the individual or organization to be open and avoid withholding important information from the public (Benoit, 1997; Seeger & Ulmer, 2001; Sellnow, et al., 1998; Ulmer, 2001). If the public finds out at a later date that information was withheld, the individual’s or organization’s image will be damaged by the discovery and by the perception that the individual or organization was dishonest in withholding the information. Benoit (1997) attends that, “Apart from the fact that this is morally the correct thing to do, attempting to deny true accusations can backfire” (p. 184).

Regardless of the strategies used, Scott and Lyman’s (1968) framework of accounts suggests that the strategies and accounts will be accepted when they (1) outweigh the offense, (2) offer a motive acceptable to the audience, and (3) reflect ordinary social knowledge of reasonable behavior. Blaney and Benoit (2001) describe the theory of image restoration as having two primary assumptions: first that communication is a goal-oriented activity, and second, is that maintenance of a favorable image is one of the primary goals.

While the maintenance of a favorable image is an obvious goal for a political candidate, that image is subject to the scrutiny of the public and the media as the public’s eye. Benoit and Brinson (1999) note, “One’s image is influenced by one’s own words and actions, as well as by the discourse and behavior of others” (p. 145). By analyzing Clinton’s and Bush’s own words, categorizing the image restoration strategies used to address the drug questions, and examining the behavior of the media pertaining to the coverage of the drug issue, this essay demonstrates how image restoration strategies, along with additional factors, influence media coverage.

Media Coverage

The amount of media coverage a certain issue warrants can be attributed to a number of different factors, including bias. Because Clinton and Bush belong to different political parties, any difference found in the coverage of their drug use could be attributed to left or right wing bias. While Lichter (2001) and Lowry and Shidler (1998) found that Democrats have received slightly more favorable coverage than Republicans in the past 50 years, repeated analysis of news coverage of presidential elections has found no evidence of partisan bias in news reporting (Gulati, Just, & Crigler, 2004; D’Alessio & Allen, 2000; Hofstetter, 1976; Just, et al., 1996; Patterson, 1980; Patterson & McClure, 1976).

Bias can also be seen in how a story is framed. Theories of framing suggest that news coverage can foster changes in public opinion by promoting particular definitions and interpretations of political issues (Shah, Watts, Domke, & Fan, 2002; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997). Patterson (1980) notes that the news frames campaigns within a competitive game in which there is always a loser. Hofstetter (1976) contends that news is biased against losing candidates, not because of their policies, but because of what reporters deem to be news. Some researchers have found candidates receive negative coverage when they are behind in the polls (Bennett, 2001; Stevenson, Eisinger, Feinberg, & Kotok, 1973) while others have found that it is the front-runner who receives more negative coverage (Robinson & Sheehan, 1983). During their respective campaigns, both Clinton and Bush were already the front-runners for their respective parties in the primaries when the initial stories of the drug questions broke (Boyarsky, 1992; Yardley, 1999).

While framing an election as a game or race can add excitement to a campaign, the juicy details of a politician’s past life have become a part of the sensationalism inherent to today’s news repertoire. “Overall, the network news, the cover stories of news magazines, and the front pages of major newspapers witnessed an increase from 15% to 43% between 1977 and 1997 in celebrity, scandal, gossip, crime, and other human interest stories” (Hickey, 1998, p. 49). Gulati, et al. (2004) contend that campaigns that are not competitive or do not have a scandal erupting are rarely covered. Television is one of the most influential catalysts to increased sensationalism and has “enhanced the discrepancy between the ‘hoopla’ and substance observed in print” (Gulati, et al., 2004, p. 241). Because television also has a greater tendency to dramatize politics (Bennett, 2001; Graber, 2001), the trend of increasing attention on political drama could be attributed to any increase in media coverage between the elections.

