

IMAGE REPAIR ON THE POLITICAL FRONT: AN EXPERIMENT TESTING  
EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE HISTORY  
IN A POLITICAL FAUX PAS

by

CATHERINE ADELLE SHELDON

(Under the Direction of Lynne M. Sallot)

ABSTRACT

A three by two factorial experiment was conducted to test the effects of crisis communication strategy (mortification, bolstering, and corrective action) and performance history (positive and negative) in conjunction with a politician's faux pas involving racial remarks. Benoit's image repair theory and Coombs' dependent measures provided the theoretical and methodological framework for the experiment. In evaluations of a politician's behavior following racial remarks, strategy and performance history had main effects for several dependent variables, but these effects were independent of one another. Contrary to previous research, performance history was not always a factor in achieving favorable evaluations, and sometimes the communication strategy of bolstering was as effective as mortification. Generally, the corrective action strategy was the least effective. Politicians' selection of effective crisis response strategies should be based on their specific situations.

INDEX WORDS: Image Repair Discourse, Crisis Communication, Political Crisis Communication, Performance History, Faux Pas, Trent Lott

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CATHERINE ADELLE SHELDON

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Approved:

Major Professor: Lynne M. Sallot

Committee: Barry Hollander  
Bryan Reber

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2006

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to five people: My parents, Jerry and Susan Sheldon, my grandparents, Ed and Lucy Moak, and my adorable grandmother who passed away years ago, Elsie Sheldon. For some reason, my parents are constantly proud of me. What they may not know is that I try to live up to *their* standards everyday; they are unbelievably good role models.

My grandparents, Ed and Lucy Moak, may not know how much their support and love has helped me as I've come back to school. Their appreciation of my accomplishments and my education has helped to ease the anxiety that often comes with giving up a *job* to follow the dream of a career.

Finally, if "Grandmommy" were still here today, I would certainly be receiving a greeting card in the mail adorned by some sort of cartoon character holding a sign reading, "Congrats, Graduate!" Inside would be five dollars. Those were the best pieces of mail *ever*. I hope I still – somehow – make her proud too.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction and Literature Review

Politicians are constantly in the public eye. On any given day, a political figure may deliver several different speeches, conduct numerous interviews with news media, and send out multiple press releases on a wide range of legislative issues. The General Accounting Office at one time estimated that federal agencies and the executive branch spend approximately \$2.3 billion annually on public relations activity (Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, & Agee, 2003).

And while politicians are frequently thrust into the public eye for official reasons, they also find themselves – all too often – the center of attention due to crisis situations. From Ronald Reagan and the Iran Contra Affair to Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, Washington, D.C. creates a sour stage upon which the players frequently forget their lines – or that they had lines at all. Because reputations are so valuable in the political arena, when politicians are in the midst of a crisis they will inevitably work to repair their embattled reputation (Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004). Thus, public relations strategies, and, more specifically, appropriate and effective image repair discourse, is essential for politicians.

### The Political Crisis

The crisis situation of Mississippi Senator Trent Lott is a prime example of a politician's need for effective image repair discourse. In December of 2002 Lott delivered a speech to a packed room at Senator Strom Thurmond's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party. During that speech Lott harkened back to Thurmond's 1948 Dixiecrat presidential campaign. Lott proclaimed to the crowd:

I want to say this about my state: when Strom Thurmond ran for President, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either.

(Goodgame & Tumulty, 2002, p. 24)

With these 45 words, Lott had pulled the pin from a grenade that would eventually explode, and Lott's handling of the crisis would be the biggest test of his career.

It is a political debacle such as this that drives this research. The purpose of this thesis is to determine the effectiveness of William Benoit's image repair theory in political crisis situations, more specifically, in a crisis similar to that of Senator Lott. While the image repair typology is a useful starting point for crisis managers, it is really more of a "tool for identifying which strategies were used in a given situation" (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000, p. 175). The theory usually does not take audience reactions or actual effects of the strategies into account. An empirical analysis of the theory could yield a more precise body of knowledge and could allow crisis managers to take better advantage of the image repair typology developed by Benoit (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

#### Benoit: Development of the Image Repair Theory

There is a growing body of public relations literature committed to image repair discourse for both organizations and individuals. Interchangeable with such terms as, "reputation management," or "image restoration," in the last decade this volume of work has been largely produced by University of Missouri Professor William Benoit. Benoit's (1982) general case study analysis began with "Richard M. Nixon's Rhetorical Strategies in His Public Statements on Watergate." By 1991 Benoit, Gullifor, and Panici had applied specific image repair strategies and tactics to case studies such as "Reagan's

Discourse on the Iran-Contra Affair.” Four years later, in 1995, Benoit developed the image repair typology in his book, *Accounts, Excuses, Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*. The book articulated a more consistent and precise typology; Benoit (1995a) combined, added to, tested, and developed a new typology based on previous work by researchers in the fields of sociology and psychology.

Throughout his many articles and books, Benoit (2004) also discusses components necessary for an accused’s reputation to be at risk. Those components are:

- (a) an act occurred that is considered offensive
- (b) the accused is held responsible for that action. (p. 264)

Only when the relevant audience(s) considers these components to be true, is the accused’s reputation at risk. “Before a company should be concerned about negative effects of an act on image,” asserted Benoit, “a salient audience (or audiences) must be thought to disapprove of the action” (p. 264).

The following sections further illuminate Benoit’s typology, as based on his most recent 2004 book chapter in *Responding to Crisis: A Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication* and his numerous case studies of individuals and organizations. Table 1.1 summarizes the image repair strategies and tactics and provides descriptions of their key characteristics.

Table 1.1. Benoit's Typology of Image Repair Strategies and Tactics.

Strategy & Tactics	Key Characteristic
<b><i>Denial</i></b>	
Simple denial	did not perform act
Shifting blame	another performed act
<b><i>Evasion of Responsibility</i></b>	
Provocation	responded to act of another
Defeasibility	lack of information or ability
Accident	mishap
Good Intentions	meant well
<b><i>Reducing Offensiveness of Event</i></b>	
Bolstering	stress good traits
Minimization	act not serious
Differentiation	act less offensive than similar ones
Transcendence	more important considerations
Attack Accuser	reduce credibility of accuser
Compensation	reimburse victim
<b><i>Corrective Action</i></b>	plan to solve problem/prevent recurrence
<b><i>Mortification</i></b>	apologize

(2004, p. 266)

### Denial

A general approach to image repair, denial maintains two different tactics: simple denial and shifting blame. Simple denial involves the accused party asserting that he or she is not at fault for an offense. Without contradicting evidence, this approach can be useful. However, if investigations are conducted or the public perceives the denial to be insincere, this strategy, as shown in Benoit's case study of California Congressman Gary Condit, can spell defeat for a public figure. In his exclusive interview with television news reporter Connie Chung, Condit directly denied questions regarding Chandra Levy's phone calls made to him on a certain date. But when Chung presented evidence to the contrary, Condit, in essence, was forced to admit that he lied. Ineffective crisis response

strategies such as this destroyed Condit's credibility and contributed to his failed re-election effort (Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004).

Shifting blame, the second tactic of denial, involves the accused party redirecting fault of a crisis situation to another party. Like simple denial, if this tactic is shown to be disingenuous, it can contribute to a severely tarnished reputation or, as in the case of some politicians, the end of a career. President Richard Nixon could not deny that he was ultimately responsible for the Watergate crisis, although he attempted to shift the blame from himself to his subordinates and, in particular, to his chief counsel, John Dean. This mistake in communication strategy lent (even further) to the public's and congress' disapproval of Nixon and helped pave the way for his impeachment (Benoit, 1982).

#### Evasion of Responsibility

This second general approach to image repair – evasion of responsibility – has four tactics: provocation, defeasibility, accident, and good intentions. Provocation involves the accused party responding to the actions of another party. In some cases, this tactic can justify actions that seem offensive. For example, a politician may explain to his constituency that he could not vote for a certain piece of legislation because amendments – of which his constituency would not approve – had been unfairly attached to it. Defeasibility, refers to a lack of information regarding a crisis situation. Within this tactic, the phrase, “ignorance is bliss,” applies. The tactic can also serve as justification of a crisis situation. Upon missing an important meeting, a busy executive who often travels for work may offer his demanding schedule as the reason why he was not told about and subsequently was absent from the meeting (Benoit, 2004).

