

RUNNING HEAD: *APOLOGIA, ANTAPOLOGIA* AND POLITICAL POWER

Apologia, Antapologia and Political Power in Congressional Candidate Sex Scandals

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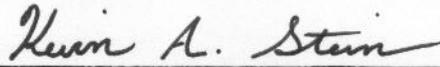
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Apologia, Antapologia And Political Power

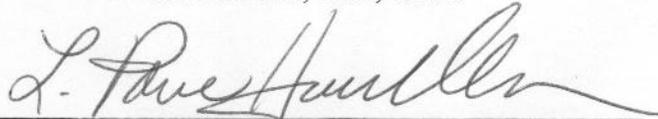
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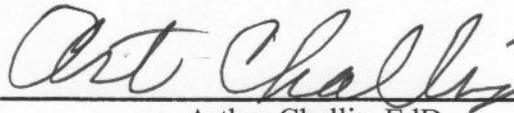
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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in an effort to find not only a visible pattern in successful image repair, but also an apologetic model that accused individuals may use in order to gain public acceptance of their apology. This study examined three different contexts of which recent political figures were accused of participating in lewd sexual behavior. Through the use of *apologia* and Benoit's 14 image repair strategies, an analog criticism was conducted for the analysis of each individual context in an effort to better compare and contrast the contexts against one another. Based on the results, I concluded that although there is no definite pattern in successful image repair and public acceptance, there is evidence to suggest that some *apologia* strategies may prove more beneficial than others in image repair. Studying these contexts provides insights into what the individuals motives are behind their apologetic strategies during an image crisis.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Citizens invest trust in their leaders, not only to lead their nations to prosperity and safety, but also to forge trust through their examples as individuals. Yet no man or woman is perfect and as such these leaders will make decisions or choices that will appear immoral or unjust. As a consequence of these choices, their moral character will be attacked. Benoit (1995), said: “These attacks on our reputation are serious matters, for our image or reputation is extremely vital to us” (p.2). When our image is threatened, we feel compelled to defend and offer explanations for our actions and choices and, at times, we must apologize for these actions.

Benoit (1995) wrote that preserving self-image becomes synonymous with leaving a lasting legacy: “We not only desire a healthy image of ourselves but we want others to think favorably of us as well” (p. 1). As a result, leaders and politicians often are willing to do whatever it takes to leave a positive impression.

The lack of a visible pattern in successful image repair in *apologia* calls for an in-depth look into apologetic strategies. There are multiple apologetic strategies available and yet there is no distinct formula that will guarantee public acceptance and a clean record and or image. Clearly apologetic strategies are linked to their delivery and context but also their framework and situational value. According to Ware & Linkugel (1973), analyzing a broad array of apology situations is needed in order to understand and “...discover those factors which characterize the apologetic form” (p. 274). There are numerous factors that could potentially influence not only the apologetic situation, but also the delivery of the apology itself. Having knowledge of what potential factors may affect an apologetic situation will prove beneficial in image repair as it gives the apologist insights into what strategies may or may not work. Examples of these factors may include timing, setting, medium or technology used to disseminate the apology. Each of

these factors could greatly affect the apologetic situation and merit further analysis into their potential effects of the apology.

While an in-depth look is warranted at the various factors that influenced these apologetic contexts, comparing the contexts to one another will prove to be beneficial in the understanding of apologetic patterns. For this particular study, analog criticism will be utilized to compare the contexts in order to achieve this goal. Rosenfield (1968) believed that using analog criticism will create a level of objectivity and constraints or similarities will be identified between the contexts while simultaneously acknowledging the differences (p.435). It is essential to analyze these similar artifacts, as it will give an accurate and yet critical insight of how the apologies compare to one another. Analyzing these contexts using analog criticism *may* potentially lead to a discernable pattern in which apologetic strategies can help in image repair.

However, the genre of *apologia* is typically studied in a single context, seeking evidence on how the apologetic strategies utilized were effective in repairing one's image. Choosing to analyze *only* the apologetic strategies utilized overlooks the other apologetic strategies that were ignored by the rhetor. Downey suggests that *apologia* "...resembles a catalog of options available to rhetors rather than a unified set..." (p. 43). Choosing to ignore or neglect these options in favor of others may provide insight to the mindset of the rhetor and the apologetic strategies utilized. This will give a deeper and more personal level of understanding as to why these strategies were chosen and others neglected.

Studies of *apologia* rarely look beyond the context of the apologetic strategy. Studies only analyze the strategies utilized within the context, but fail to analyze the apologetic strategies that could have been used. These analyses do not tell us what patterns occur in *apologia* over time. Providing potential alternatives or choices and explaining these choices may have repaired

the rhetor's image. Such insights may help illuminate examples in which strategies should be avoided.

In this study, I will analyze three separate contexts; Senator Larry Craig's bathroom debacle, Representative Anthony Weiner's sexting and Senator John Edwards's extramarital affair. I hope to discover various factors that may have influenced the apologetic setting including party affiliation, time, media utilized, length of scandal and level of severity.

Searching For Love In A Bathroom Stall

In early June 2007, Senator Larry Craig of Idaho was awaiting his plane at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. During this time, Craig had to use the restroom like all travelers do; however, Craig experienced something few travelers ever encounter, being arrested on suspicion of lewd conduct. During his use of the restroom, Craig was accused of soliciting an undercover police officer for sexual activity in a public restroom. According to police reports, Craig had entered the restroom and peered into a stall that was occupied by an individual. He then proceeded to occupy the neighboring stall, during of which he ran his hand under the neighboring wall between the two stalls. What Craig did not realize was that a sting operation was being conducted, as there were reports of sexual encounters occurring in the airport bathroom stalls. The way these encounters were engaged was through the use of hand signals, by running a hand under the wall of the neighboring stall to signal intent for sexual intercourse.

Craig was arrested and brought in for questioning and he maintained his innocence, making several claims for his suspicious behavior. Some of his excuses included peering in the stall to see if it was occupied, that their feet touched by accident because Craig had a "wide stance" on the toilet, because of his body's build and that he wasn't running his hand under the

wall but rather steadying himself on the toilet. While he tried to maintain his innocence, Craig pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor. Later that month, he held a press conference admitting to his indiscretion. When pressed for an explanation as to why Craig pleaded guilty, his reason was to quickly end the process. Reactions from the public were from shock to humor.

While the public accused Craig of being gay and laughed at his situation, Craig's colleagues called for his resignation as his behavior was deemed detrimental to not only the Senate but to the Republican party as well. Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky called Craig's conduct "unforgivable" and former Governor Mitt Romney, who accepted Craig's endorsement in helping him during his presidential campaign, equated Craig's actions to Bill Clinton's Lewinsky scandal and called Craig's behavior "disgusting" (Harper, 2007). On September 1, Craig announced his intent to resign as an Idaho Senator. However, Craig appeared to have second thoughts as his legal team filed a motion to repeal the guilty plea and publicly announced he would not resign. The news of Craig's new intent to stay in the senate was heavily criticized by his colleagues: "Senator Craig gave us his word. I wish he would stick to his word. It's embarrassing for the Senate, it's embarrassing for his party," said John Ensign, chair of the Republican campaign committee (Staunton, 2007). The judge later denied the motion and Craig's guilty plea was upheld. The indiscretion followed Craig for the rest of his term and in 2008 he chose to forgo seeking reelection.

Weinergate

In May of 2011, a link to a sexually suggestive photo was sent to a female college student from the twitter account of Representative Anthony Weiner of New York. The photo, a picture of a man's lower torso wearing boxer briefs with the outline of an erect penis, was quickly taken offline, however, a screenshot was sent to conservative blogger, Andrew Breitbart, who

published the photo on his website the next day. Immediately, Weiner's staff stated in a press release that his account had been hacked and that the photo was a hoax. However, the damage was done. For weeks, Weiner was asked several media outlets in interviews if the photo was his. Each time, Weiner not only denied it, but grew angry, as this was a continued subject of discussion. However, Weiner never asked the FBI or police to help aid or assist him in an investigation for this apparent hack of his twitter account. After several days of denying he posted the image, Breitbart posted another cropped photo of Weiner, obtained from a second woman, this time showing him shirtless in the photo.

On June 6, Weiner admitted during a press conference that the image was his, and that he posted similar pictures in multiple other instances and subsequently sent them to multiple women. Yet, Weiner stated that he would not resign. As a result, his colleagues from both sides of the aisle called for not only an investigation into his affairs to see if any House rules were violated, but also to resign. When asked about Weiner's scandal and what he would do, President Barack Obama responded, "I can tell you that if it was me, I would resign" (Russert, 2011). The public was upset as well. During Weiner's press conference on June 16, an unidentified civilian was planted by *The Howard Stern Show*, heckling Weiner saying "Goodbye pervert." The individual also capitalized on the humiliating situation by asking questions, "Congressman, were you fully erect? The people need to know!" (Karl, 2011). Citizens on the street gave their opinion of Weiner's resignation with NBC news "I think it's about time," and "...hopefully we find somebody else that could replace him that'll be worthwhile" (Russert, 2011). Since his resignation, he has rarely been seen in public.

Leaving your dying wife for a younger, healthier woman

In the midst of the 2008 presidential primary campaign, reports surfaced from *The National Enquirer* that Senator John Edwards of North Carolina, a potential candidate for the Democratic Party nomination, was engaging in an extramarital affair. The *Enquirer*, was the first paper to break the story almost a year before other news agencies reported it and had reported that not only Edwards was participating in an affair with a former campaign worker Rielle Hunter, who was hired on Edwards's campaign to create a series of promotional campaign videos, but that a child had come from the relationship. At the time, Edwards was running for President of the United States, and the allegations hurt his campaign and subsequently both parties denied the affair. The following year, Edwards was pressed by the community on how the allegations might hurt his potential of becoming Obama's vice presidential candidate.

In July, *Enquirer* reporters ambushed Edwards after they had learned Edwards was visiting Rielle, who was a guest at a hotel. Reporters cornered Edwards in the hotel bathroom and Edwards would not leave until he had security protect him. In light of the encounter at the hotel and mounting evidence, Edwards admitted during an interview with *ABC News* correspondent Bob Woodruff that he did have an affair with a former campaign worker, but denied fathering the child. Colleagues of Edwards were immediately upset. Representative Chet Edwards, a relative of John Edwards, commented on John's character: "John Edwards disgraced himself and his family..." (Gillman, 2008).