Aside from political bias, game-framing, and sensationalism, there could be many other reasons why one candidate receives more media coverage than another, including timing, relevance, or lack of more important news stories. In the analysis of the media coverage of candidates’ past drug use, I do not attempt to claim image restoration strategies have a direct correlation with the amount of media coverage an issue receives since I cannot control any other factors. However, I do posit that image restoration strategies are an additional influence on

the media coverage. As future research on image restoration strategies and media coverage develops, additional studies may further prove this hypothesis.

Method

To determine whether image restoration strategies have an influence on media coverage, I analyzed each candidate's use of image restoration strategies and the media's coverage over the course of the presidential campaigns before the 1992 and 2000 elections. I completed a textual analysis of the quotations from news articles in various metropolitan area newspapers, including Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Orlando Sentinel, Star Tribune, The Washington Post, and Wall Street Journal (retrieved through ProQuest). I also studied the evening news on three major television networks, ABC, NBC, and CBS, over the course of the campaigns (retrieved through the Vanderbilt Television News Archives). The articles and television news clips were retrieved using the following key word combinations: Clinton and marijuana, Clinton and drug, Bush and cocaine, Bush and drug. The articles and news clips were then classified and counted as a part of the initial story break or the revival of the story. Articles and news clips retrieved were not used in the study if they did not pertain to past drug use of the candidates. For example, articles regarding Clinton's stance on medicinal marijuana were not used unless there was a reference to accusations of Clinton's own past drug use. Likewise, articles regarding Bush's stance on tougher penalties for cocaine dealers were not used unless there was a reference to accusations of Bush's own past drug use. I also did not review articles featured in the opinion, editorial, letters to the editor, commentary, or perspective columns of the newspapers. After limiting the scope of my study, I reviewed the 76 articles and 12 news clips and analyzed the image restoration strategies used by the candidates as reported by the newspapers and networks.

Textual Analysis of Image Restoration Discourse

Image Restoration and Clinton's Awkward Admission

During the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton engaged in multiple image restoration strategies when questioned about marijuana use. While he eventually admitted to using the drug, it was only through a series of strategically ambiguous statements and minimization, denial, attacking the accuser, bolstering, and mortification strategies that the awkward admission occurred.

Using ambiguity, Clinton implied he had not used drugs, without admitting whether he had in fact used them. Edsall (1992a) reported that "When asked by the New York Daily News editorial board if he had ever engaged in drug use, Clinton replied: 'I have never broken the laws of my country'" (p. A1). Clinton also stated, "I've never broken any state laws" (Edsall, 1992a, p. A1), thus avoiding admitting past drug use by withholding that he had broken the law of another country.

In his now famous admission, "When I was in England, I experimented with marijuana a time or two. And I didn't like it, and I didn't inhale and I didn't try it again" (Edsall, 1992a, p. A1), Clinton employed a compound of minimiz-

ing statements. Noting he was in England at the time, Clinton attempted to minimize the offense by claiming he did not technically break United States law. His comment that he "experimented a time or two" implied that the use was out of curiosity and was not a regular habit. Blaney and Beniot (2001) contend that "By saying that he did not like the experience and never repeated it, he minimized the offense, implying that he never became an active part of the drug culture that so many people found offensive" (p. 60). Finally, Clinton's claim that he did not inhale implied that "the action was not as bad as if he had actually imbibed the substance" (Blaney & Benoit, 2001, p. 60).

When asked to assess the political impact of his admission, Clinton used minimization in conjunction with denial and bolstering: "I don't think it hurt Senator Gore four years ago, or Governor Babbitt. It certainly didn't keep Clarence Thomas off the Supreme Court" (Edsall, 1992a, p. A1). Invoking the names of famous political figures who admitted past marijuana use allowed Clinton to minimize his own use. In this instance, his use of denial allowed him to imply that since the other politicians' careers were not damaged by their admissions, neither would his.

Clinton used minimization with bolstering when recalling past experiments with other vices. "This is not a big issue with me. I never even had a drink of whiskey until I was 22" (Edsall, 1992a, p. A1). Claiming it is not a big issue to him, Clinton minimized the offense by determining that it was unimportant. In his comment that he "never even had a drink of whiskey" Clinton employed minimization and bolstering by implying that someone who did not even have a "drink of whiskey" until age 22 could not have been involved in a major drug offense.