In Benoit's typology, an accident maintains that a crisis situation was a mishap. Amid his racial remarks crisis, Trent Lott stated that, "I can't say it was prepared remarks. As a matter of fact, I was winging it," as if the words were not premeditated and should be seen as an accident (Sheldon, 2006, p. 12). And lastly, good intentions serve as an explanation for a crisis, as if the situation was meant well. Sears utilized this tactic when the company was caught overcharging customers for auto parts. Sears' chairman informed consumers that, "We would never intentionally violate the trust customers have shown" (Benoit, 1995b, p. 97).

#### Reducing Offensiveness of the Event

This third general approach to image repair includes six different tactics: bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attack accuser, and compensation. Bolstering is used to stress the good traits of an individual or an organization in a time of crisis. When Texaco employees were caught on tape making racist remarks, one of the tactics that Texaco chairman Peter Bijur employed was bolstering. During an interview with *Nightline* host Ted Koppel, Bijur insisted that, "We have excellent statistics with respect to women and minorities who are moving up in our company" (Brinson & Benoit, 1999, p. 494).

Minimization seeks to frame the crisis event in such a way that it seems less serious. Trent Lott's staff members attempted to minimize the damage done by his racial remarks speech when they told *Washington Post* reporters that, "to read anything more into these comments is wrong" (Sheldon, 2006, p. 9). Differentiation is similar to minimization; it distinguishes the act from other similar but more offensive actions. When Chung showed Gary Condit records of repeated calls made from Levy to his phone



he stated that, “She might have left a message...she didn’t make frantic phone calls” (Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004, p. 102). Transcendence occurs when an individual or a company reminds the general public of larger, more important issues. Condit also employed this tactic when he told the public that, “I decided that I would not discuss my private life in the media” (Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004, p. 101). By reminding people that private matters are often more important, Condit attempted to transcend the crisis. Attacking one’s accuser attempts to destroy the credibility of the accuser. Democrats waged a war against then-Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, when he was vilified for making a lucrative book deal. Gingrich, a Republican, shot back at his accusers when he stated that they (presumably the Democrats), “were clearly going to use the book advance to distract, to obstruct, and to critique” (Kennedy & Benoit, 1997, p. 203). Lastly, compensation is used to offer reimbursement to a victim involved in a crisis. This tactic can be illustrated by any company offering payment to a consumer when there is found to be a faulty product. Depending on the severity of the crisis, these six tactics can work effectively; however, they can also spell disaster when shown to be insincere (Benoit, 1982; Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004).

#### Corrective Action

The fourth general approach on Benoit’s typology, corrective action, presents a plan to solve or prevent a future crisis. This strategy can oftentimes quell the wave of discontent that erupts during a crisis and, as illustrated in many of Benoit’s case studies, solve a company’s dilemma. Throughout the examination of organizations such as Dow Corning (1996), AT&T (1994), and Texaco (1999), Benoit and his colleagues illustrate how important it can be to present the public with a plan for corrective action. However,

within this strategy exists a conundrum for individuals and, in particular, for politicians. Unless the crisis involves something palpable (such as the Gingrich book deal) what can politicians offer the public as a form of prevention for future crises – a promise that they will never perform a particular offense again? If this is the case, then the public will have to accept what the politician says as true. Depending on the severity of the crisis and the other strategies and tactics employed, acceptance may very well be impossible to attain.

### Mortification

The last general approach to image restoration seems to be the preferred method, as articulated by Benoit in many of his case studies (Benoit et al., 1991; Blaney & Benoit, 2001; Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004). This strategy involves apologizing for an offensive act. At times it entails actually admitting to charges and can be more effective than some of the aforementioned strategies and tactics. As Benoit outlines in his case studies involving mortification, this strategy is generally what the public expects and prefers to hear – the truth (Benoit et al., 1991; Blaney & Benoit, 2001; Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004). Ultimately, “Apologies are likely to be more effective in dealing with problematic situations” (Benoit & Drew, 1997).

Table 1.2 lists many of Benoit’s case studies, the offending parties, the strategies and tactics employed during the crisis, and whether the crisis response was deemed a success or a failure by Benoit.

Table 1.2. Benoit's Case Study Analyses and Results.

<b>Offending Party</b>	<b>Strategies &amp; Tactics Employed</b>	<b>Outcome of Crisis</b>
Richard Nixon and Watergate (Benoit, 1982)	Denial, shifting blame, minimization	Unsuccessful
Senator Edward Kennedy and Chappaquiddick (Benoit, 1988)	Mortification, indirect shifting blame	Generally successful
Ronald Reagan and the Iran Contra Affair (Benoit, Gullifor, & Panici, 1991)	Denial, bolstering, differentiation, good intentions, mortification	Unsuccessful in the beginning; changed to more successful as Reagan admitted fault
Dan Quayle versus Murphy Brown (Benoit & Anderson, 1996)	Denial, attack accuser, bolstering	Successful (for Murphy Brown) although Benoit asserts that these strategies are not always or necessarily effective
Newt Gingrich's book deal (Kennedy & Benoit, 1997)	Denial, good intentions, bolstering, attack accuser, corrective action	Unsuccessful
Bill Clinton and the Monica Lewinsky scandal (Blaney & Benoit, 2001)	Denial, bolstering, transcendence, attack accuser, mortification, corrective action, good intentions, minimization, differentiation	Generally successful
Gary Condit and the Chandra Levy disappearance (Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004)	Denial, shifting blame, differentiation, bolstering, attack accuser, transcendence	Unsuccessful
Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994)	Bolstering, denial, attack accuser, defeasibility	Unsuccessful
Hugh Grant and the prostitute (Benoit, 1997b)	Mortification, bolstering, attack accuser	Successful
Queen Elizabeth and her reaction to the death of Princess Diana (Benoit & Brinson, 1999)	Denial, bolstering, defeasibility, transcendence	Partially successful for this incident, but would not be successful if employed in the future
Tylenol and the cyanide poisoning incident (Benoit & Lindsey, 1987)	Denial, bolstering, differentiation, corrective action	Successful

Table 1.2, cont'd. Benoit's Case Study Analyses and Results.

<b>Offending Party</b>	<b>Strategies &amp; Tactics Employed</b>	<b>Outcome of Crisis</b>
AT&T long distance service interruption (Benoit & Brinson, 1994)	Shifting blame, mortification, corrective action, bolstering	Successful
Sears auto repair (Benoit, 1995)	Denial, differentiation, bolstering, good intentions, minimization, attack accuser, corrective action	Unsuccessful
Dow Corning and the breast implant controversy (Brinson & Benoit, 1996)	Denial, minimization, bolstering, attack accuser, transcendence, mortification, corrective action	Partially successful; it took the company too long to apologize and offer help to women affected by the faulty product
USAir crash of 1994 (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997)	Bolstering, denial, corrective action	Unsuccessful
Texaco's racist remarks by employees (Brinson & Benoit, 1999)	Corrective action, bolstering, shifting blame, mortification	Successful

According to this analysis, organizations and individuals who employ the strategy of mortification in combination with some other strategy (oftentimes corrective action and/or bolstering) are more successful in repairing a tarnished image than those who employ other strategies and tactics (oftentimes denial and/or shifting blame). Benoit and Brinson (1994) recommended that, "those guilty of wrong-doing accept their responsibility immediately and apologize" (p. 87). Moreover, in the Condit case study, Len-Rios and Benoit (2004) asserted that the research "shows again that mortification can be vital to image restoration efforts" (p. 11).

There seems to be a pattern, according to the case studies, but is this trend the unequivocal evidence needed to determine the correct strategy to use in a crisis situation?

Or, for example, was the case of Gary Condit so severe that the situation itself negated *any and all* attempts to reconcile with the public? It is impossible to assume that if Condit had utilized different strategies (i.e., mortification), he would have been more successful in repairing his image. This level of doubt demands that Benoit's theory undergo experimental testing. Crisis communication is directly affected by the particular crisis situation. Thus, testing these variables can offer crisis communicators more insight and better recommendations regarding the use of effective strategies (Coombs & Holladay, 2004).