In a turn of events, however, Edwards held a press conference in January 2010, admitting to fathering the child with Hunter. The reaction from the public was of outrage and disgust. Reporters from *The Daily News* called the situation a "...filthy tale" and also called Edwards "...both a cad and a liar" (Siemaszko, Connelly, & Nelson, 2010). Adding insult to injury, when

he first admitted the affair, it was announced that Edwards's wife, Elizabeth's cancer was in remission. This further outraged the public. Even the *The Globe and Mail* asked the public if the "ickiest part" of the scandal was "when he explained that his wife's breast cancer was in remission when he took up with Rielle" (Wente, 2008). However, the affair appeared to continue even with the joint announcement by the couple that Elizabeth's cancer resurfaced and was diagnosed into stage 4. Doctors said Elizabeth's condition was incurable. She died in December of 2010 as a result of her cancer.

In June of 2011, Edwards was indicted by a North Carolina grand jury on six felony charges. Investigators were suspicious that Edwards may have used campaign money to cover up his affair. If convicted on all charges, Edwards would have the maximum penalty of thirty years in prison and fines up to 1.5 million dollars. The following year, in May of 2012, a verdict found Edwards not guilty on one count and a mistrial of the other five counts. Today, Edwards has rarely been seen in public.

The apologetic strategies in these three contexts are analyzed, compared and contrasted to one another in an effort to understand not only why their image repair strategies failed or succeeded, but also understand why the audience chose to reject or accept the apologies. I will first review previous literature on the study and theory of *apologia*, explain my chosen method and the benefits thereof, and provide the results of my findings and future implications they may have on strategies of *apologia*. The analysis will be conducted by extracting quotes from transcripts, interviews and newspaper articles that have documented the accused individuals addressing the accusations. The quotes will then be categorized based on their linguistic use of words and justified as such.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following literature will focus on two areas that are pertinent to this particular study. This review will summarize various *apologia* strategies utilized in the political spectrum with the goal of creating a perceived understanding of which strategies were successful and were well-received and which strategies were deemed unsuccessful and were ill-received. The first section will be an examination of U.S. Presidents and their various *apologia* tactics utilized. The second section will focus strictly on U.S. congressman and their strategies as well.

Most studies of *apologia* have focused on a single key event or apology. Literature studying multiple politicians apologizing for similar faults or misdeeds has rarely been examined and even fewer have examined why the public has chosen to forgive some politicians for their scandalous actions and have held others accountable for similar scandals.

Theory Literature

Like all communication, the theory of *apologia* is ever evolving and changing. Factors that may affect this include changes in customs, political parties, governments and new technology that can be used to disseminate information.

Kruse (1977) recognized that non-denial *apologia* was one of the more prominent strategies utilized whenever a person with importance attempted to repair his or her image. However, what is said in order to either justify the person's actions or repair the image is done within the circumstances of the discourse. Too often, apologists are studied by whether they successfully repaired their image; however, an apologist's goals may have a deeper intent than just repairing their image. Predominant needs are an aspect that is rarely study. As a result, Kruse created a new set of sub-genre categories that helped explain why non-denial *apologia* is utilized and the situational factors that could influence this *apologia* strategy.

Ware and Linkugel (1973) examined speeches, which utilized self-defense strategies in an effort to discover factors that could be attributed to self-defense *apologia*. In addition, Ware and Linkugel hoped to find new sub genres of the apologetic form and as a result found that speakers fall into one of four major rhetorical positions when defending their character, which include absolution, vindication, explanation or justification. Each position is unique to their level of defense and discourse. For example, explanation relies on an arrangement of bolstering and differentiation, while justification utilizes bolstering and transcendence. Explanative can therefore be perceived as more defensive than justification as the audience is expected to have an understanding of the underlying motives or beliefs. This strategy is used in an effort to shield the apologist from being condemned as he or she tries to create an expectation of common sense or knowledge attributed to the event that transpired. These rhetorical positions were created as categories, but can be utilized in an effort to perceive the effectiveness of the apologetic strategies and motives of the apologist.

Downey (1993) argued that the rhetoric of *apologia* has evolved over time yet its purposes remain the same. As a result, *apologia* has evolved from a genre into a symbolic strategy, and because of this, new genres, and sub genres will be created and added to the categories of *apologia* throughout time. These new genres and sub genres may be influenced by multiple factors including: new technological developments that assist in communication and the ever-changing landscape of interpersonal communication.

While the medium used to deliver an apology will change, Fisher (1970) theorized that rhetorical situations are perceived from the motive of those who are communicating. However, the perception of situation is heavily influenced and dependent upon the rhetorical context of the apologist's presentation. Fisher outlined four rhetorical situations that call for differing

strategies: affirmation (concerned with giving birth to an image), reaffirmation (concerned with vitalizing an image), purification (concerned with correcting an image), and subversion (concerned with undermining an image).

Ryan (1982) elaborated on Fisher's (1970) rhetorical situations by treating accusations and apologies as a speech set. Ryan believes that the accuser in discourse is the affirmer in the speech model while the accused or apologists role is to defend or purify his or her image. This relationship was demonstrated with an analysis on Pope Leo X. and Martin Luther. History records that Leo delivered accusations against Luther's policies. By affirming this belief, Luther had no choice but to defend his policy, as not doing so would negate not only his policy practices but show how the true ethics of character is as well.

Studies of *apologia* focus on the perceived effectiveness of the delivery and literary devices utilized within the apology. However, all apologies have shared elements of motivation. Schlenker (1980) further explained the art of apologizing when trying to preserve public image. Apologies have five main elements: some form or expression of guilt, recognition of indiscretion, rejecting the inappropriate behavior, taking up appropriate conduct, offering penance or compensating victim(s). Schlenker cautioned that apologies should be offered "...at best a pardon...they do not offer a not guilty verdict..." (Schlenker, p. 157 1980) and also believed that apologies are mainly utilized when repercussions are trivial or that it is extremely unlikely that a guilty verdict can be avoided. Such habits can greatly affect which apologetic strategies are utilized.

Instead of looking strictly at the apology, Schonbach (1990) treated the situation as an account episode and created a basic model that can categorize *apologia* in unique but similar events. The first is the failure event, where the person (actor) who feels violated or offended

accuses the person (opponent) who committed the violation. The reproach phase follows and is where the opponent reacts with criticism to the accusation; however, the accused can offer other responses that can show compassion or sympathy. Account phase is when the actor reacts to the opponent usually as an excuse; however, other forms such as concessions may take place as well. Finally, the opponent will acknowledge any or all of the following: the account and or failure, the actor's personality and responsibility in relations to the account. While this pattern is basic it can be expanded and utilized to understand the deep complexities of *apologia*.

Knowing that multiple parties may be involved in apologetic strategies, Abadi (1990) created a model that explains possible scenarios of *apologia* strategies that these parties may need to agree to before an actual apology is issued and or established. Themes of the model include acknowledging full or partial responsibility, choose to renounce the act or not, promises to refrain, offering to make amends and either expressing or implying the apology. With multiple choices and thousands of outcomes, it is easy to understand why it is difficult to get multiple parties to utilize appropriate *apologia* that will benefit all parties and give an accurate representation of what occurred and what parties are at fault. While the results of this study bring unique and interesting concepts to light, these situations rarely occur and therefore are rarely utilized as it requires multiple parties to admit fault.

Kruse (1981) used Harrell and Linkugel's (1978) generic guidelines on what composes apologetic discourse and created specific demarcations in an effort to refine the current definitions of apologetic discourse. Kruse (1981) suggested: "*apologia* is discourse generated in response to an actual situation, in which one's character is attacked or perceived to have been attacked...thus apologists feature 'repair of reputation' as the general motive for their discourses (p. 290). Subsequently, the refinement of what is apologetic discourse has led to a greater

understanding and comprehension in three areas: providing a rationale that permits us to distinguish the different types of statements used in self-defense, that *apologia* is not a speech, but rather a process that helps us understand the true nature of apologetic discourse and a greater comprehension of the ongoing attempts of image repair.

U.S. Presidents

Arguably, the most common area of focus within the realm of *apologia* is studied with U.S. Presidents. Carcasson (1998) specifically analyzed President Herbert Hoover's rhetoric during the 1932 presidential election. Using the categories of *apologia*, Carcasson theorized that President Hoover knew he was going to lose the election, and thus used his campaign as a soapbox to apologize. During the campaign, President Hoover attempted to defend himself and his administration against accusations from his opponent, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. However, Hoover failed in doing so. The apologetic strategies he used included; denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence, all of which were ineffective in persuading the public of his innocence. While the findings of this study may focus on a presidency from another era, they do lay a foundation for an understanding of the utilization of *apologia* in the political world.

Being president of a country comes with the expectations of the public that the President is accountable for not only the actions he or she has that affect the country, but how these decisions may have affected foreign nations as well. Klope (1986) studied this while examining President Ronald Reagan's speech addressing the Beirut bombing and Grenada invasion. During the speech, Reagan attempted to defuse the growing crises in what Klope (1986) believed was a strategy that utilized "...specific textual features of myth and victimage, when viewed in the context of this crisis, suggests that Reagan's speech had the potential for defusing the crises by redefining the situation" (p. 387). By redefining the situation, Reagan was able to resolve the

crisis by shifting blame for the bombing of Beirut and the invasion. This helped reaffirm Reagan's foreign policy. While the analysis does not directly address an indiscretion made by Reagan's administration, the study does illustrate how *apologia* strategies, while used in different situations, can be utilized in an effort to obtain similar outcomes.

Rosenfield (1968) conducted an analog criticism of two different speeches by different U.S. Presidents and yet the speeches were similar to each other. Vice presidential candidate Richard Nixon was accused of having a campaign fund account that was only utilized for his financial comfort in what became known as the "millionaire's club." Days later, Nixon addressed the accusations on television to the American people, explaining not only the proper uses of the fund, but attacking those who attacked him in what became known as the "Checkers speech." President Harry Truman was accused of allowing a communist spy to hold a high office in government despite having knowledge of negative reports surrounding this individual's activities. The similarities both men used in their speeches include: reassembling previous arguments, prevalence of facts and supportive evidence utilized, broadcast mediums used have a strong clash of views and *apologia* utilized in broadcast mediums do not have limits to defensive apologetic strategies. The results of the analysis concluded that those who choose a public forum to defend their image may have been motivated to do so to not have limitations on both their defenses and attacks. Utilizing the analog criticism is useful in that it acknowledges the differences in apologies, but is able to compare the similarities in not only the apologetic strategy, but delivery as well.