Clinton also used denial in response to the accusation that he had misled the American public into believing he had not used drugs. Edsall (1992a) reported that during an impromptu sidewalk news conference after the March 29, 1992 debate, Clinton defended his answers: "I said I've never broken the drug laws of my country, and that is the absolute truth. . . . If they [the Daily News editors] had asked me the same question . . . I would have given the same answer" (p. A1).

As questions about Clinton's past drug use progressed into the weeks following the admission, Clinton began to attack his accusers. Rosenstiel (1992) reported that "The Clinton campaign responded by blaming the New York media for not being interested in issues" (p. 24). Maraniss (1992) reported that Clinton "raised his hoarse voice several decibels as he tried to turn the burden of responsibility around to the press. He said, 'I think a lot of this stuff is calculated media grandstanding and positioning'" (p. A1). Turning his attacks to his political opponents, "Clinton, appearing exasperated, said the focus on personal issues was what Bush and the Republicans wanted to obscure a debate on the nation's problems. 'It's a trap,' he said. 'It's just another trap'" (Maraniss, 1992, p. A1).

After taking hit after hit from the media, Clinton used bolstering and mortification to try to put an end to the questions. "I think I've done a pretty good job, being an imperfect person, in trying to follow the real moral obligation in life - Speaker and Gavel, Vol 42 (2005) www.dsr-tka.org/

which is trying to do better tomorrow than you did today. . . . What you're seeing is what you get. If you don't want it, vote for Bush. . . . I've got a great life but it's going to be a bad, cold four years for America" (Maraniss, 1992, p. A1). Clinton used bolstering by implying that he is a good man because he is "trying to follow the real moral obligation in life." He implied mortification by admitting that he is "an imperfect person." Clinton used bolstering again by implying that he is a better candidate than Bush by claiming that, if you vote for Bush, "it's going to be a bad, cold four years for America."

Despite the instances of ambiguity and image restoration strategies, Clinton claims he was not trying to restore his image with his answers. Richter (1992) reported that Clinton said he found it "amazing" that "anybody would be so obsessed with [the drug use issue] and should actually have decided that I gave a calculated answer to try to diminish the impact of the fact that I'd tried" marijuana (p. 31). Clinton also stressed that he was not trying to avoid blame by saying he did not inhale. "What you interpret me as saying was, 'It really wasn't so bad because I didn't inhale it.' I wasn't trying to exonerate myself" (Richter, 1992, p. 31).

Bill Clinton engaged in multiple image restoration strategies in the progressive apologia surrounding the question of marijuana use. While he eventually admitted to using the drug, it was only through a series of strategically ambiguous statements and the utilization of the image restoration strategies of ambiguity, minimization, denial, attacking the accuser, bolstering, and mortification.

Image Restoration and Bush's Refusal to Reply

George W. Bush had seen the media's fascination with presidential candidates' past drug use when Clinton ran against his father in 1992. Despite this front-row view, Bush also had to employ image restoration strategies when faced with accusations of past cocaine use. As reported in the media in 1999, Bush engaged in ambiguity and employed the strategies of mortification, minimization, attacking the accuser, and transcendence.

Simon and Walsh (1999) accounted that "Bush asks voters to dismiss his past sins, real or imagined, as the result of an occasionally 'irresponsible' youth" (p. 31). By acknowledging his "past sins," Bush used mortification to imply that what he did (or did not do) in the past was wrong. He used ambiguity by saying that his sins were "real or imagined" but did not admit whether he had actually "sinned," or used cocaine. Bush sought to minimize the offense by saying any sins are the result of an occasionally "irresponsible" youth. By focusing on "occasional" and "youth," Bush attempted to distinguish claims that he was an avid partier and that it was not a recent activity.