#### Mortification: Entertainers, Politicians, and Organizations

Much of Benoit's work has revolved around corporate crisis response, and some of his work has even focused on figures such as the actor, Hugh Grant (1997b), ice skater, Tonya Harding (1994), and former Vice President Dan Quayle and the television character Murphy Brown (1996). In his case study of Grant, Benoit (1997b) contrasts the use of his typology amongst three groups: entertainers, politicians, and corporations. He contended that, "Reputation is important in all three realms; discourse can be a remedy for threats to image; and although which strategies are used most often, or which are most appropriate, may vary, the same options are open to all rhetors" (p. 255).

However, Benoit (1997b) also pointed out that there are several keen differences between politicians and entertainers that affect the discourse. First, politics is partisan in nature, so politicians must always anticipate attacks from an opposing party. Second, these same opposing parties will attempt to keep an offensive act in the public eye for as long as possible. Third, politicians vote on legislation that affects the daily lives of their constituencies, and politicians must direct messages toward and satisfy the needs of those

constituencies for re-election purposes. Consequently, openly admitting mistakes may be more difficult for politicians than it is for entertainers because future costs are more serious.

Additionally, Benoit (1997b) stated that corporations must always be aware of possible litigation when dealing with a crisis situation, and “This may mean that, like politicians, corporate officers are less inclined than entertainers to use apology or mortification” (p. 256). Correspondingly, it becomes simplest for entertainers to apologize and admit fault, less simple for politicians to do so, and least simple for corporations to use this strategy in a time of crisis. Ultimately, Benoit (1997a) claimed that there are differences in the use of image repair discourse for individuals versus corporations: “Firms might use different strategies than individuals or employ them in different configurations” (p. 177). It is helpful to keep in mind these aspects of Benoit’s image repair discourse when testing and measuring its effectiveness for politicians.

### Limitations of the Image Repair Theory

#### No guidelines exist for measuring Benoit’s case studies

In each of Benoit’s case studies he takes the defensive words and actions of the offender in a crisis situation and classifies them according to his typology. Benoit then deems the employed strategies as appropriate (or inappropriate) and offers the individual’s or the organization’s current reputation status and other evidence as indicators of the repair effort’s success or failure.

Unfortunately, over the course of the evaluation, Benoit offers no set guidelines as determinants of success or failure. As noted by Coombs, “Theory in public relations is advanced by making and testing predictions from that theory” (Coombs & Schmidt,

2000, p. 163). How are crisis managers to take full advantage of Benoit's theory if there are no established, scientific guidelines by which to gauge a crisis situation? The theory offers explicit descriptions and a retrospective analysis, which is a helpful place to start (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). But, perhaps a more convincing and valuable measure of the success or failure of image restoration discourse would include a standardized, scientific litmus test that would offer more predictive value for future use.

#### The image repair theory is not prescriptive according to crisis type

Nearly 20 years ago Benson (1988) challenged researchers to study crisis communication more thoroughly, devise a system of responses and strategies, and decide which strategies are best suited for certain crisis situations. Additionally, Benoit (2000) asserted that his work, "inevitably focuses on the source, on the source's options, and on discourse (texts) from sources" (p. 40). Thus, it can be assumed that Benoit maintains no set link between crisis response and crisis type. In fact, Benoit (1995a) stated in his book, *Accounts, Apologies and Excuses: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*, that:

Although I characterize this as a "general theory" of image restoration, I don't intend this label to imply that I have articulated an exhaustive discussion of everything of interest concerning excuses, apologies, and accounts...The theory of image restoration discourse has room for further development. (p. viii-ix, 164)

#### Coombs: Attribution Theory

To strengthen the typology offered by Benoit, Coombs uses attribution theory to link crisis strategies with their appropriate crisis type. A summation of Coombs' theory follows.

Eastern Illinois University Professor Timothy Coombs focuses his research on the critical features of crisis situations to guide the selection of crisis response strategies. The goal of this work is to maximize crisis response strategies in order to offer protection to an organization’s reputation. After all, “A crisis manager is better prepared for crisis communication when she or he knows which response fits best with a given crisis situation” (Coombs & Holladay, 2004, p. 95). Coombs and Holladay offered a symbolic approach to crisis management, in which they combine neoinstitutionalism, a concept predicated upon organizational legitimacy, and attribution theory, the reasoning that situations influence the selection of communication strategies (1996).

Additionally, Coombs and Holladay (1996) asserted that these two merged theories offer three means by which crisis strategies might affect an organizational image:

1. Convince stakeholders there is no crisis.
2. Have stakeholders see the crisis as less negative.
3. Have stakeholders see the organization more positively. (p. 283)

Out of these options emerge a two by two matrix (see Table 1.3) which classify crisis situation types. These four classifications are accidents, transgressions, faux pas, and terrorism. Additionally, these crisis situations’ placement within the matrix is determined by their control (either internal or external) and their intentionality (either intentional or unintentional).

Table 1.3. Coombs and Holladay’s Matrix of Crisis Types.

	Internal	External
Intentional	Transgression	Terrorism
Unintentional	Accident	Faux Pas

(1996, p. 284)



### Transgression

A situation may be deemed a transgression if the organization itself caused the crisis (internal) and the crisis is intentional (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). An example of a transgression would be Congressman Gary Condit's affair with his intern, Chandra Levy.

In transgression situations, addressing the organizational image in a beneficial way seems to be the most effective method of repair. According to the concept of neoinstitutionalism, boosting an image under these circumstances could repair legitimacy (Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

### Terrorism

A situation is deemed terrorism if the crisis is intentionally created by some agent outside of the organization. When responding to this crisis type, it is best to emphasize the unintentional nature of the situation. This strategy seeks to reduce the individual's or the organization's responsibility for the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). Tylenol's 1982 cyanide case is an example of terrorism. By infiltrating safe Tylenol products with cyanide-laced capsules, a psychopathic killer took the lives of seven people. By emphasizing that the crisis was intentional from an outside source, Tylenol was able to quell enormous public discontent.

### Accident

Crisis situations are deemed an accident if they are internal, something the organization did itself, and unintentional. For this crisis type, much like terrorism, the unintentional dimension of the response should be emphasized, thus downplaying the organization's responsibility for the situation (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). An example of an accident would be the crash of ValuJet Flight 592.

### Faux Pas

In this situation, an external group claims that the organization has done something wrong. Thus, “The ambiguity provides an opportunity to convince stakeholders there is no crisis” (Coombs & Holladay, 1996, p. 285). Examples of faux pas are what some may call “urban legends.” The Pepsi product-tampering case, in which a woman claims that she opens her Pepsi bottle, only to find a syringe, is an example of urban legend. Denial strategies tend to be most useful for this crisis type (Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

### Coombs: Performance History

According to Coombs and Holladay (2002), one of the factors used in crisis type assessment is performance history. Research has shown that the level of responsibility that publics attribute to the source of a crisis changes according to performance history. If an organization (or, in this case, a politician) has a past history of similar mistakes or if the organization has not maintained a positive relationship with stakeholders, they may be held to a higher level of responsibility than an organization (or an individual) with a positive performance and/or relationship history (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2001).

This notion of performance history is especially significant regarding the Trent Lott racial remarks case study. Lott maintained a negative performance history on the issue of civil rights; he delivered another, similar speech on behalf of Thurmond in Mississippi in 1980, voted against extending the Voting Rights Act in the 1980s, and appeared before the Council of Conservative Citizens (former Ku Klux Klan), proclaiming that they hold, “the right principles and the right philosophy” (Sheldon,

2006, pp. 6-7). Since Lott was the first senate majority leader ever to be forced from the post, the concept of performance history must be examined as a possible contributing factor.

### Testing the Image Repair Theory

As previously stated, the purpose of this thesis is to determine what image repair strategies are most effective for politicians by testing Benoit's largely qualitative body of work against the backdrop of quantitative analysis. This research also attempts to fill a void that exists at the end of Benoit's typology, where it seems to be, "short on predictive value and causal inferences...The knowledge gained from a one-shot case study is generally illusory" (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000, pp. 163-164). Moreover, as public relations continues to evolve as a social science the field needs scientific evidence to expand and improve the selection and implementation of crisis response strategies (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

Additionally, other critics such as Burns and Bruner (2000) specifically asked for further development of Benoit's theory on several different levels, and, in the end stated that, "One might expect experimentation with both qualitative and quantitative research methods to apply and test the predictive power of the theory" (p. 37). Benoit (2000) responded to the article and claimed that he embraces the call, "for experimental research into image restoration theory, which is relatively uncommon" (2000, p. 42).