McGucking (1968) also analyzed Nixon's "Checkers speech" with a different focus. At the time the speech was given, Nixon's fund caused ethical concerns, especially if a special interest group provided the funds. Republican leaders asked Nixon to address the accusations by

having him give a public accounting of his personal finances and budgetary expenses. Nixon gave his side of the story using radio and television as media to spread this message. McGuckin (1968) analyzed Nixon's speech in an effort to understand what rhetorical strategies were utilized during his speech. McGurkin (1968) concluded that Nixon was able to convince people of his intentions and connect with them using his *ethos*, or by showing his moral character in his persuasive message. In order to do this, Nixon, had to "...associate(s) himself with what is virtuous and elevated, bestow praise on himself and his cause, creates an impression of sincerity, identifies himself with his audience, and offsets any persona reason for the speech" (p. 261). Throughout Nixon's speech, he utilized key themes or phrases that would connect with the audience personally. Examples of these include personal honesty, equality, concern for the individual, integrity, rejection of authority, success, hard work and family cooperation, courage, sociality, and patriotism. These themes were created and used to identify with his audience and persuade them to see his point of view. Nixon was successful and evidence of this is prevalent as the situation was never mentioned again and he faced no legal ramifications for this campaign fund.

Another study exposed the strategies used by President Reagan and French President Francois Mitterrand during speeches that addressed the crisis at hand (Heisey, 1986). As previously mentioned, Reagan chose to create an image of power using rhetorical perspective, a strategy that forces listeners of the message to evoke self-reflection and create internal questions. However, Mitterrand chose to transcend those appearances by his cohort. Mitterrand applied this strategy by using the appropriate rhetorical language and choosing what can be perceived as the 'high ground,' in the following excerpt "[My country] respects the great Russian people and wishes to preserve the good secular relations which unite it to her" (p. 330). This study further

shows the different utilizations of strategies of *apologia*. In this study, both presidents chose to act in such a way that they believed was in the best interests of their country and represented their countries well.

In April of 1985, the White House announced President Ronald Reagan's itinerary during an 11-day trip to Europe. Among the list of places Reagan would be attending was a German military cemetery. A closer look at the occupants of the cemetery yielded names of war criminals and SS soldiers who were responsible for killing hundreds of Jews during the Holocaust. Representatives, Congressmen and numerous politicians called for Reagan to change his itinerary. However Elie Wiesel, a holocaust survivor and chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, used a public memorial accusing the president of being insensitive to other people's feelings. The next day, while receiving an award from Reagan himself, Wiesel took advantage of his acceptance speech to speak directly to Reagan on changing his itinerary out of respect for those who died and those who survived. Friedenber (1988) examined Reagan's response and apologetic strategy to such challenges. Reagan was able to downplay the controversy by utilizing symbolic actions in his rhetoric. In his speech at the cemetery, Reagan consistently stressed reconciliation, as his strategy was to define the ceremony of laying a wreath as an act of reconciliation. Reagan also used "bolstering" in his speech, focusing on the struggle of freedom. Both apologetic strategies minimized the accusations placed by his critics.

Later on during his presidency, Reagan had to address his critics and the public as to why his administration allowed the sale of arms to Iran. Benoit, Gullifor and Panici (1991) examined Reagan's defensive discourse and concluded that Reagan failed to persuade his critics and the public. However, only upon admitting his own failure did Reagan receive support both from his colleagues and the public as well. When the discourse was the primary focus of Reagan's

strategies, only then did he succeed in repairing his image. This conclusion can be utilized in the analysis of the present study, as image repair is a primary purpose or reasoning behind choosing *apologia* strategies.

Inspired by Ware and Linkugel's (1973) work on subcategorizations of apologetic discourses, King (1985) used a generic approach in an effort to add *tragedy* (utilizing fictional rhetoric to relate fiction to reality) as a sub-genre of *apologia*. To accomplish this, King examined President Nixon's Watergate scandal and the rhetoric utilized both by representatives of Nixon and Nixon himself. The analysis yielded evidence that Nixon used language of popular entertainment in a possible effort to play down his potential guilt. For example, in popular culture and entertainment, talking in the third person makes light of the situation, something Nixon attempted to accomplish: "I would also like a scenario with regards to the President's role," (p. 292). Nixon switched from speaking in first person to third person, a common practice in the entertainment industry.

Previous work on Watergate by Harrell, Ware and Linkugel (1975) investigated the shortcomings of President Richard Nixon's apology for ordering a break-in to the Democratic National Convention Headquarters. While Nixon failed to explain his actions, he subsequently failed to restore his image not only among his peers and colleagues, but the American public as well. The study yielded evidence that Nixon was never in control of his image prior to the crisis. As a consequence, he failed in repairing his image as the majority of the public made it clear that he, the President should have a higher level of accountability. The findings of previous studies, which focus on apologetic rhetoric, support and supplement the conclusions of the current study.

Two years after Watergate had become public knowledge, Nixon gave his last speech as President to the American people. It was clear that not only was Nixon trying to explain himself

to the public, but also did so in such a way that he tried to place blame on others while preserving his image and his legacy as President. An analysis conducted by Katula (1975) found that Nixon tried minimizing Watergate by focusing on his victories, while saying Watergate was just a small chapter of everything he has done as President. It is clear in the analysis that Nixon's primary apologetic strategy was denial. Yet, the public's reactions were varied and typically fell upon party lines in ideology. It was clear that Nixon's image was tarnished and his apologetic strategy failed. This study is key in showing how the candidate's intent in the apologetic strategy can inherently ruin the apology. Nixon's choice of blaming others rather than owning up to his failures made him appear weak and not in control of his administration. Had Nixon owned up to his mistakes, it is probable the public would have been more forgiving. This is a relevant lesson for the subjects of the present study to be compared and/or contrasted.

Post-Watergate, multiple autobiographies of the twelve participants in the Administration as well as other related books were published. The public believed these books may provide more answers publicly as to why they had participated in Watergate and any other details that may be related to it. However, these expectations were not met. Blair (1984) examined these forms of literature in an effort to identify if the rhetorical situation presents constraints on the *apologia* utilized by the authors. Results show that the authors utilized conventional *apologia* strategies. While the strategies utilized by the authors were similar throughout the investigation of Watergate, they differed, however, as the outcome of the case was already closed. Yet, these authors were not able to achieve the success they hoped in their apologetic strategies. While this study elaborated more on the Watergate scandal, it shows the lasting consequences of certain apologetic strategies that are utilized in the initial apology.

John Dean, a co-conspirator of Watergate had published two books on the historic event previously mentioned. Dean employed varying forms of *apologia* in these memoirs in an effort to restore his public image. Kahl (1984) analyzed both memoirs in an effort to understand and see the full effects of Dean's varying methods. In his first memoir *Blind Ambition*, Dean engaged in multiple forms of denial on three levels. First, citing his inexperience in politics, second, claiming his ambitions blinded him and therefore he became susceptible to corruption and third, choosing to omit alternative actions he could have taken. In his second memoir, *Lost Honor*, Dean utilized differentiation and transcendence. These strategies chosen were used in an effort to remove Dean from those who were guilty in an effort to place him on a higher plane. These strategies help victimize Dean himself and, while it is not known if they were successful, it is an example of how apologetic strategies can be utilized not only in rhetoric but in written works as well.

Further fallout from Watergate called for a renewed trust in the office of the President. As a result, candidates had to defend their past actions and character to meet this new expectation by changing their apologetic strategies. Gold (1978) specifically studied the presidential campaigns during the 1976 presidential election. Both candidates' character and past were questioned and heavily attacked. The media compounded this by "...repeatedly questioning the candidate about a charge," and "[not allowing a] single explanation...to stand" (p. 311) in relation to their character. It was clear that the candidates were being held more accountable for their past actions and their character. Candidates had to utilize various strategies to combat the constant attacks from not only their opponents but also the endless barrage from the media. Polls showed that the American public believed and supported the candidates, rating both candidates as "highly trustworthy" (p. 316). This renewed call for a trustworthy nominees required candidates to

change their apologetic strategies. The results of this study support the current analysis as individuals utilizing apologetic rhetoric will have to adapt to the media just as their predecessors have done in the past.

Just a few short weeks before the Democratic presidential primary, candidate John F. Kennedy learned that his large lead in the polls turned to a deficit in West Virginia as citizens of the state did not approve of Kennedy's religion; Catholicism. In an effort to combat this issue, Kennedy gave a speech to address the public's concerns with his religion. Henry (1988) examined Kennedy's rhetorical strategy. The bulk of his speech utilized *apologia*, however, in the latter part of the speech, his manner shifted towards a more accusatory tone. In essence, the analysis yielded evidence that Kennedy re-cast the question of his religion into a question of the local public's religious tolerance. This strategy was effective as his religion was rarely an issue after this speech and he went on to win the presidency.

Having taken on the mantle of the presidency as President Richard Nixon resigned, President Gerald Ford had to be mindful of what he said for fear of the public and critics of the previous administration looking for similarities between Ford and Nixon's rhetoric. Brock (1988) examined Ford's rhetorical strategy to see if the strategy worked by reassuring the American public he was different from his predecessors. To do so, Ford launched a rhetorical strategy to combat Vietnam, a legacy of Nixon's. While he was successful in satisfying the public with this rhetorical strategy, the public was displeased with Ford's decision to pardon Nixon and thus Ford quickly lost popularity among voters after doing so.

Benoit and Wells (1996) analyzed the discourse shared between candidates of the 1992 presidential race utilizing new theories of persuasive attack and persuasive defense. While persuasive attack is a relatively new theory, persuasive defense (also known as image repair) has

been thoroughly examined in previously literature. Persuasive attack is a form of discourse created in an effort to attack an opponent's image or reputation. The findings of the analysis showed that Clinton attacked more on the issues that the public thought most important and persuasively defended himself utilizing corrective action more than the other candidates. It can be inferred that because Clinton had attacked on topics the public cared about and apologized using corrective action when his record was questioned, then he may have had an influence in his win in the election later that year.

Simons (2000) conducted an analysis on the Monica Lewinsky scandal during the Clinton administration. His intent was to present a dilemma-centered analysis of Clinton's speech on August 17, 1998. During this speech, President Clinton announced that he had purposefully concealed a sexual relationship he had with an intern, Monica Lewinsky, from his family, administration and the American people (Simons, 2000). However, Simons also chose to not only focus on the speech, but also emphasized Clinton's multiple use of various apologetic strategies and the appropriateness thereof. Simons also concluded that President Clinton faced several dilemmas stemming from his relationship with Lewinsky and his attempts to cover it up. Clinton used several rhetorical strategies, some of which failed, as he appeared to lack "...genuine remorse, his retreat to legal hairsplitting, his tarnishing of the office of the Presidency, and his assault on the very meaning of moral responsibility" (p. 448). While the context of this study is relevant and details Clinton's use of *apologia* strategies, the study itself is limited as it lacks a comparison to previous U.S. Presidents' *apologia* strategies in similar situations as well as why these strategies succeeded in winning the public's acceptance of his or her image.