Bush often used his youth as a minimization strategy. In response to the questions: "Have you ever used drugs? Marijuana? Cocaine?" Bush replied: "I'm not going to talk about what I did as a child" (Kurtz, 1999a, p. C1), and "I'm not going to talk about what I did years ago" (Kurtz, 1999b, p. A2). In one account Bush stated that he would have been able to pass security clearance in Clinton's administration, which required reporting drug use in the past seven years, and in Bush's father's administration, which would have required report-

ing drug use 15 years prior to 1989 (Barringer, 1999b, p. 1.28). When pushed to answer the question beyond 1974, Bush refused. Barringer (1999b) reported that Bush rebuffed the question of past drug use with the words: "What I did as a kid? I don't think it's relevant" (p. 1.28). Bush used minimization by concentrating on the "relevance" of youthful indiscretions and by implying that anything prior to 1974 was not important enough for a response.

Bush attacked his accusers when stating that rumors were being planted and the media was taking the bait. Barringer (1999b) reported that Bush said he was convinced that rumors about his personal life were being planted, but he didn't identify who he believed was planting the rumors. "They're ridiculous and they're absurd, and the people of America are sick and tired of this kind of politics. And I'm not participating" (p. 1.28). "Somebody floats a rumor and causes you to ask a question, and that's the game in American politics . . . I refuse to play it" (Balz & Duggan, 1999, p. A13). Bush was not alone in attacking the accuser. Woodward (1999) noted, "Supporters of George W. Bush launched an assault on the news media for its coverage of rumors" (p. A5).

Bush used transcendence in his reasoning for not answering the question. Benoit (1995) suggests that a transcendent appeal "directs our attention to other, allegedly higher values, to justify the behavior in question" (pp. 77-78). Apple (1999) reported that Bush said, "I have told the American people all I'm going to tell them . . . I hope the people appreciate a candidate who comes along and says, enough is enough. Enough is enough digging into people's background years ago" (p. A14). In a later interview, he said he was determined to end what he called "the politics of personal vilification," and he was going to give his "best shot at cleansing and reinvigorating the system" (Apple, 1999, p. A14). According to Walsh (1999), Bush said, "I've learned that sometimes politics can be unnecessarily ugly and I'm trying to purge the system of ugly politics" (p. A5). Bush used transcendence when he said his reason for refusing to answer the question was to draw the line on invasive questions and "cleanse" and "purge" the system. Bush contended that he was taking the high road and would sacrifice the election in order to take a stand against invasive questions: "If the American people don't like my position they can go out and find someone else to vote for" (Apple, 1999, p. A14).

While both Clinton and Bush utilized image restoration strategies, they varied in their use of the different strategies. I propose that the image restoration strategies used demonstrate, not a direct correlation, but a potential influence on the media coverage of the issue.

Media Coverage of the Drug Questions

To determine if candidates' image restoration strategies influenced media coverage, the study included an analysis of news articles from Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Orlando Sentinel, Star Tribune, The Washington Post, and Wall Street Journal, and news clips from the evening news on ABC, NBC, and CBS over the course of the campaigns. There were differences in the newspaper and television coverage of the candidates.

Twenty-seven news articles and nine evening news stories covered Clinton's responses to drug questions from March 29 to October 4, 1992, with news coverage on 16 days. Forty-nine news articles and three evening news stories covered Bush's response to drug questions from August 5 to October 27, 1999, with news coverage on 20 days. Clinton's answers to the drug question received much less coverage in the newspapers; however, they received more television news coverage. For Clinton, the topic remained in the news for a much longer period of time; however, he had fewer actual days of news coverage.

The Media of Marijuana

The initial newspaper coverage of questions about Clinton's drug use included 21 articles in the 7 publications (Table 1). The coverage ran 26 days from March 30 to April 24, 1992. Television coverage during the evening news included 9 stories on 3 stations (Table 2). The coverage ran March 29 to April 29, 1992, spanning 31 days. During the conventions and the final stages of the campaign, Clinton's opponents revived the drug question, bringing up Clinton's sketchy admission to smoking marijuana. Six articles in 3 of the 7 publications (Table 3) covered the stories for 82 days, from July 14 to October 4, 1999.