To further illustrate this assertion and to introduce the research on which this thesis is based, the 1999-2000 dialogue between Benoit and Coombs regarding the Texaco racist remarks case is highlighted. Benoit's case study of the crisis and Coombs'

subsequent testing of the case serve as a model for this thesis experiment and data collection.

### Texaco's Racism Crisis: Experimental Research and the Image Repair Theory

When executives at Texaco were caught on tape referring to African Americans as “black jelly beans” who were “glued to the bottom of the jar,” lawsuits ensued, and Texaco Chairman, Peter Bijur, responded with messages that included four different image repair strategies. According to Brinson and Benoit (1999), those strategies were: bolstering, corrective action, mortification, and shifting blame (separation). From November 4, 1996, until November 12, 1996, Bijur disseminated written and video-taped messages to the press and employees. He also appeared on *Nightline* and conducted meetings with African American leaders (including the Reverend Jesse Jackson) in order to quell the controversy. Based on the strategies employed by Bijur, the fact that Texaco was able to settle the lawsuit, have the story disappear, and cancel boycotts, Brinson and Benoit (1999) deemed the crisis situation “very effective at both getting Texaco out of the spotlight and escaping with a damaged – but not thoroughly destroyed – public image” (p. 507). In the “Notes” section of the case study, Brinson and Benoit (1999) specified (in fine print) that, “Although we identified some strategies as more prominent than others, we did not feel a quantitative content analysis would be appropriate for this critical analysis” (p. 508).

In response to the Texaco racism case study, Coombs and Schmidt (2000) did indeed conduct quantitative analysis of the case study to, “become more prescriptive so that crisis managers have clearer guidelines for selecting their image restoration and crisis-response strategies” (p. 164). Based on the image repair literature and Benoit's

Texaco case study, Coombs and Schmidt (2000) identified two strategies that should stand out as most effective: mortification and separation (originally known as shifting blame, but identified as separation in the Texaco case study by Benoit). Coombs and Schmidt gathered a sample of 141 students and presented them with five different crisis scenarios using actual messages produced by Texaco during the crisis. This experiment sought to test actual strategies in their original crisis milieu to glean the most accurate data (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

Coombs and Schmidt (2000) constructed seven different hypotheses, but for intense purposes only two will be described here. They are:

H1A: Respondents in the mortification and separation conditions will report more positive images of Texaco than those in the shifting blame, corrective action, or bolstering conditions.

H1B: Respondents in the separation condition will report more positive images of Texaco than those in the mortification condition. (p. 167)

These two hypotheses involved organizational reputation and were accurately measured according to previous scales and research. A series of one-way ANOVAs and post hoc analyses were used to investigate H1A and H1B, and the results revealed no significant differences between strategy effectiveness. Thus, the empirical tests conducted by Coombs and Schmidt (2000) did not support some of Benoit's major strategy conclusions regarding the Texaco case study. By combining Benoit's descriptive case study with scientific, predictive experimentation, Coombs and Schmidt yielded a more reliable and precise result.

One of the goals of image repair discourse is to offer the most useful and effective communication methods to crisis managers. Benoit (2000) himself noted that, “I do not believe that evidence of effects should substitute for the critic’s assessment; neither do I believe critics who assess effectiveness should ignore evidence of audience effects (p. 42). As such, evaluating the discourse with *both* qualitative and quantitative methods seems to be the surest way to identify the appropriate and effective image repair strategies and, by means of further research, pair those strategies with detailed crisis situations.

#### Further Rationale for the Current Study

In 2004 a content analysis was conducted to investigate the methods used by former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott to handle his crisis involving the racial speech that he delivered in honor of Strom Thurmond’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday (Sheldon, 2006). In December of 2002, the ACLU gave Lott a 20% rating based on his civil liberties voting record; by ACLU standards, 20% is a failing grade (On the Issues, 2002). Ironically, that same month, Lott delivered the speech in which he nostalgically looked back at Thurmond’s Dixiecrat presidential campaign of 1948. This speech placed Lott in the middle of a career-defining, political crisis from which it was difficult to emerge.

Using the context of Benoit’s theory of image restoration, the Lott case study (Sheldon, 2006) sought to find the degree of effectiveness with which Lott responded to the public in his time of crisis. By analyzing articles published in *The Washington Post* and *Time* magazine from the occasion of Lott’s speech on December 5, 2002, until Lott’s resignation as incoming senate majority leader on December 20, 2002, the study identified explanatory or apologetic statements made by Lott to the press regarding his

Thurmond speech. Based on Benoit's theory of image repair and Lott's subsequent status in the senate, Lott's crisis response strategies, much like Texaco's, were deemed only partially effective: Lott lost his majority leader position (ineffective outcome) but was not pushed out of the senate entirely (effective outcome). Lott was bruised but not beaten.

The Trent Lott case study (Sheldon, 2006) offers further rationale for investigating this particular type of political crisis. Additionally, the case study forms the structure for this thesis experiment. Lott utilized many strategies and tactics to recover from his crisis, not all of which could possibly have been effective, based on his unprecedented loss of the senate majority leader position. The case study showed that Lott used eight different strategies and tactics from Benoit's typology, including: minimization, mortification, good intentions, bolstering, transcendence, accident, corrective action, and shifting blame (see Table 1.1). Three of these strategies – mortification, corrective action, and bolstering – were replicated for use in this experiment to test the effectiveness of Lott's responses and to identify strategies that could potentially be useful.

Additionally, the Lott case provided an opportunity to further test the influence of performance history on message effectiveness. Trent Lott's previous history of racial remarks became an important factor early on in the case study, as it helped to classify the case as a faux pas for experimental purposes.

Finally, the Lott crisis offers more insight into Benoit's idea that politician's lie somewhere in between the crisis realm of entertainers and organizations. Benoit asserts that it is more difficult for politicians to apologize and admit fault than it is for entertainers to do so. Politicians often come under fire from the opposing party (or, in

Lott's case he comes under fire from his OWN party), and, quite often, the opposition attempts to keep the crisis in the public eye for as long as possible (1997b). With these facts in mind, the case study of Lott unfolded into a scenario ripe with information for experimentation. This case study offered a variety of factors that could be beneficial to extending both Benoit's and Coombs' work, and, moreover, to the work of political crisis communication.

### Hypotheses and Research Question

This research goes beyond Benoit's approach of classifying rhetoric according to theory by conducting an experiment to evaluate effects of message strategies and performance history in a political crisis situation. The structure of this research is based directly upon the Lott crisis situation. Fictional scenarios used as experimental manipulations employed different names, party affiliations, and home states. Additionally, the historical facts were changed, but the situation and the responses remained the same. Based on Benoit's and Coombs' previous research and the Trent Lott case study, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H1: A more positive evaluation of the politician by the audience is predicted in the mortification strategy-positive performance history condition than in the bolstering strategy-negative performance history condition.

Based on the literature, an individual or an organization using the strategy of mortification should be more successful in repairing their tarnished image than if they used another strategy (in this case, bolstering). Additionally, a positive performance history should further substantiate the success of the crisis response strategy.



H2: A politician expressing mortification will yield more positive audience evaluations than a politician who utilizes either the strategy of corrective action or bolstering.

Again, based on the literature, an individual or an organization using the strategy of mortification should be more successful in repairing their tarnished image than if they used another strategy (in this case, corrective action and bolstering).

H3: There will be a more favorable evaluation of the politician in the positive performance history condition than in the negative performance history condition.

A politician who makes a mistake for the first time, who does not have a negative record (according to public opinion) on a particular issue should yield more forgiveness than a politician who has made repeated offenses on the issue.

Additionally, the following research question will be investigated:

RQ: Do the same image repair strategies work as effectively for politicians as they do for organizations (such as Texaco in its racism case)?

Although Benoit (1997a) asserted that individuals and organizations may use strategies in different ways, most of his case studies and analyses (of both organizations and individuals) insist that apologizing, admitting fault, and (often) employing corrective action are the best methods to use when repairing an image (see Table 1.2). Is it accurate to list a general image repair typology, or should there be separate typologies for entertainers, politicians, and organizations? This research seeks to answer this question and make an accurate recommendation for these three crisis groups.