However, the speeches of his admitted affair did not end. Clinton subsequently gave two more speeches within days of his public acknowledgment of having an extramarital affair. Yet, as the speeches were given, Clinton's tone had changed along with the apologetic strategies he used. Lee and Barton (2003) analyzed these speeches using Illocutionary acts to frame or give understanding of Clinton's motives during the speeches and why the public chose not to forgive him. In the first speech, Clinton took responsibility for his relationship with intern, Monica Lewinsky, but maintained that his previous answers to the questions were legally accurate, that he never lied. This was in reference to questions if he had destroyed evidence or asked anyone to take any unlawful action. The media and public, however, rejected the original speech, calling it a failed confession. Clinton's second speech only spoke of his personal trials and problems. During his speech, he focused on the role of forgiveness in a just and peaceful society. He then contrasted his temper and shortcomings with leaders he believed to be great, including Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr., while accenting their positive merciful attributes. This second speech focused on Clinton's pride and resentment, yet did little to address others he believed to have wronged him. The press, however, framed his speech as an act of him requesting forgiveness. Critics, however, still believed Clinton was not ready to fully request forgiveness as his speech showed little evidence of him confessing his original indiscretion. The last speech utilized religious metaphors as Clinton accepted responsibility, discussed his state of sorrow and process in obtaining forgiveness. Clinton had not only apologized for his actions and behaviors, but also acknowledged that he hurt others by apologizing to the Lewinsky family for his inappropriate behavior. Yet, he chose not to utilize language to appropriately describe his indiscretions as a "lie" or "adultery." As a result of being willing to use religious language in describing his "sins" but not actually admitting to them, the public did not forgive him. It is clear

that when utilizing a religious discourse in image repair, fully accepting and utilizing the discourse is beneficial to the apologist. Choosing to not verbally say he committed sins but eluding to them is why Clinton failed during his series of apologies.

Blaney and Benoit (2001) examined Clinton's use of surrogates during multiple crises that had occurred during his presidency. Three sets of discourse were examined: Hillary Clinton's appearance on NBC's *Today Show* defending her husband from the allegations he had an affair, White House Counsel Jack Quinn and Representative Tom Lanto's appearance on CNN's *Larry King Live* defending the president from accusations that he had used FBI files inappropriately in an effort for political gain, and White House Chief of Staff Mack McLarty giving a press briefing defending the president against allegations replacing White House Travel Employees with political allies. The analysis showed that each surrogate utilized multiple strategies; however, one apologetic strategy was utilized the most: attack the accuser. Each surrogate had differing success rates that could possibly be attributed to several factors. Hillary defending her husband against illicit affair allegations had swayed some into thinking he did not have an affair but in the end it had minor effectiveness, if any at all. Quinn and Lanto were ineffective as well, as the public believed Clinton had known about the file acquisition and had abused his presidential powers as a result. McLarty's rhetoric during the press briefing was unsuccessful as the public continued to believe that Clinton acted unethically and/or illegally. Even though each surrogate had failed, they failed for different reasons, thus showing how even if *apologia* delivery is replicated it does not mean that it will have a similar effect.

While Clinton admitted having a sexual relationship with an intern, the damage of the investigation had not only spread to those close to Clinton, but to those who conducted the investigation as well. Benoit and McHale (1999) examined Ken Starr's image repair discourse on

20/20, analyzing the strategies utilized in an effort to repair his image. Starr was accused of being unobjective and at times aggressive in such a way that critics called into question his tactics and ethics in the investigation of Clinton's affair. Starr's image and reputation were tarnished as result of these accusations. The results showed that Starr's efforts to repair his image were ineffective. It was clear that public opinion of Starr was very poor, as many believed that the time and money wasted on Clinton's extramarital affair was not worth taxpayer money. Image repair is a key influence present in *apologia* and, while this study may not deal directly with a politician, its ties to the Clinton scandal as well as the discourse utilized supports this analysis.

Roberson and Connaughton (2010) examined a rare utilization of *apologia* during the 2008 presidential campaign, which they deemed *apologia* of association. This form of *apologia* is utilized when "a candidate engages in *apologia* to (a) defend themselves, and (b) defend or explain the surrogate or supporters misstep or comments...(c) place distance between or disassociate themselves from the surrogate or supporter" (p. 181). During the 2008 presidential election, former President Bill Clinton was surrounded by controversy regarding negative comments he made at then Senator Barack Obama. Both parties then engaged in various forms of *apologia*, during this time, Clinton's wife, Senator Hillary Clinton, chose to remain publicly silent during this conflict. It can be assumed that Senator Clinton's choice to stay silent on the matter was politically motivated and thus leaves this specific form of *apologia* open to differing apologetic strategies and motivations. Choosing not to speak about the situation is completely different from choosing not to acknowledge the existence of the situation. Such a choice is rarely documented in *apologia* studies and may call for a separate category.

While the findings of these studies continue to support the theory of *apologia*, the literature does not explain why different results may be obtained if differing political figures utilized the same *apologia* strategies.

Other Political Figures

Just as National leaders are subject to indiscretions, state and local leaders are subject to mistakes as well. Kennedy and Benoit (1997) examined self-defense rhetoric utilized by Newt Gingrich who would soon become Speaker of the House. Prior to his swearing in, Gingrich was offered a book deal for a large amount of money. Gingrich's critics were quick to question the amount of money offered for the book deal and the intentions of the political connections the owner of the publisher had. These accusations put Gingrich on the defensive as he not only had to become transparent with the public, but also deny knowing who was the publisher. To do this, Gingrich utilized five major defense strategies to combat the allegations including denial, good intentions, bolstering, attacking accusers and corrective action. However, Gingrich poorly utilized them as there were inconsistencies with his arguments and he failed to address the accusations adequately. As a result, his appeal to the public and subsequent popularity dropped.

Achter (2000) theorized that while the utilization of *apologia* strategies is not an immediate solution to each situation, some strategies should have a "narrativized" approach with *apologia*. Furthermore, Achter argued that common apologetic strategies cannot compete with cultural narratives at work. This was taken into consideration when Gubernatorial Independent-Republican candidate Jon Grunseth had to answer for accusations of trying to coerce two teenage girls to swim nude in a pool with him at a Fourth of July party. Grunseth failed to redeem himself from the claims made against him. It is possible that his failure was attributed to the media's competing narrative, which at the time was getting reports from various attendees of the

party, including a hired band that the event was very sexual in nature. However, even though Grunseth passed a lie detector test, it still was not enough to prove his innocence of the accusations. This study is valuable as it gives a deeper understanding that those who are utilizing apologetic strategies need to consider that there are competing narratives from other sources, which may undermine their credibility.

In 1984, incumbent Congressman George Hansen lost by just 133 votes. Just weeks earlier Hansen was convicted in federal court on felony violations for failing to include federal transactions on disclosure forms. Yet, what baffles experts is how he rallied from a 15 percent deficit only to lose by a small sum of votes not long after this indiscretion. Short (1987) examined Hansen's rhetoric during this time and attributed it to a kind of "paranoid *apologia*" which describes the state of mind of Hansen during his utilization of apologetic strategies. "By adopting a "paranoid style," Hansen transformed his ethical liabilities into arguments for his reelection..." (p. 201). While this strategy is rare, it is clear that it benefitted Hansen's campaign and changed the public's perception of his image. However, while the strategy was successful, it may only have been so due to the situation and may rarely if ever be implemented again. When convicted of crimes or other poor moral acts, most politicians choose to retire because doing so is a way to preserve what little image they have left.

Ex-governor Sam Houston is known in U.S. political history for brutally beating another representative of the U.S. House of Representatives, William Stanberry. Stanberry had given a speech that questioned Houston's character and portrayed him in a negative light. Out of rage, Houston wanted to speak to Stanberry in private; however, after Stanberry refused, their next encounter resulted in Houston beating Stanberry with a cane. Houston was on trial for his crime, but before he was sentenced, he was given the opportunity to speak in the House of

Representatives. During his speech, Houston utilized various apologetic strategies including mortification, bolstering and minimization. While Houston was still reprimanded for his actions, his image was not tarnished from his brief encounter with Stanberry. While this is a study that focuses on an artifact that occurred centuries before our time, it gives merit to the present study as it shows how apologetic discourse has the same motives and agendas behind its utilization.

Hoover (1989) examined Tennessee Governor Ray Blanton's use of these strategies as Blanton attempted to regain public confidence. Blanton was incarcerated at the end of his term, convicted of having committed multiple crimes including conspiracy to sell liquor licenses. After his prison sentence was up, Blanton was interviewed by various papers and at one point appeared on television news station trying to justify his behavior using various apologetic strategies including bolstering and transcendence. However, he failed as his attempt to bolster his image actually had the opposite intended effect and instead made him appear as arrogant and pompous. Blanton took these lessons and applied them to later interviews. In order to use bolstering as an effective strategy, the apologist must identify with his or her audience. This is done in an effort to portray the apologists in a positive light while keeping the respect of the audience.

Early in 1969, Senator Edward Kennedy was involved in a vehicular incident that resulted in the death of passenger Mary Jo Kopechne. Due to the nature of the accident and the criticism he received, Kennedy addressed the Massachusetts people later that year in an effort to regain support and public confidence in his image. Ling (1970) conducted a pentadic analysis to analyze the rhetoric utilized in order to determine what strategies were used during the address. Results of the analysis show that through careful word choice, Kennedy minimized the situation and circumstances of the accident while shifting blame to other factors or phenomena that could have attributed to the situation.

Butler (1972) further examined Kennedy's apologetic strategies using Rosenfield's (1968) Analog Criticism to fully determine why Kennedy had failed. The results showed that Kennedy's apologetic strategy differed, as he did not have previous arguments to reuse. Compared to Nixon and Truman, Kennedy did not have a distinct enemy, making it difficult to counter attack any claims made against him. As such, Kennedy had to resort to defensive apologetic strategies. These changes in Kennedy's situation, compared to Nixon and Truman's, could be attributed as to why Kennedy's apologetic strategy failed to resonate with constituents.