Table 1: Newspaper articles in the initial story break of Clinton's marijuana questions

Newspaper	# of Articles	Dates Run
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	1	March 30, 1992
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	6	March 30 – April 24, 1992
<i>New York Times</i>	2	March 30 – April 24, 1992
<i>Orlando Sentinel</i>	2	March 30 – April 24, 1992
<i>Star Tribune</i>	1	March 30, 1992
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	1	March 30, 1992
<i>The Washington Post</i>	8	March 30 – April 12, 1992

Table 2: Television news stories in the initial story break of Clinton's marijuana questions

Network	# of Stories	Dates Run
ABC	2	March 29 – March 31, 1992
CBS	3	March 29 – April 17, 1992
NBC	4	March 29 – April 7, 1992

Table 3: Newspaper articles in the revival of the story of Clinton's marijuana question

Newspaper	# of Articles	Dates Run
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	3	August 19 – October 4, 1992
<i>New York Times</i>	1	October 4, 1992
<i>Star Tribune</i>	2	July 14 – August 18, 1992

The Coverage of Cocaine

The initial newspaper coverage of Bush's responses to drug questions included 38 articles in seven publications (Table 4). The coverage ran August 5 to September 20, 1999. Television coverage during the evening news included three stories on two stations (Table 5). The coverage ran three days, from August 19 to August 21, 1999. Bush also saw a revival of the drug question when an unauthorized biography alleging drug use was pulled from the shelves. Nine articles in 6 of the 7 publications (Table 6) covered the story, running 6 days from October 22 to October 27, 1999.

Table 4: Newspaper articles in the initial story break of Bush's cocaine questions

Newspaper	# of Articles	Dates Run
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	8	August 5 – August 27, 1999
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	3	August 19– August 23, 1999
<i>New York Times</i>	7	August 19 – August 26, 1999
<i>Orlando Sentinel</i>	7	August 19 – August 23, 1999
<i>Star Tribune</i>	1	August 22, 1999
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	2	August 20 – August 30, 1999
<i>The Washington Post</i>	10	August 11 – September 20, 1999

Table 5: Television news stories in the initial story break of Bush's cocaine questions

Network	# of Stories	Dates Run
ABC	1	August 19, 1999
CBS	2	August 19 – August 21, 1999

Table 6: Newspaper articles in revival of the story of Bush's cocaine questions

Newspaper	# of Articles	Dates Run
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	1	October 24, 1999
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	3	October 22 – October 27, 1999
<i>New York Times</i>	2	October 22 – October 23, 1999
<i>Star Tribune</i>	1	October 22, 1999
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	1	October 22, 1999
<i>The Washington Post</i>	1	October 27, 1999

Implications***Print Media Coverage***

In reviewing the image restoration strategies and the potential influence on media coverage, I found that Clinton employed minimization the most often in his interaction with the media. Because minimization is a more passive strategy, the media may have decided to simply let the marijuana issue go, since Clinton did not think it was a big issue. Also, while there are other reasons that may explain the difference in the number of articles in the newspaper coverage of the drug use questions, including media issues such as bias and timing aforementioned or policy issues such as the hardness of the drug and past stances on drug issues, based empirical evidence demonstrating the importance of open, honest communication (Benoit, 1997; Seeger & Ulmer, 2001; Ulmer, 2001; Sellnow, et al., 1998) I believe the strongest factor in Clinton's marijuana story fading from the news was in his admission. While the "I didn't inhale" line is still used as a political inside joke, once the question was answered to the reporters' satisfaction, there was no reason to revisit it.

Bush, however, in refusing to fully answer the question, left reporters still looking for answers. By using transcendence in his image restoration strategy, Bush may have also offended reporters by saying the system needed to be purged of "ugly politics" (Walsh, 1999, p. A5). Transcendence is an aggressive strategy and implies that the user of the strategy has "higher values." Bush's strategy of transcendence may have been seen as a challenge to some reporters, causing an increase in questioning rather than a decrease in coverage. Clymer (1999) contends that Bush's answers made the issue linger rather than go away (p. A8). Based on the difference between the amount of media coverage of the drug question in the two campaigns and the empirical research described in this study, I maintain image restoration strategies do influence the amount of media coverage an issue receives.