## CHAPTER 2

### Methodology

Coombs and Schmidt (2000) used experimental methods to further test message strategies in Brinson and Benoit's (1999) Texaco racism case study. Similarly, this experiment seeks to further test the effects of three message responses from Benoit's (1995a) image repair discourse and crisis communication theory during a political crisis modeled after the Trent Lott racial remarks case. This experiment also tested two levels of performance history in the political crisis. A three by two factorial design was used, based on three strategies from Benoit's typology and two levels of performance history, and yielded a total of six experimental manipulations. These strategy-performance history manipulations were each embedded into mock newspaper articles, yielding six different articles. The experimental instrument consisted of one of these six articles, together with a pretest and a posttest questionnaire. Copies of the six manipulation articles and the questionnaire are included in the appendix.

### Subjects

Conducted over three different days in January and February of 2006, the experiment included 348 participants. All participants were students in journalism, public relations, and advertising introductory courses at a large, southeastern university. After times and dates were chosen for implementation of the experiment, classrooms in the journalism building of the university were reserved for use. Students were informed of these times, dates, and location, volunteered to participate, and were awarded extra credit for their participation by their instructors.

## Experimental Manipulations

Since the experiment was based on the Trent Lott racial remarks case, the first step in its design was to review the actual statements made by Lott throughout his political crisis. Three of Lott's responses were selected; each response was paired with a level of performance history – either positive or negative. Table 2.1 summarizes the experimental research design.

Table 2.1. Construction of Experimental Manipulation Conditions.

	<b>Positive Performance History</b>	<b>Negative Performance History</b>
<b>Mortification Strategy</b>	Mortification and Positive Performance History (#1)	Mortification and Negative Performance History (#2)
<b>Corrective Action Strategy</b>	Corrective Action and Positive Performance History (#3)	Corrective Action and Negative Performance History (#4)
<b>Bolstering Strategy</b>	Bolstering and Positive Performance History (#5)	Bolstering and Negative Performance History (#6)

One of these six conditions was embedded into base information that recounted an incident similar to the Lott crisis. The base information remained the same throughout the experiment; it was loosely derived from Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign to ensure that the story would have historical significance, but would not be easily recollected. The base information along with the embedded six conditions was constructed to resemble authentic, on-line newspaper articles.

These mock newspaper articles were selected as the vehicle for the manipulation since most non-victim publics learn about crisis situations through the media, especially newspapers (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Deephouse, 2000). Additionally, an organization's – and an individual's – reputation, especially during a crisis, is often maintained through the news media, and these sources of information have great bearing

on the public's perception of organizations and individuals (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Deephouse, 2000).

The headline and sub-headline of each article reinforced both the response strategy and the performance history. The articles, dated April 21, 2001, detailed a hypothetical politician, Henry Davis, who delivered a speech lauding an elder senator, Donald Waterton, who openly opposed civil rights in his 1964 presidential campaign. Each article was approximately 450 words in length.

Prior to the experiment 360 copies were made of the survey instrument. To ensure random and equal assignment of the manipulated newspaper articles, 60 copies were made of each treatment condition. The articles were separated according to treatment (one through six) and rotated throughout the survey instrument in a systematic order.

#### Performance History

Two levels of performance history, one positive and one negative, were tested in the newspaper article. Following are excerpts illustrating the manipulations used in the newspaper article:

**(Positive)** Since the late 1960s, Davis has gradually supported civil rights positions. This past fall, the senator lobbied vigorously for additional grant monies for states to invest in minority nursing and medical school programs. Additionally, the senator this year achieved an American Civil Liberties Union rating of 78%, an above-average rating compared with his colleagues in the Senate.

**(Negative)** In the mid-1990s, Davis was censured after disclosures that he had been a speaker at meetings of the Council of Citizens, an organization formed to

succeed the segregationist White Citizens' Councils of the 1960s. Additionally, Davis's American Civil Liberties Union rating is currently 20%, one of the lower, failing grades on civil rights issues in the Senate.

### Image Repair Strategies

Three different image repair strategies were tested in the newspaper articles. They were: mortification, corrective action, and bolstering. Following, respectively, are the excerpts from the article detailing these strategies:

**(Mortification)** Amid heated criticism the next day, Sen. Davis released a statement saying, "I am sorry that my poor choice of words conveyed to some the impression that I embrace the discarded policies of the past. Nothing could be further from the truth, and I apologize to anyone who was offended by my statement."

**(Corrective Action)** Amid heated criticism the next day, Sen. Davis released a statement saying, "I certainly do not embrace the discarded policies of the past. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, as a show of good faith, I am officially reversing my stance against affirmative action. I feel, in my heart, that affirmative action is right and fair, and now I vow to prove that to the country."

**(Bolstering)** Amid heated criticism the next day, Sen. Davis released a statement saying, "I can assure the public, I am indeed a staunch supporter of civil rights."

A three-page list of the senator's legislative achievements on behalf of minorities accompanied the statement. The list included Davis's vote to support a congressional medal of honor for Rosa Parks, his chairmanship of task forces to

pay tribute to slaves who built the Capitol and a day honoring minority World War II veterans.

### Summary of Manipulations

As previously stated, the design of the experiment was a randomized three by two factorial. Each survey instrument was handed to a subject as he or she arrived to participate in the experiment. Because the newspaper article was fictitious, after completing and turning in the questionnaire, participants were given a debriefing statement that read, "Please note that the newspaper article you read, including all details such as the circumstances and all the persons described in it, is entirely fictitious."

### Measurement of Variables

This study was primarily interested in the effectiveness of image repair strategies used in political crises and the effect that performance history may have on those strategies. To gauge these effects, audience opinions, influences, and evaluations were measured.

### Pretest Items

Subjects were asked to complete a series of pretest items designed to measure their pre-existing attitudes toward politicians. These items were included for possible use as a covariate in data analysis and consisted of 11 semantic differential-type items derived from many studies measuring credibility-type constructs. Previous experiments conducted by Sallot (2002) used an index consisting of these covariate items; this index had a Cronbach's alpha of .88. Responses ranged from "1" to "5" with "5" measuring positive attitudes toward politicians and "1" measuring negative attitudes toward politicians in seven of the eleven questions. Four items used "1" to measure positive

attitudes and “5” to measure negative attitudes; these four items were recoded in data analysis. Items designed to measure political involvement and co-orientation measures of perception of self, others, and politicians based on cynicism and impression management self-monitoring were also included for future analyses.

After subjects completed the pretest section of the questionnaire, they were informed that they were about to read a newspaper article and it was imperative that they not look back at the article once they had completed it. Instructions on each of the pages following the newspaper article reminded subjects, “DO NOT TURN BACK.” Participants were asked to answer the posttest questions according to the details they recalled by reading the article only one time.

#### Posttest Items

After reading their randomly assigned newspaper article, subjects were asked to answer a series of questions regarding the content of the article. Eight Likert-type items were used as manipulation checks.

Next, subjects were asked to answer 11 semantic differential-type items used to measure credibility, trustworthiness, and likeability toward the offending senator, Henry Davis. These post-manipulation items were identical to the 11 semantic differential-type pretest items that had been included for possible use as a covariate in data analysis. In Sallot’s (2002) experiment, the Cronbach’s alpha for an index of these 11 post-manipulation items was .92.

Lastly, subjects were asked to respond to 15 Likert-type items used as dependent variables assessing participants’ post-experimental attitudes and opinions. These questions were derived from Coombs and Schmidt’s (2000) Texaco analysis in which

they developed scales to measure reputation, honoring the account (account acceptance), and potential supportive behavior. Cronbach's alphas for these measures in an earlier study (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000) were .80, .82, and .81, respectively. Questions were also derived from Sallot's (2002) analysis in which she used scales measuring character traits and competency traits. Her Cronbach's alphas for these two measures were .90 and .77, respectively.

Upon completion of the survey, subjects were asked, "Does the scenario involving Senator Davis remind you of any real-life political situation?" This question was meant to gauge whether subjects may have associated the fictional scenarios with the Trent Lott case or any other case.

The questionnaire closed by asking questions regarding age and gender, demographics, participants' major, political party affiliation (Republican, Democrat, Independent, or other), and ideology (liberal, moderate, conservative, or other).

### Procedures

Altogether, the questionnaire consisted of 101 questions, with only two demographic items allowing for open-ended answers (age and major). The experimental treatment accounted for one page, and the questionnaire numbered 12 pages, including the required University of Georgia Institutional Review Board cover page. This cover sheet informed subjects of their rights and responsibilities as a research subject.

Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaire independently. They were observed to ensure precise procedure. Subjects took anywhere from 10 minutes to 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire.



### Pilot Test

This experiment was pre-tested in a pilot study with the identical manipulation treatments and survey questionnaires. During this pilot test, 21 members of a public relations theory course, 14 members of a public relations writing course, and 29 members of a public relations management course volunteered to participate.

The pilot study data was analyzed to test the manipulation checks. Results of the pilot study suggested the experimental treatments were having intended effects, and no changes were made to the questionnaire.

## CHAPTER 3

### Results

#### Overview of the Experiment

This experiment was conducted over three separate days. On the first day, January 27, 2006, the experiment took place in an introductory journalism class. One hundred-twenty-two surveys were completed and gathered on this day. On January 31, 2006, and February 1, 2006, two additional experiment sessions were held from 2 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. The remainder of the surveys, 230 in number, were completed and collected on these two days. A total of 352 subjects participated. Four questionnaires were discarded in analysis, as they were incomplete. Thus, 348 completed questionnaires were analyzed. All subjects were enrolled in introductory courses in journalism (N = 122, 35%), advertising (N = 97, 28%), and public relations (N = 129, 37%) at a large, southeastern university. Subjects received extra credit for their participation. Ninety-two percent (N = 321) of the subjects were working toward a bachelor's degree; 6% (N = 21) a master's; 1% (N = 3) a doctoral degree, and 1% (N = 3) were classified as "other." Subjects ranged in age from 18 to 42 ( $M = 20.2$ ,  $SD = 1.9$ ). Sixteen percent (N = 55) of the subjects were male and 84 percent (N = 292) were female.

Additionally, 51% (N = 179) of the subjects identified themselves as Republicans, 27% (N = 95) as Democrats, and 21% (N = 73) as Independents. According to ideology, 22% (N = 76) of the subjects classified themselves as liberal, 34% (N = 119) as conservative, 40% (N = 141) as moderate, and 3% (N = 12) as "other."

## Constructing the Measures

### Participant's evaluations of the politician's behavior

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation of the 26 items (11 semantic differential-type; 15 Likert-type) measuring participants' evaluations of the politician's behavior yielded six factors (See Table 3.1 at the end of this chapter for the results of the factor analysis, along with means and standard deviations for each item).

Several items loaded on two factors; one item (#6 on Table 3.1) loaded on three factors. Examination of the scree plot suggested a six-factor solution as well. The first factor explained 33.4% of the variance; the second accounted for 9.6%; the third for 7.8%, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth factors for 6.4%, 4.4%, and 3.9%, respectively. Cronbach's alpha tests of reliability for each of the six factors ranged from .67 to .92. The items in each factor were summed to create indices. The six factors were generally consistent with Coombs and Schmidt's (2000) and Sallot's (2002) measures and were labeled accordingly.

The first factor, labeled reputation, had a Cronbach's alpha of .86, a mean of 2.6, and a standard deviation of .78. Factor two, supportive behavior, had a Cronbach's alpha of .92, a mean of 1.7, and a standard deviation of .74. The third factor, account acceptance, had a Cronbach's alpha of .82, a mean of 2.2, and a standard deviation of .73. The fourth factor, character traits, had a Cronbach's alpha of .79, a mean of 2.5, and a standard deviation of .71. Factor five, concern for others, had a Cronbach's alpha of .82, a mean of 2.8, and a standard deviation of .93, and the last factor, competency traits, had a Cronbach's alpha of .67, a mean of 2.9, and a standard deviation of .73.

Pearson R correlation tests among the six dependent measure indices were all significant (See Table 3.2 at the end of this chapter for the correlation results).

#### Pre-existing attitudes toward politicians

Analysis of covariance increases the efficiency of completely randomized experiments (Kennedy & Bush, 1985). To neutralize effects of subjects' individual, pre-existing attitudes toward politicians in data analysis, the same 11 semantic differential items that were used as dependent measures were also presented before experimental manipulations. This "pre-test" measure was used as a covariate in analyses of the dependent measure indices of the politician's behavior. Cronbach's alpha for the index of pre-existing attitudes was .80. The mean for this covariate index was 3.3 ( $SD = .47$ ).

#### Manipulation checks

In all, eight manipulation check items were included in this study. Three Likert-type items were included immediately following the experimental manipulations to ensure general reading comprehension of the mock newspaper scenarios. These items measured facts reported in all six manipulated scenarios and yielded means ranging from 4.2 to 4.7, confirming that the subjects had read and comprehended the basic facts of the newspaper stories.

Immediately following the general comprehension questions, five Likert-type items were included to check that the strategy (mortification, bolstering, or corrective action) and performance history (positive or negative) manipulations had anticipated effects. Two of these questions gauged the effects of performance history, and three questions gauged the effects of communication strategy. One-way analyses of variance with Tukey HSD follow-up procedures for each of the items yielded significant

differences in the cell means in expected directions. For example, to check the communication strategy of mortification, subjects were asked to evaluate the statement, “Following his remarks at the gala, Senator Davis released a statement clearly saying, ‘I apologize to anyone who was offended by my statement.’” This test was significant in the desired direction; the mean was well above the average (4.2 and 3.9 in the each of the mortification strategy cells). Moreover, results in the mortification cell yielded significance ( $F(5, 341) = 66.5, p < .001$ ) in this desired direction (See Table 3.3 at the end of this chapter for the results of the one-way analyses of variance and the means for the three message strategy and two performance history manipulation check items).

### Testing the Hypotheses

This study consisted of three hypotheses. In data analysis, each hypothesis included subsets based on the six dependent measures (reputation, supportive behavior, account acceptance, character traits, concern for others, and competency traits). The first set involved the a priori hypothesis predicting the effects of the combinations of communication strategy and performance history on participant evaluations. This set of hypotheses was designated H1 with its subset labeled H1A through H1F. The second set of hypotheses dealt with communication strategy alone and what effects, if any, there were on audience evaluations. This set of hypotheses was designated H2 with its subset labeled H2A through H2F. The last set of hypotheses was labeled H3 with the subset classified as H3A through H3F. This set of hypotheses predicted the effects, if any, of performance history on audience evaluations.

## Results of A Priori Hypotheses Tests for Strategy and Performance History

A more positive evaluation of the politician by the audience was predicted a priori in the mortification strategy-positive performance history condition than in the bolstering strategy-negative performance history condition. Independent t-tests were used to test this set of a priori hypotheses.

The H1 set of hypotheses posited that a politician using the mortification strategy with a positive past record on civil rights would yield a more favorable audience evaluation than a politician utilizing the bolstering strategy with a negative past record on civil rights.

H1A: No differences were found between evaluations of the politician's reputation in the mortification-positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.9$ ) than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition ( $t(117) = 1.4, p < .243, \underline{M} = 2.6$ ). H1A was not supported.

H1B: Evaluations were more positive in the mortification-positive performance history condition ( $M = 2.0$ ) than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition regarding the supportive behavior of the audience ( $t(117) = 6.2, p < .014, \underline{M} = 1.7$ ). H1B was supported.

H1C: Evaluations were more positive in the mortification-positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.4$ ) than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition regarding the account acceptance of the audience ( $t(117) = 6.1, p < .015, \underline{M} = 2.0$ ). H1C was supported.

H1D: Evaluations were more positive in the mortification-positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.8$ ) than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition

regarding the politician's character traits as perceived by the audience ( $t(117) = 5.1, p < .026, \underline{M} = 2.4$ ). H1D was supported.

H1E: No differences were found between the audience's evaluations of the politician's concern for others in the mortification-positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ) than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition ( $t(117) = .004, p < .953, \underline{M} = 2.8$ ). H1E was not supported.

H1F: No differences were found between evaluations of the politician's competency traits as perceived by the audience in the mortification-positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ) than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition ( $t(117) = .30, p < .587, \underline{M} = 2.9$ ). H1F was not supported.

Because all six dependent measures were significantly correlated, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test for any multiple effects of message response type and performance history with the six dependent variables (see Table 3.4). There were significant main effects for strategy response types with four of the dependent measures. There were significant main effects for performance history with four of the dependent measures. There were no significant interactions. Analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were conducted with each of the dependent variables separately to test the next two sets of hypotheses. One set of hypotheses was for main effects of response strategies; the other set was for main effects of performance history.