In 2001, suspicions arose about Congressman Gary Condit's relationship with intern Chandra Levy, who disappeared in May. The parents of Levy appeared on national television asking that Condit share any information about Levy's whereabouts. This was due, in part, to rumors circulating that Condit had a relationship with Levy. That same year Condit inferred that his working relationship with Condit became a personal friendship. After months of scrutiny, witnesses came forward about Condit having a relationship with Levy and claimed to have participated in an affair with the married congressman. Buckling under pressure, Condit admitted that Levy had spent the night in his apartment at one point in time. Condit wrote a letter to his constituents later that year addressing the attacks on his character and calls for his resignation. Len-Rios and Benoit (2004) examined this rhetoric, utilizing Benoit's image repair theory. Results showed that Condit and his advisors utilized several image repair strategies including bolstering, denial, shifting blame, attacking one's accuser and transcendence. Condit later appeared on *ABC News PrimeTime* and utilized more strategies including simple denial, refusal to answer, and differentiation. Even after all of his efforts and strategies, Condit failed to restore his image. Condit's choices of not using mortification, or any admission of wrongdoing were

mistakes that cemented the accusations against him. Had Condit shown any real remorse or admitted fault, his outcome could have been vastly different.

Most literature on *apologia* examines apologies of acts or events in a relatively current time period. Rarely is an apology issued for an act that occurred in another era of time. Hatch (2006) analyzed Hall's apology as well as apologies submitted by his colleagues, arguing that the nature of apology can be "transformed by the rhetor's participation in (or intention to contribute to) a dialogic rhetoric of reconciliation" (p. 195). Hall's utilization of mortification is clear in his said intent to establish a new and lasting relationship with minorities. This conclusion is distinctive, as Hall was not apologizing for himself but for those before him. Using the past, Hall was able to forge a new friendship with the minorities of these nations.

While the literature gives us an understanding of not only the theoretical background of *apologia*, it does give context through examples in presidential and other varying political party *apologia* events. However, most literature only studied a single context of *apologia* or two different contexts over long periods of time. There has not been any literature that has studied multiple contexts that are similar in not only the indiscretion but also looking at what factored in to their success and/or failure in their apologetic strategies.

While past literature examines *apologia* in these singular contexts, it does at times recognize that the outcomes may only be attached to the situation. Yet, the literature does not explain if apologetic strategies can be replicated and utilized by others and if a similar outcome is possible. This is essential to study and understand why apologetic strategies utilized in one setting that even if replicated to a similar setting can have differing results. While some apologetic strategies are known to fail, previous literature does not identify strategies that are successful and its after affects.

The present study will analyze not just a single context of political *apologia*, but compare and contrast three similar events that involved similar *apologetic* strategies. These individual contexts will be examined for factors that attributed to the success or failure of the apologetic strategies used.

RQ1: What were the apologetic strategies used in each of the situations?

RQ2: Why did some strategies succeed for certain members of this study while others failed?

RQ3: What factors played a role in the success or failure of the strategies used by these individuals?

Chapter 3: Method

An analog criticism will be used to compare the individual contexts of Larry Craig, John Edwards, and Anthony Weiner, while utilizing Benoit's (1995) fourteen strategies of image repair in order to analyze the rhetorical strategies these rhetors used when apologizing. Benoit's apologetic strategies of image repair include: denial, shifting responsibility, provocation, defeasibility, accident, good intentions, bolstering, minimization differentiation, transcendence, attacking the accuser, compensation, corrective action and mortification and non-apology. Originally Benoit omitted non-apology from his original strategy list, as he wanted to focus on more provocative rhetoric utilized by the rhetors. However, there is evidence to suggest that utilizing this strategy to be provocative and aggressive.

Denial

Denial is utilized when the accused claims he/she did not commit the offending act. An example of the denial strategy being implemented is when President Bill Clinton addressed accusations of an affair: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman" (MCAmericanpresident, 2008). Choosing to deny these claims was strategic by Clinton as he wanted to suppress any further investigations or attacks on his moral character, which would make him look weak, not only as the leader of his nation but as a world leader as well.

Shifting responsibility

Shifting responsibility occurs when the accused chooses to blame others for the offense or source of the harmful act. For example, a sequester occurred under President Obama's administration in 2013, which resulted in \$85 billion being cut from the budget. Obama's response was to blame the Republicans, "It's happening because Republicans in Congress chose this outcome over closing a single wasteful tax loophole that helps reduce the deficit" (Obama,

2013). Choosing to shift the responsibility also carries the blame for the offensive act. Shifting the responsibility to the Republicans was strategic for Obama in order to maintain his image and accountability.

Provocation

The accused claims he/she was provoked to commit the harmful act, thereby trying to diminish personal responsibility for the offensive act. For example, after the infamous boxing match with Evander Holyfield, Mike Tyson recounted why he bit Holyfield's ear off. Citing numerous instances of being head butted during the match, Tyson said: "I gotta retaliate" (ChannelTDS, 2012). This example shows how an individual tries to diminish personal accountability for the accused offensive act. Tyson believed Holyfield was truly at fault and he had to react to Holyfield's actions and that is why he shouldn't be held accountable.

Defeasibility

The accused blames some external element or variable for the offensive act. For example, pop sensation Justin Bieber went on tour in London in early 2013. While on his tour, Bieber reportedly was late to several of his concerts, threw diva-style tantrums, and physically threatened a member of the paparazzi. Bieber responded to questions of his erratic and inappropriate behavior: "I'm only human" (Burbank-Douglas, 2013). Bieber's defensive statement was constructed so that he would not have to hold himself accountable for his actions, as it was a natural reaction or behavior.

Accident

The accused claims that the offensive act was not planned nor was expected. For example, during a hunting trip in 2006, campaign donor Harry Whittington was accidentally shot by vice president Dick Cheney. Whittington apologized for the situation: "We all assume certain

risks in whatever we do. Whatever accidents we pursue and regardless of how experienced, careful and dedicated we are, accidents do and will happen” (Lavandra, 2006). This example was created in an effort to focus on how the event was not intended and thus tried to preserve the image of the Vice-President.

Good intentions

The accused claims that the offensive act had positive motives or intentions behind it. For example, at a videogame convention, publisher Entertainment Arts (EA) announced a promotion that encouraged participants to commit acts of lust with any of the female models working at the convention and to tweet the photos to EA. The winner would be awarded what EA called a “night of lust” (Danteteam, 2009). Outraged fans demanded answers from EA calling the campaign sexist. EA responded by saying the marketing campaign centered on the “Circles of Hell” and that the statement “commit acts of lust” was taken out of context. EA’s response was not one of apology for their campaign, rather an explanation of their intent with their promotion.

Bolstering

The accused states his or her history of good qualities and actions in an effort to minimize the damage from the offensive act he/she is accused of committing. For example, during Tiger Woods’ apology at a press conference, addressing accusations of having multiple extramarital affairs, Woods’ cites his continued efforts in his foundation, which provides opportunities for less fortunate children in obtaining education and scholarship knowledge. Woods’ also discussed rediscovering his childhood religion of Buddhism and hoped to relearn the lessons of personal restraint (Woods, 2010). Woods’ choosing to discuss his foundation and rediscovery of religion was strategic in trying to promote what is left of his image while potentially minimizing the harm that he had caused.

Minimization

The accused attempts to minimize the harm or damage caused by the offensive act. For example, former pharmaceutical drug Hydroxycut, a weight loss supplement, was claimed to have been the source to severe liver injuries. Hydroxycut responded on their website to these accusations “a number of reports relative to the many millions of people who have used Hydroxycut products over the years, out of an abundance of caution and because consumer safety is our top priority, we are voluntarily recalling these Hydroxycut-branded products” (Alonso-Zaldivar, 2009). By stating that the number was small, Hydroxycut was able to minimize the situation and create a new meaning as to why the situation occurred with such a small population.

Differentiation

Differentiation happens when the accused attempts to separate a fact from some larger context that the audience presently holds attribute. For example, in 2011 actress Lindsay Lohan was accused of stealing a necklace from a jeweler, which resulted in an investigation from the district attorney’s office. Lohan’s representative responded saying: “...they let her borrow the necklace” (Lee, 2011). By saying she only borrowed the necklace, Lohan tried to minimize the situation to a “simple misunderstanding” rather than a criminal investigation.

Transcendence

Transcendence occurs when the accused shifts the focus away from his/her situation to a larger ideal that he/she believes the audience favors. For example, critics of President Obama have called into question the lack of a balanced budget from his administration. Obama responded to this accusation by saying, “My goal is not to chase a balanced budget just for the sake of balance. My goal is how do we grow the economy, put people back to work, and if we do

that we are going to be bringing in more revenue” (Stephanopoulos, 2013). By shifting focus to a goal that everyone wants, Obama was able to diminish the issue at hand.

Attacking the accuser

In an effort to not address the accusation, the accused criticizes the accuser charging him/her of committing an offensive act. For example, professional cyclists Lance Armstrong has battled critics for years on accusations he was using performance enhancing drugs and steroids. A fellow cyclist and his wife, Franke and Betsy Andreu said they were among those who claimed Armstrong admitted to doctors that he had been taking performance-enhancing drugs. Armstrong lashed back saying, “I think he’s trying to back up his old lady” (Levs, 2013). In an effort to diminish the situation, Armstrong used this strategy in an effort to put the attackers “character” in question and in the spotlight.

Compensation

The accused individual offers, attempts to pay reparations in some form to individuals who were affected by the offensive act. For example, the President of the Tokyo Electric Power Company announced that TEPCO was drafting a plan to compensate victims affected by radiation leaked from a nuclear power plant caused by a tsunami in 2011. “I would like to deal honestly in consultations with the government and according to the atomic damage compensation nuclear law for the various nuclear damage caused by the radiation disaster (NTDTV, 2011). This demonstrates the apologetic behavior that is associated with compensating those who were affected by the harmful act.

Corrective Action

The individual attempts to fix the damage caused by the harmful act. For example, Hollywood actor Robert Downey Jr. battled drug addiction for most his life which ultimately

landed him in jail. Downey chose to revamp his life and, in a recent interview, discusses how he moves forward while forgetting the past: “I think of myself as someone who has no desire, use for or conscious memory of that life. And yet I don’t shut the door on it, and I don’t pretend it didn’t happen” (Oldenburg, 2010). Downey’s admission of accepting his past while moving forward to a better future is an example of how he publicly addresses his offensive or harmful act using corrective action.