Television Media Coverage

While a continuing trend in covering scandals can help explain the increase in newspaper coverage of Bush's cocaine query, it does not explain the decrease in television coverage from 1992 to 1999. However, the availability of video can explain the difference. Clinton's admission was delivered during a television debate. There were cameras rolling, and there was "exciting" video to feed to television stations. Kurtz (1992d) states that Clinton spent much of his time in New York "explaining, denying, justifying and shouting down hecklers. The television image is of a man constantly backpedaling, struggling to shift the debate from personal ethics and pot-puffing to economic issues" (p. A1). Not long after Clinton's admission, Billy Crystal took the opportunity to mock Clinton on the televised Academy Awards, which led to more interesting video (Maraniss, 1992, A1). Yardley (1999) found there was only a tape recording and a transcript of the news conference where Bush lashed out at the media. There was no "hoopla" to show on television, which diminished the television coverage of Bush and the cocaine accusations. Comparing the television news coverage of

the responses to question of drug use in light of the research on sensationalism in television news (Gulati, et al., 2004; Bennett, 2001; Graber, 2001), I found no correlation between the image restoration strategies and the evening news coverage.

Length of Media Coverage

Based on the timing of the story breaks, it is also difficult to draw conclusions from the length of the time the stories were in the media. The amount of time the issue was in the news is relevant to when the story broke. Because Clinton's admission occurred in March during the primary, the revival of the story in October occurred because of the upcoming general election. Meanwhile, since Bush's story broke in August—a year before the election—the story was not timely enough to bring back into the news at the end of the campaign. Therefore, even though Clinton's connection to marijuana was in the news longer, it does not necessarily mean his drug use received more coverage. I found no correlation between the image restoration strategies and the length of time the stories were in the news.

After analyzing the image restoration strategies and the media coverage of the campaigns, I determined that image restoration strategies do influence media coverage; however, other factors also influence media coverage, including the availability of video and timing of the story. While some implications can be drawn from this study, others require future research.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was limited to news articles in seven national newspapers and news stories on three television news programs. Future research could take into account the coverage of the drug issue in newspaper opinion columns. While I did not analyze whether the content of the opinion columns was positive or negative, an initial count of opinion, editorial, letters to the editor, commentary, and perspective columns in the 7 publications revealed 21 articles on Clinton and 50 articles on Bush. Analysis of editorials could suggest a possible slant in the news coverage due to the opinions of the editors. A qualitative analysis of letters to the editor could be compared with a quantitative analysis of the polls to determine if the public really is disinterested in the past drug use of presidential candidates. The study could also be expanded to other newspapers and other mediums, including cable and satellite television as well as newsmagazines. While it was not used in 1992, the Internet could be added as a medium in future studies comparing other campaigns. An interesting twist considering the gossip value of the drug issue would be to analyze the content and coverage of entertainment programs like *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Late night with David Letterman*, and *Saturday Night Live*. Smith and Voth (2002) note that shortly before the 2000 Presidential election, the Pew Research Center for People and the Press reported that 47% of people between the ages of 18 and 29 obtained most of their political information from late-night entertainment outlets.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the image restoration strategies utilized by Bill Clinton in 1992 and George W. Bush in 1999 and the ensuing media coverage of their alleged past drug use. Despite polling evidence that the public is not interested in presidential candidates' past drug use (Balz, 1999), reporters continue to broach the subject when questioning politicians, forcing candidates to employ various strategies to protect their images. While the glaring headline in The Washington Post embodies the predicament of politicians faced with the nagging questions of past drug use: "To Answer, or Not to Answer: That is the Question of the Hour" (Woodward, 1999, p.A.05), continued coverage of this issue could lead to interesting longevity studies of image restoration strategies and improved strategic campaign rhetoric.

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