### Results of Hypotheses Tests for Response Strategy

The H2 set of hypotheses stated that a politician expressing mortification would yield more positive audience evaluations than a politician who utilized either the strategy of corrective action or bolstering.

H2A: Evaluations of the politician's reputation were more positive in the mortification condition ( $\underline{M} = 3.0$ ) than in the bolstering condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.6$ ) and the corrective action condition ( $F(2, 338) = 26.5, p < .000, \underline{M} = 2.3$ ). H2A was supported. See Table 3.5.

Table 3.5. Results of ANCOVA Between-Subject Effects for Reputation.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	41.252 <sup>b</sup>	6	6.875	13.892	.000	.198
Intercept	10.968	1	10.968	22.162	.000	.062
PreTrait	12.990	1	12.990	26.247	.000	.072
Strategy	26.256	2	13.128	26.526	.000	.136
History	.025	1	.025	.050	.824	.000
Strategy*History	.314	2	.157	.317	.729	.002
Error	167.279	338	.495			
Total	2573.531	345				
Corrected Total	208.530	344				

b. R Squared = .198 (Adjusted R Squared = .184)



H2B: Evaluations of the audience's supportive behavior were more positive in the mortification condition ( $\underline{M} = 1.9$ ) than in the bolstering condition ( $\underline{M} = 1.7$ ) and the corrective action condition ( $F(2, 337) = 7.4, p < .001, \underline{M} = 1.6$ ). H2B was supported. See Table 3.6.

Table 3.6. Results of ANCOVA Between-Subject Effects for Supportive Behavior.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	17.766 <sup>b</sup>	6	2.961	5.927	.000	.095
Intercept	3.718	1	3.718	7.443	.007	.022
PreTrait	7.177	1	7.177	14.366	.000	.041
Strategy	7.422	2	3.711	7.428	.001	.042
History	2.155	1	2.155	4.313	.039	.013
Strategy*History	.645	2	.323	.646	.525	.004
Error	168.352	337	.500			
Total	1234.375	344				
Corrected Total	186.118	343				

b. R Squared = .095 (Adjusted R Squared = .079)

H2C: Evaluations of the audience's account acceptance were more positive in the mortification condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.3$ ) than in the corrective action condition ( $F(2, 338) = 3.0$ ,  $p < .050$ ,  $\underline{M} = 2.1$ ). There were no significant differences between mortification and bolstering or corrective action and bolstering ( $\underline{M} = 2.1$ ). H2C was partially supported. See Table 3.7.

Table 3.7. Results of ANCOVA Between-Subject Effects for Account Acceptance.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	8.482 <sup>b</sup>	6	1.414	2.772	.012	.047
Intercept	24.125	1	24.125	47.311	.000	.123
PreTrait	.713	1	.713	1.398	.238	.004
Strategy	3.075	2	1.538	3.016	.050	.018
History	4.617	1	4.617	9.054	.003	.026
Strategy*History	.018	2	.009	.018	.983	.000
Error	172.352	338	.510			
Total	1833.080	345				
Corrected Total	180.834	344				

b. R Squared = .047 (Adjusted R Squared = .030)

H2D: Evaluations of the politician's character traits were more positive in the mortification condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ) than in the corrective action condition ( $F(2, 338) = 10.0, p < .000, \underline{M} = 2.3$ ). There were no significant differences between mortification and bolstering or corrective action and bolstering ( $\underline{M} = 2.5$ ). H2D was partially supported. See Table 3.8.

Table 3.8. Results of ANCOVA Between-Subject Effects for Character Traits.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	26.698 <sup>b</sup>	6	4.450	10.154	.000	.153
Intercept	11.981	1	11.981	27.338	.000	.075
PreTrait	10.061	1	10.061	22.959	.000	.064
Strategy	8.735	2	4.367	9.966	.000	.056
History	7.722	1	7.722	17.621	.000	.050
Strategy*History	.149	2	.075	.170	.843	.001
Error	148.122	338	.438			
Total	2355.640	345				
Corrected Total	174.820	344				

b. R Squared = .153 (Adjusted R Squared = .138)

H2E: Evaluations of the politician's concern for others were more positive in the mortification condition ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ) than in the corrective action condition ( $F(2, 338) = 13.4, p < .000, \underline{M} = 2.5$ ) There were no significant differences between mortification and bolstering ( $\underline{M} = 2.8$ ). H2E was partially supported. See Table 3.9.

Table 3.9. Results of ANCOVA Between-Subject Effects for Concern for Others.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	37.041 <sup>b</sup>	6	6.173	8.041	.000	.125
Intercept	13.208	1	13.208	17.202	.000	.048
PreTrait	13.903	1	13.903	18.108	.000	.051
Strategy	20.606	2	10.303	13.419	.000	.074
History	1.271	1	1.271	1.655	.199	.005
Strategy*History	.075	2	.037	.049	.952	.000
Error	259.513	338	.768			
Total	2979.000	345				
Corrected Total	296.554	344				

b. R Squared = .125 (Adjusted R Squared = .109)

H2F: No differences were found between evaluations of the politician's competency traits in the mortification condition ( $\underline{M} = 3.0$ ), the bolstering condition ( $M = 3.0$ ), or the corrective action condition ( $F(2, 339) = 1.7, p < .173, \underline{M} = 2.8$ ). H2F was not supported. See Table 3.10.

Table 3.10. Results of ANCOVA Between-Subject Effects for Competency Traits.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	21.937 <sup>b</sup>	6	3.656	7.612	.000	.119
Intercept	18.767	1	18.767	39.071	.000	.103
PreTrait	11.747	1	11.747	24.458	.000	.067
Strategy	1.692	2	.846	1.762	.173	.010
History	7.574	1	7.574	15.769	.000	.044
Strategy*History	1.695	2	.847	1.764	.173	.010
Error	162.829	339	.480			
Total	3176.000	346				
Corrected Total	184.766	345				

b. R Squared = .119 (Adjusted R Squared = .103)

#### Results of Hypotheses Tests for Performance History

This final set of hypotheses predicted a more favorable evaluation of the politician in the positive performance history condition than in the negative performance history condition.

H3A: No differences were found between evaluations of the politician's reputation in the positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.6$ ) or negative performance history condition ( $F(1, 338) = .050, p < .824, \underline{M} = 2.6$ ). H3A was not supported. See Table 3.4 for a further explanation of tests of between-subject effects for reputation.

H3B: Evaluations of the audience's supportive behavior were more favorable in the positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 1.8$ ) than in the negative performance history condition ( $F(1, 337) = 4.3, p < .039, \underline{M} = 1.7$ ). H3B was supported. See Table 3.5 for a further explanation of tests of between-subject effects for supportive behavior.

H3C: Evaluations of the audience's account acceptance were more favorable in the positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.3$ ), than in the negative performance history condition ( $F(1, 338) = 9.1, p < .003, \underline{M} = 2.1$ ). H3C was supported. See Table 3.6 for a further explanation of tests of between-subject effects for account acceptance.

H3D: Evaluations of the politician's character traits were more favorable in the positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ) than in the negative performance history condition ( $F(1, 338) = 17.6, p < .000, \underline{M} = 2.4$ ). H3D was supported. See Table 3.7 for a further explanation of tests of between-subject effects for character traits.

H3E: No differences were found between evaluations of the politician's concern for others in the positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 2.8$ ) or negative performance history condition ( $F(1, 338) = 1.7, p < .199, \underline{M} = 2.7$ ). H3E was not supported. See Table 3.8 for a further explanation of tests of between-subject effects for concern for others.

H3F: Evaluations of the politician's competency traits were more favorable in the positive performance history condition ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ) than in the negative performance history condition ( $F(1, 339) = 15.8, p < .000, \underline{M} = 2.8$ ). H3F was supported. See Table 3.9 for a further explanation of tests of between-subject effects for competency traits.

## Post Hoc Analyses

A series of one-way analyses of variance with Tukey HSD follow-up procedures was conducted to test the effects of participant's demographic characteristics on the six dependent measures.