Mortification

The accused individual attempts to express sorrow for the offensive act. For example, while on vacation, Atlanta lawyer Andrew Speaker contracted a rare strain of Tuberculosis and unknowingly carried it on the plane with him and subsequently infected multiple people with the virus. Speaker apologized to his fellow passengers on multiple network television interviews (“TB carrier Andrew,” 2007). This example showed how Speaker utilized the strategy of mortification in order to address the accusations while showing remorse for what had occurred.

Non-Apology

The accused individual chooses not to answer questions or respond to the accusations of committing an offensive act. The most common way this is executed is when the accused chooses to say something to the effect of “I will not respond to that absurd question” or even saying “no comment.” By choosing not to comment, the accused risks the perception that he or she has something to hide or is guilty.

Texts Used In The Analysis

I will utilize the statements and reactions given at press briefings and interviews from the three individuals when they were approached about the accusation or indiscretion. These artifacts are necessary to analyze as it shows not only their mindset, but also the various strategies utilized

from the original accusation to the confession. Along with the multiple interviews and press briefings, Senator Larry Craig's *apologia* will be analyzed using transcripts from his August 28, 2007 press conference in which he denied being gay, but regretted the incident that occurred. For a complete list of texts used in the analysis, refer to the Appendix. Senator John Edwards' *apologia* will be analyzed using not only the interview on August 8, 2008, admitting to an extramarital affair but also subsequent interviews and press briefings used before and after the original interview. For a complete list of texts used in the analysis, refer to the Appendix. Representative Anthony Weiner's apologetic strategies will be examined, which include his June 6, 2011 press briefing, in which he admitted he had sent lewd photos of himself to multiple women. For a complete list of texts used in the analysis, refer to the Appendix. The reactions to the accusations found in these artifacts are *key* for the analysis and discussion of apologetic statements.

Benoit's fourteen categories of image repair are useful; however, this study will not be constrained to *only* these strategies and is open to emerging themes and categories that may occur. Using an analog criticism to compare these three contexts will help illustrate the mindset of the accused when a scandal is starting to break and as questions start to arise. The comparisons will illustrate how each candidate was similar in their reactions, yet different in the strategies they utilized.

When classifying certain utterances into the appropriate *apologia* category, I examined the text for specific themes, which are the smallest units of discourse capable of expressing an idea. Holsti (1969) defined a theme as a "single assertion about some subject." Allow me to demonstrate how this process works using a political example unrelated to the contexts in focus for this analysis. Harry Reid made a comment in 2010 attributing President Obama's success to

his being “light-skinned” and “having no negro dialect.” He issued the following apology: “I deeply regret using such a poor choice of words. I sincerely apologize for offending any and all Americans, especially African Americans for my improper comments [Theme 1]. I was a proud and enthusiastic supporter of Barack Obama during the campaign and have worked as hard as I can to advance President Obama's legislative agenda. Moreover, throughout my career, from efforts to integrate the Las Vegas strip and the gaming industry [Theme 2] to opposing radical judges [Theme 3] and promoting diversity in the Senate [Theme 4], I have worked hard to advance issues important to the African American community.” In this passage, I would have classified theme 1 as mortification and themes 2 through 4 as distinct instances of bolstering because Reid is praising himself for different ways in which he advanced important African-American issues. However, even though I identify distinct themes, this analysis does not look for numerical frequencies, but rather for “prominence” of strategies. Due to this study being conducted qualitatively, numerical data would not add to the results of the analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

John Edwards

In responding to accusations of having an extramarital affair, John Edwards' utilized the following apologetic strategies: denial, mortification, corrective action and non-apology.

Denial. Denial is a strategy primarily used when the accused individual claims to have no knowledge or responsibility of the offending act. John Edwards utilized this strategy multiple times throughout the scandal, but primarily at the beginning of the scandal, when the accusations were initially made. Examples of this include when Edwards was asked if he was having an affair after the *National Enquirer* originally broke the story: "The story is false. It's completely untrue, ridiculous" ("John Edwards says," 2007) and when Edwards responded to accusations of fathering a child with Hunter: "I know that it's not possible this child could be mine" (Sawyer & Harris, 2010). These examples fit denial as Edwards is claiming to have not participated in an extramarital affair.

Edwards not only used this strategy to deny the accusation, but also at times to make light of the accusation and attach a "childish" connotation to the accusations. Examples of this include Edwards calling the accusation "made up," "untrue," "ridiculous," and "false" ("John Edwards says," 2007). Edwards attempted to do this again when he was accused of fathering a child with Hunter: "Not true. Published in a supermarket tabloid. That is absolutely not true" (Woodruff, 2008). Edwards was even accused of paying others to help cover up his affair but when pressed for an answer he denied all knowledge it: "I don't know. I told you just a moment ago I know absolutely nothing about this (Woodruff, 2008). By not only denying the accusations repeatedly, but also creating a strategy of attaching a negative connotation to the claims, Edwards attempted to distance himself from the accusations.

Mortification

Mortification is utilized when the accused admits responsibility and or expresses remorse for the offensive act he or she committed. As evidence mounted, it became clear that Edwards was lying about his extracurricular activities. During an interview with Bob Woodruff from *ABC News*, Edwards started to come clean: “I made a very serious mistake, a mistake that I am [responsible] for and no one else,” (Woodruff, 2008). Although Edwards admitted the affair was not over. Two years later, Edwards again apologized and admitted being the father to Hunter’s child: “To all those I have disappointed and hurt, these words will never be enough, but I am truly sorry.” It was wrong for me to ever deny she [Quinn] was my daughter. And hopefully, one day when she understands, she will forgive me” (Harris, Roberts & Stephanopoulos, 2010). These statements show how Edwards admitted fault while expressing remorse for his poor judgment. By being honest with his feelings and telling the truth about the situation, Edwards was utilizing the strategy mortification.

Corrective Action

Corrective action occurs when the accused individual admits to the offensive act and makes a statement that he or she will repair the damage that was caused. After multiple responses to allegations that Edwards fathered a child with his mistress and continuing to deny his paternity, Edwards finally admitted to fathering Hunter’s daughter during a press conference: “I am Quinn’s father. I will do everything in my power to provide her with the love and support she deserves” (Harris, Roberts & Stephanopoulos, 2010). This statement by Edwards is an example of the apologetic strategy of corrective action as it shows he is going to be accepting his daughter rather than denying her.

Non-apology

Non-apology is a strategy used when the individual chooses not to comment on the allegations against his or her character. While Edwards rarely used this strategy, at one point he showed his frustrations when the accusations increased and reporters were demanding answers. “I’ve responded to, consistently, to these tabloid allegations by saying, I don’t respond to these lies” (Harris, Roberts & Stephanopoulos, 2010). This example shows how non-apology can be utilized. By stating his continual record of past responses, Edward’s tried to diffuse the situation while keeping a serious tone about his public image and private life. Furthermore, by labeling the situation as a “lie,” Edwards attempts to bolster his image by appearing above the lies and the ridiculous accusations from his opponents.

Larry Craig

In responding to a misdemeanor of sexual solicitation in a Minneapolis Airport bathroom stall, Larry Craig’s apologetic strategies were: mortification, denial, provocation, attacking the accuser, and Transcendence.

Mortification

The accused individual expresses sorrow for the wrongdoing he or she has committed. During his press conference, Craig not only addressed the issue but acknowledged and apologized to others who may be affected, “...please let me apologize to my family, friends and staff and fellow Idahoans for the cloud placed over Idaho,” “I apologize,” “...that overreaction was a mistake and I apologized for my judgment,” and “...I seek and ask the people of Idaho to forgive me” (“Transcript: Sen. Larry,” 2007). Craig not only apologized for his behavior, but also acknowledged his responsibility and personal accountability to the situation. This is an important step of remorse that lies within the category of mortification: “I should not have kept

this arrest to myself, and I should have told my family and friends about it,” “As an elected official, I fully realize that my life is open for public criticism and scrutiny and I take full responsibility for a lapse in judgment I made in attempting to handle this matter myself” (“Transcript: Sen. Larry,” 2007). These statements show how Craig was not only apologetic but also showed remorse and thus fit in the category of mortification.

Denial

Denial is used when the accused individual rejects responsibility for the offensive act that he or she is accused of doing. Larry Craig used denial multiple times during this scandal. Some of these were clarifications of his sexuality: “I am not gay. I never have been gay,” (“Transcript: Sen. Larry,” 2007) while Craig proclaimed his innocence “I did nothing wrong at the Minneapolis airport” (“Transcript: Sen. Larry,” 2007). These examples fit the description of denial as Craig denied not only any wrongdoing, but also attacks on his personal character as well.

Provocation

Provocation is used when the accused individual claims he or she was provoked to commit the offensive act. During Craig’s press conference, he explained why he pleaded guilty to the charge rather than fight it: “In pleading guilty, I overreacted in Minneapolis because of the stress the *Idaho Statesman* investigation and the rumors it has fueled all around Idaho” (“Transcript: Sen. Larry,” 2007). This statement is an example of provocation, as Craig believed he was heavily influenced in making the decision to plead guilty because of stress caused by others rather than of his own accord.

Attacking the Accuser

The accused individual chooses to criticize or “attack” those who have accused him or her. Craig used this strategy in an effort to explain during his press conference how he felt attacked leading up to the scandal during his press conference: “For eight months leading up to June 11 my family and I had been relentlessly and viciously harassed by the *Idaho Statesman*” and “Still...without a shred of truth or evidence to the contrary, the *Statesman* has engaged in this witch hunt” (“Transcript: Sen. Larry,” 2007). This statement shows how Craig tried to use this strategy to show the *Statesman* in a negative light in an effort to divert some of the attention away from him.

Transcendence

Transcendence is used when the accused individual tries to shift the focus of the scandal away from his or herself to a concept or ideal the public holds in high regard. Craig attempted this during his conference: “I love my wife, my family. I care about friends and staff and Idaho. I love serving this great state. Over the years, I have accomplished a lot for Idaho and I hope Idahoans will allow me to continue to do that” (“Transcript: Sen. Larry,” 2007). This statement is an example of transcendence because it shows how Craig stopped addressing the scandal and started talking about positive ideals and or goals.

Anthony Weiner

After a lewd tweet was accidentally posted publicly to Anthony Weiner’s account, accusations arose that Weiner was the author and was in the picture that was tweeted. In response to these allegations, Weiner’s apologetic strategies were: shifting responsibility, denial, mortification, non-apology and defeasibility.

Denial

The apologetic strategy of denial is utilized when the accused individual claims to not have committed the offensive act he or she is accused of doing. Weiner used this strategy throughout the beginning stages of when the scandal was breaking, “You know, I can’t say with certitude” (Connelly, Cuomo & Vargas, 2011) “This seems like a prank to make fun of my name,” “I’m treating this like a prank...” and “I didn’t send any Twitter picture” (Blitzer, 2011). Weiner attempted to maintain his innocence by denying all knowledge of the origins of the photograph, in an effort to maintain his innocence.

Shifting Responsibility

Shifting responsibility occurs when the accused shifts focus or blame on to others for the offensive act. Weiner did this continually using the theme that the tweet was a prank by someone else, “We’re trying to find out where – where that photograph came from and whether it was manipulated...” “here’s all that I can do....I said, let’s try to figure who, how and what this, how this prank went down...” “...look, this was a prank...” (Karl, Stephanopoulos & Roberts, 2011) later, he said “The objective of the person who is doing the mischief is to try and distract me from what I’m doing” (Russert, Viera & Curry, 2011) “I write it off basically as a prank” “It was a hoax. It’s a prank. It’s hacking” (Connelly, Cuomo & Vargas, 2011) “Sometimes, a prank is a prank” (Blitzer, 2011) By repeatedly stating the scandal was a prank; Weiner was distancing himself from the scandal in an effort to maintain a positive public image while playing the victim.

Non-apology

Non-apology is utilized when the accused attempts to not answer questions or chooses not to comment on the accusations or claims being made against him or her. Weiner did this

repeatedly during the early stages of the scandal: “If I were giving a speech to 45,000 people and someone in the back threw a pie or yelled out an insult I would not spend the next two hours of my speech responding to that pie or that insult” later, he said “You know, I have (sic) I think said this a couple of ways and I’ll say it again. I’m not going to permit myself to be distracted by this issue any longer” (Russert, Viera & Curry, 2011) he continued this sentiment “I’m not going to get into how I communicate with people on social media” and “I’m drawing the line. I’m not going to talk about this anymore” (Blitzer, 2011). By choosing not to respond, Weiner was trying to show he was taking a hard line about this topic and did not want to respond to the accusations against him.

Mortification

Mortification is used when the accused expresses regret and sorrow for the offensive act he or she caused. Weiner did this when he held a press conference, revealing that he was the true author of the scandalous tweet: “...I’d like to make it clear that I have made terrible mistakes that have hurt the people I care about the most, and I’m deeply sorry” (Weiner, 2011). Weiner also addressed those he hurt involved in the scandal “This woman was unwittingly dragged into this and bears no responsibility. I am so sorry to have disrupted her life in this way” (Weiner, 2011). He then addressed his wife and his supporters “I am deeply sorry for the pain this has caused my wife, Huma, and our family, and my constituents, my friends, supporters and staff...I brought pain to people I care about the most and the people who believed in me, and for that I am deeply sorry...I haven’t told the truth and I’ve done things I deeply regret. I’ve brought pain to people I care about the most and the people who believe in me, and for that I am deeply sorry” (Weiner, 2011). Weiner went on to apologize his original accuser “I apologize to Andrew

Breitbart...I apologize to the many others of the media that I misled” (Weiner, 2011). These statements show Weiner admitting his mistakes and apologizing to those he had offended.

Defeasibility

Defeasibility occurs when the accused blames some external circumstance for the offensive act. Weiner originally tweeted the following comment after the photo was first tweeted and then deleted “Tivo shot. FB hacked. Is my blender gonna attack me next?” (Morales, 2011). While the example does not state the original tweet posted was the result of electronic failure, Weiner implies this by citing other problems with his electronics. Weiner used this strategy again when asked what he was thinking while tweeting these photos “You know, I don’t know what I was thinking” (Weiner, 2011). Both examples show how Weiner was trying to allude to external influences in an effort to minimize his personal accountability for the situation.

Minimization

Minimization is used when the accused attempts to make the situation less severe than originally thought. Weiner used this strategy multiple times during his denial of causing the act “Photographs can be taken up from one place and put in another place, photos they can be doctored” and “I don’t believe that this is a big federal issue...” (Blitzer, 2011). However, Weiner also used this strategy when he confessed to the act “I lied because I was ashamed of what I had done and didn’t want to get caught. But did I violate the constitution of the United States by lying about posting a Twitter post? I certainly don’t think so...” (Weiner, 2011). These examples show Weiner’s attempts to downplay not only what he was accused of doing, but if he violated any ethical codes within the government.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The following section will describe the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the *apologia* strategies utilized in the individual contexts found within the results and will compare and contrast the circumstances with each individual. This section also answers research question number two in relation to why some strategies succeeded or failed in repairing their public image.

Effectiveness

The political leaders utilized several effective *apologia* strategies that can increase the public image of an accused individual if exercised appropriately. For example, the apologetic strategy of bolstering is excellent as it highlights the accused individual's achievements. This is important as it reminds the audience that the accused individual was not a bad or evil person their entire life, but rather showed their accomplished, and respectable achievements. Bolstering can help preserve an individual's image and even retain trust, faith and public support. An example of effectively using bolstering was during Larry Craig's apology. The execution of this strategy was *key* during his speech. Had Craig utilized it before the other strategies within his apology, the audience could have reacted negatively and seen his rhetoric as an attempt to cover-up his misdeeds rather than a sincere apology. However, after his apology, Craig received mixed reviews "Sorry, senator: Once you plead guilty to an offence, you admit to the truth of the allegation" (Ibbitson, 2007) and "Being stupid as a member of Congress is hardly a reason to be ridden on a rail from Washington" (*Disowning*, 2007). While this strategy may not have been fully effective in preserving his image, I believe it was successful in the attempt of highlighting the good he has done within his career as a public servant.

Another positive approach that can be utilized is the apologetic strategy of mortification, or admitting and accepting responsibility for the offensive act he or she is accused of committing. Accepting responsibility and acknowledging the wrongful act shows maturity, and humility (Farrell, 2011). These traits are highly valued by the public (Tardanico, 2013) and elected officials *should* seek these high standards of high expectations. However, no one is perfect and mistakes do occur. Yet, acknowledging these moments of weakness can potentially build support from constituents. All three individuals in this study utilized this strategy. Weiner, however, utilized it more often than the others. During his apologetic press conference, Weiner also stated why he originally lied “I was embarrassed. And I didn’t want it to lead to other embarrassing things. And I did – it was dumb to do, to try to tell lies about it because it just led to more lies” (Weiner, 2011). The willingness to accept responsibility for actions including admitting why he chose to lie about his situation shows maturity and responsibility, even though Weiner’s actions were wrong. A poll was conducted following his apology, by Marist showing that 56 percent of residents in his district wanted him to stay in office, while only 33 percent wanted him to resign (Blau & Siemaszko, 2011). It can be inferred that Weiner still had public support and his transparency during his apology may have created a more favorable public perception of him.

Ineffectiveness

While there are many strategies that can preserve the image of an accused individual, there are just as many strategies that can be detrimental to the accused individual if utilized incorrectly. The apologetic strategy of denial is one of the most prevalent strategies that were utilized during these scandals. The concept of denying responsibility or knowledge of the offensive act is primarily used to preserve public image, even though the accused may be guilty

of the offensive act. According to Benoit and Drew (1997), studies have shown that denial is not an effective apology to utilize towards those who are injured by the actions as other potential image restoration strategies. Therefore, utilization of this strategy is not recommended unless an alibi or proof can be accompanied with it; otherwise it appears that the accused individual is guilty of committing the act. In each context that was examined, denial was utilized quite often ranging from denying responsibility for the accused act, denying paternity to a child and denying an assumed sexuality. Denial may work, but the accused still has to answer questions on what actions are being taken to fix the situation. One of the many questions posed to Weiner was whether or not he did create the lewd tweet and if his account was indeed hacked, then why was he not utilizing law enforcement and the FBI in order to catch the culprit. However, Weiner would not directly answer the question. “I believe that I answer[ed] the question. I just want to really need to get to the bottom of this. It’s much more important than a lot of other issues. It’s definitely a four or five-day story. Don’t you agree?” (Karl, 2011). While Weiner continued to deny any responsibility, the fact that he chose to not answer the question on reporting the hacking to the authorities raises suspicions as to what his true motives were behind his actions and brought even more unwanted questions and attention to him. Had Weiner provided support for his deniability, it would have been deemed more probable and believable than just the claim that he did not create the lewd tweet.

The idea of claiming that the accused individual was provoked or incited to commit the offensive act is not an effective apologetic strategy. Whether intentional or not, utilizing provocation as a strategy sends the message that the accused does not accept responsibility for his or her actions and, therefore, is placing blame on someone else. Provocation or shifting blame is not a successful strategy compared to others. Choosing not to accept responsibility risks

damage to the accused individual's reputation. Craig was the only individual who utilized provocation and did so by saying he "...overreacted...because of the stress of the Idaho Statesman investigation and the rumors it has fueled..." (Craig, 2007). Craig blaming the *Idaho Statesman* for his overreaction shows he shifted responsibility and accountability from himself to the newspaper. In essence, it appears that Craig did not want to be responsible for his actions. There was a mixed reaction to his apology among the public as Craig was both heckled and cheered for at the end of his press conference. However, most people were embarrassed, as Craig's situation was not judged as a scandal, but more of an act of stupidity. Among those who were baffled and/or embarrassed included Senator Lamar Alexander "I'm hoping it's a big mistake" (Stolberg, 2007) and a news reporter "the real question for Republicans in Washington is how low can you go, because we are approaching a level of ridiculousness" (Doyle, 2007).

In these particular contexts, an ineffective apologetic strategy utilized was non-apology. Although rarely utilized, non-apology occurs when the accused individual chooses not to comment on the accusation against his or her character. This apologetic strategy can never be successful, as the public wants answers or responses to the allegations. There are two subcategories of this strategy: choosing not to comment on an accusation and refusing to comment anymore. Both sub strategies are unique and create different reactions from the public. For example, choosing to not acknowledge the accusation and therefore not warranting a response, creates a sense of superiority for the accused individual. This superior image may be interpreted as a lack of respect between constituents and the accused, resulting in a lack of trust in what the accused says. Choosing to not respond to the allegations anymore due to repetitiveness even after the allegations were addressed can give mixed perceptions. Weiner and Edwards utilized both the strategy and sub strategies. What is interesting, though, is the sub

strategy of choosing not to respond to questions about the allegation was utilized after they had repeatedly addressed the accusations against them. Thus, the individuals created a stance that they will not waste their time on this topic anymore. However, just like with apologetic strategy of denial, this action leaves the public with more questions than answers and can inadvertently lead the public to believe the accused individual is hiding something due to the lack of transparency.

Another ineffective strategy utilized in these contexts was attacking the accuser. Attacking the accuser is exercised when the individual is accused of committing an offensive act attack to attack the accuser. Rarely does attacking the accuser work, as there is a substantial risk involved in questioning the accuser's character. There are multiple reasons behind attacking the accuser. Shifting the focus away from the accused to the accuser, can help the accused by creating a new situation, questioning the validity of the claim and the credibility of the source. This in turn creates a window of time in order to build a defense that may help in creating a proper alibi. Obtaining extra time can mean the difference between a ruined career and successfully saving an individual's public image. Destroying the accuser's public image can be beneficial as it can force the accuser to retract his or her claims, rendering the accused individual victorious in saving his or her public image. However, the risk associated with attacking the accuser means putting the accused individual's reputation on the line. Yet, by not attacking the accuser, the accused individual's reputation is damaged. In order to successfully utilize the attacking the accuser strategy, the accused individual needs to have justifiable alibis and or supportive evidence in order to legitimize the attack against the accuser. Ad Hominem attacks, which are arguments made against a person's character instead of his or her argument, will not work as it shows the weakness of the accused individual's arguments and thereby legitimizes the

accusation. Craig attacked the *Idaho Statesman* multiple times during his apology and, to back these attacks, Craig believed that the newspaper was making him a target “Still, without a shred of truth or evidence to the contrary, the Statesman has engaged in this witch hunt” (Craig, 2007). Craig failed in attacking the newspaper by trying to label its intentions as a negative personal vendetta because the paper had successfully discovered Craig’s scandal that he had tried to keep hidden from public knowledge. Without a successful alibi or reasoning to question the newspaper’s intentions, Craig could not successfully attack the newspaper and instead reinforced the perception that he wanted to be the victim and not take responsibility for his actions.

Another ineffective strategy utilized by these three individuals is known as shifting responsibility. The strategy places blame upon others for the offensive act. This strategy is difficult to utilize successfully as it attempts to separate the accused individual from those who are associated with the offensive act. It is also difficult to prove that the accused individual had no involvement in creating and implementing the offensive act. Evidence needs to be provided by the accused individual in order to successfully prove the accused party’s innocence and place the responsibility on others. Shifting perception only works when reasonable doubt can be provided. Weiner utilized this strategy the most out of the three individuals as he repeatedly placed blame on an unknown individual whom he believed was responsible for the picture “It was a hoax. It was someone sending a picture of wiener [sic] on Weiner’s account” (Karl, 2011). Weiner made numerous accusations, like the previous example, he consistently shifted responsibility from himself to someone else or some entity. However, in order to have the public believe this claim, Weiner needed to continue with this narrative and provide evidence or actions that will be taken in order to prove the true perpetrator of the act. Weiner, however, changed his narrative at times and started to use non-apology in order to avoid further discussion of the

situation. This shift in strategy deviated the public's attention from seeking out the perpetrator and placed focus on Weiner and why he chose not to discuss the issue any longer.

When admitting responsibility to an offensive act, the frequently asked question is "what was the reason behind committing the act?" Most individuals accused have their specific reasons or motivations behind committing the act. However, often times the individual may not know or choose to not share the reasons for their actions. The accused individual then blames an external circumstance for their motivation rather than themselves. This is known as defeasibility, and is a poor strategy to utilize, as it often appears that the individual is looking to make up reasons or excuses in an effort to shift blame or responsibility. Such perceptions can be detrimental to an individual's public image and apologetic intent and thus should be avoided. During Craig's situation; instead of contesting the alleged act, he quietly took a disorderly conduct plea. However, once it hit the media, Craig "...claimed his judgment was clouded..." (*Disowning*, 2007). However, not only did the public not believe this claim, but also the Judge who presided over Craig's case. The verdict over the plea reinforced this perception that "the defendant's plea was accurate, voluntary and intelligent, and because the conviction is supported by evidence...the defendant's motion to withdraw his plea is denied" (Staunton, 2007). Claiming incompetence does not work and only leaves the accused individual looking foolish.

Minimization is a poor apologetic strategy to utilize as it attempts to minimize or make light of the scandal or situation. When utilized, it is mostly viewed as the apologist trying to save his or her public image, or is just interested in keeping the position of power he or she has been given. Therefore, it can be assumed that public acceptance of the strategy is low and could possibly incite a backlash of support against the accused individual. During his apologetic press conference, Weiner was asked a question by a journalist on whether if his offensive act violated

his oath to the office he was elected. He responded by saying: “I don’t believe I did anything here that violates any law or violates my oath to my fellow constituents.” Later on Weiner reiterated this when he was questioned again on violating his oath of office “...did I violate the constitution of the United States by lying about a Twitter post? I certainly don’t think so...” (Weiner, 2011). Weiner was trying to show that what he did was just a bad judgment but should not affect his eligibility for his position as a representative to the people. The fact the question was raised on whether he should continue in his position or resign provides evidence of mixed public reviews of Weiner’s apology.

Comparison of contexts

While each apologist had indiscretions that were unique, they all shared similar aspects in their situations. All three apologists were elected officials of Congress and there is an expectation of professional and moral conduct that is supposed to be followed as an elected official for the public. Unfortunately, all three engaged in some form of inappropriate behavior in what is believed to be a behavior of men in power. “Time proves corrosive. [P]owerful men...come to believe that their power entitles them to commit acts that lesser mortals might avoid, simply through fear of the consequences” (Ibbitson, 2007). When suspicions arose of their inappropriate behaviors, all three attempted to distance themselves from the accusations. It can be inferred that instead of admitting and utilizing the apologetic strategy of mortification, all three apologists were focused on protecting their positions as powerful leaders instead of their personal image and reputation. Had these men worried about their personal image instead, strategies such as mortification, corrective action and compensation would have been utilized to accomplish this as they attempt to show true sorrow. However, each apologist utilized similar apologetic strategies and executed them alike. Each individual originally attempted to deny the

allegations and/or any wrongdoing, but when the truth finally came out, all used mortification followed by various other strategies. These were executed in similar fashion via press conferences, press releases and interviews.

While the apologists shared similarities in their rhetorical situations, they did have differences. The following features may have impacted their successes or failures and thus answers research question number three in what factors played a role in the successes or failures of these individuals: Each apologist's severity of sexual infidelity was not equal to each other. Edwards was the only individual to engage in a sexual affair whereas Weiner's sexually explicit text messages only entertained the thought of an affair and while many people wouldn't find homosexual infidelity to be more embarrassing to public image than heterosexual offenses, Larry Craig obviously felt this disclosure was very damaging to his image and therefore denied that particular aspect of his offense on numerous occasions.

Since the levels of severity were different, it can be concluded that the public judged the situations differently. For example, Edwards' affair was not only wrong according to the majority of America (Newport, 2008), but also the most damning as the public realized that Edwards' wife was diagnosed with terminal cancer. This revelation turned the public against him and, according to federal prosecutors, "...Edwards was more concerned about covering up the affair to protect his public image than about caring for his ill wife" (Palmer, 2012). While Weiner's text messages were not on the same level of severity as Edwards' situation, the public was upset with his behavior upon finding out his wife was pregnant with their first child during his involvement of the scandal.

The setting of these apologies is interesting to observe as well. Each rhetor handled his apologies similarly and yet differently. The settings of all the contexts were in a press conference

in order to acknowledge the allegations. These situations, however, could be deemed calculated as the apologist brings out a prepared speech that is designed to save what is left of the apologist's image. Weiner, however, not only gave a press conference statement, but also held an open session where press members were given the opportunity to ask questions freely. This strategy, therefore, shows sorrow and true transparency. Throughout this scandal, Weiner could have stated this was not anyone else's business, but his willingness to be open and transparent showed he did not want to hide anything anymore. It should also be noted linguistically how the apologies were made. For example, saying the apologist made a mistake is different from the apologist saying he or she is sorry. Admitting a mistake is made greatly differs from saying sorry as sorry implies a sorrowful state of mind while a mistake creates an idea of how to avoid this situation in the future. Such subtle linguist choices can add or detract from the apology, thereby making it meaningful or fake.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In summary, it seems that there is no universal apologetic strategy that can be applied in political sex scandals. However, there is a pattern that seems to be followed within each context. In each context, the apologists either denied the accusations or tried to keep the situation secret from the public, then admitted or took responsibility for the offensive act and finally apologized using mortification and corrective action strategies. It should be recognized that the apologist's motives behind the utilized strategies were similar as well. Each apologist within his context explained either his motives behind his actions during the situation, his handling of the apology, or both. Weiner stated this during his press conference, at one point explaining why he chose to lie about the tweet and why he had been practicing this behavior for so long. Craig repeatedly explained why he pled guilty and why his actions were misconstrued. Like Weiner, Edwards also explained why he lied about the alleged affair but chose not to explain why he participated in it. It seems the state-of-mind within the apologists is panic and a quick fix rather than addressing the situation properly with a level of self-respect that could possibly save some of their image.

Since these speeches were analyzed for the explanations of their behavior, it should be acknowledged that the only successful apology is one where the apologists utilize the strategy of mortification. According to Benoit (1995), "A person who initially denies responsibility for actions reasonably attributable to that person can suffer substantially damaged credibility when the truth emerges" therefore it "seems desirable for a person (or company) who is at fault to admit this immediately" (p. 160). Lee & Barton (2003) supported this belief while acknowledging this strategy may have been avoided due to potential risks, "Publicly announcing one's transgressions is humiliating. Such a concession invites public scorn, isolation, and retribution" (p. 239). Had the apologists in these contexts utilized this strategy at the beginning,

they may have saved themselves from the embarrassment of admitting to the lies, deceit and designs they created to cover up the situation. The only real solution, however, is for individuals to learn from their predecessors mistakes and steer clear of inappropriate actions, but since no one is perfect, we can expect repeat offenders in the future to not only take part in indiscretions, but following the same apologetic strategies utilized by their constituents.

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Appendix

Transcripts utilized in the analysis of Larry Craig, John Edwards and Anthony Weiner

- Transcript of Larry Craig’s press briefing on the accusation. Obtained from *FoxNews.com*.
- Senator Larry Craig may be reconsidering resigning. Obtained from *CBS News Transcripts*.
- Transcript: John Edwards Interview. Obtained from *ABC News*.
- Transcript: Weiner: “I Tweeted a photo of myself.” Obtained from *CNN News*.