### Age

Participants were divided by age into three approximately equal divisions for comparison purposes. Subjects aged 18 and 19 ( $N = 113$ , 32%) were grouped into the first division; those aged 20 ( $N = 131$ , 38%) comprised the second division. The remaining subjects aged 21 to 42 ( $N = 104$ , 30%) were included in the third division. There were significant differences in age with the dependent measures of character traits and concern for others. For character traits, participants aged 21 to 42 evaluated the politician more positively ( $M = 2.7$ ) than did participants aged 18 and 19 ( $M = 2.5$ ) and participants aged 20 ( $F(2, 344) = 3.0, p < .051, M = 2.4$ ). Participants aged 21 to 42 evaluated the politician's concern for others more positively ( $M = 3.0$ ) than participants aged 18 and 19 ( $M = 2.8$ ) and aged 20 ( $F(2, 344) = 3.0, p < .053, M = 2.7$ ). There were no significant differences in age for reputation ( $F(2, 344) = 2.2, p < .114$ ), supportive behavior ( $F(2, 343) = 1.5, p < .214$ ), account acceptance ( $F(2, 344) = 2.0, p < .144$ ), and competency traits ( $F(2, 345) = 1.2, p < .310$ ). A chi-square test of expected frequencies between those aged 21 to 42 and experimental manipulation was not significant ( $\chi^2(5, N = 348) = 6.4, p < .267$ ).

### Gender

There were significant differences in gender with the dependent measures of supportive behavior and concern for others. For supportive behavior, male subjects

evaluated the politician more positively ( $M = 1.9$ ) than female subjects ( $F(1, 344) = 3.9, p < .049, \underline{M} = 1.7$ ). Considering concern for others, male subjects evaluated the politician more positively ( $\underline{M} = 3.0$ ) than female subjects ( $F(1, 345) = 4.7, p < .030, \underline{M} = 2.7$ ).

There were no significant differences in gender for the dependent measures of reputation ( $F(1, 345) = .09, p < .760$ ), account acceptance ( $F(1, 345) = .07, p < .794$ ), character traits ( $F(1, 344) = .77, p < .380$ ), and competency traits ( $F(1, 345) = .07, p < .788$ ).

#### Political party affiliation

Analysis of participants' political party affiliations (Republican, Democrat, Independent) yielded significant results for the dependent measures of supportive behavior, character traits, and competency traits. Republican subjects evaluated the politician more positively in the supportive behavior measure ( $\underline{M} = 1.9$ ) than both Democrat subjects ( $\underline{M} = 1.5$ ) and Independent subjects ( $F(2, 342) = 13.2, p < .000, \underline{M} = 1.6$ ). Republican subjects evaluated the politician more favorably in the character traits measure ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ) than Democrat subjects ( $F(2, 343) = 8.2, p < .000, \underline{M} = 2.3$ ). There were no significant differences for Independent subjects compared with either Republican or Democrat subjects ( $\underline{M} = 2.4$ ). Republican subjects evaluated the politician more favorably in the competency traits measure ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ) than Democrat subjects ( $F(2, 344) = 8.6, p < .000, \underline{M} = 2.7$ ). There were no significant differences for Independent subjects compared with either Republican or Democrat subjects ( $\underline{M} = 2.9$ ).

Additionally, there were no significant differences in political party affiliation for the dependent measures of reputation ( $F(2, 343) = 2.6, p < .075$ ), account acceptance ( $F(2, 343) = 2.2, p < .111$ ), and concern for others ( $F(2, 343) = 2.2, p < .113$ ).



### Ideology

Participants' ideology (liberal, conservative, moderate) yielded significant differences in the dependent measures of reputation, supportive behavior, character traits, and competency traits. For reputation conservative subjects ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ) and moderate subjects ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ) evaluated the politician more favorably than liberal subjects ( $F(2, 332) = 4.4, p < .013, \underline{M} = 2.4$ ). For supportive behavior conservative subjects ( $\underline{M} = 1.9$ ) and moderate subjects ( $\underline{M} = 1.8$ ) evaluated the politician more favorably than liberal subjects ( $F(2, 331) = 6.7, p < .001, \underline{M} = 1.5$ ). For character traits conservative subjects ( $\underline{M} = 2.6$ ) and moderate subjects ( $\underline{M} = 2.6$ ) evaluated the politician more favorably than did liberal subjects ( $F(2, 332) = 6.1, p < .003, \underline{M} = 2.3$ ). For competency traits conservative subjects evaluated the politician more favorably ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ) than did liberal subjects ( $F(2, 333) = 5.2, p < .006, \underline{M} = 2.7$ ). For this dependent measure, there were no significant differences between moderate subjects and either of the other two ideologies ( $\underline{M} = 2.9$ ).

There were no significant differences in ideology for the dependent measures of account acceptance ( $F(2, 332) = 1.3, p < .269$ ) and concern for others ( $F(2, 332) = 1.8, p < .164$ ).

### Relationships between participants' gender, age, ideology, and party affiliation

A chi-square test was conducted to assess whether there were differences in expected frequencies between participants' gender and their ideology. The results of the test were significant with more females than expected classifying themselves as conservative ( $N = 107$ ) and fewer as liberal ( $N = 56$ ) than did males ( $N = 12$  conservative,  $N = 20$  liberal) ( $\chi^2(2, N = 335) = 9.3, p < .01$ ).

Chi-square tests conducted to determine any differences in expected frequencies between participants' gender and political party affiliation ( $\chi^2(2, N = 346) = 3.6, p < .164$ ), age and ideology ( $\chi^2(4, N = 336) = 8.4, p < .08$ ), and age and political party affiliation ( $\chi^2(4, N = 347) = 7.0, p < .14$ ), were not significant.

A chi-square test between participants' age and sex was significant ( $\chi^2(2, N = 348) = 6.5, p < .04$ ). There were more women than expected (N=101) and fewer men (N=12) in the group aged 18 to 19 years, and there were more men than expected (N=24) than women (N=80) in the group aged 21 to 42 years.

Also, a chi-square test was performed with participants' party affiliation and ideology. However, there were fewer than five cases in two cells, violating assumptions of chi-square analysis, so results were disregarded.

#### Identifying the scenario

When asked if the scenario involving Senator Davis reminded them of any real-life political situation, 14% (N = 51) of the subjects recalled the Trent Lott racial remarks incident. Two percent (N = 8) recounted the name Trent Lott; 7% (N = 24) specified Senator Thurmond, and 5% (N = 19) recalled both Lott and Thurmond in their answer. A chi-square test of expected frequencies between those recalling the scenario and experimental manipulation was not significant ( $\chi^2(5, N = 348) = 1.9, p < .862$ ).

#### Experimentwise Error Rate

To provide an experimentwise protection level across the set of tests conducted for this study (Steinfatt, 1979), an alpha percentage for the .05 level computed at 7.9%. Of a total of 71 tests for significance conducted, 45 in all were significant at the .05 level or higher. This means that perhaps 3.6% of the tests were significant due to a Type 1

error at the alpha of .05. However, 41 of the 45 significant tests had alphas of .04 or higher; only 4 tests were significant at the .05 level

Table 3.1  
Results of Factor Analysis of Participants' Evaluations of the Politician's Behavior

Politician's Traits	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. D Honest – Dishonest*	2.9	1.2	.77					
2. D Sincere – Insincere*	2.6	1.2	.68					
3. D Believable – Unbelievable*	2.6	1.1	.60					.30
4. Sen. Davis is basically DISHONEST.+	3.0	1.1	.73				.39	
5. I do NOT trust Sen. Davis to tell the truth about this incident.+	2.4	1.0	.70				.35	
6. Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what Sen. Davis says.+	2.6	.98	.57	.32			.35	
7. After hearing Senator Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would BELIEVE Sen. Davis.+	2.3	.84	.64		.40			
8. Say nice things about Sen. Davis to other people you knew.^	2.0	.88		.76				
9. Attend a rally designed to show support for Sen. Davis.^	1.6	.72		.87				
10. Sign a petition in support of Sen. Davis.^	1.7	.83		.86				
11. Vote for Sen. Davis when he runs for re-election.^	1.8	.85		.84				
12. After hearing Sen. Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would react FAVORABLY to Sen. Davis.+	2.0	.87			.74			
13. After hearing Sen. Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would be ACCEPTING of Sen. Davis.+	2.1	.88			.79			
14. After hearing Senator Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would be SATISFIED by Sen. Davis's statement.+	2.2	.95			.76			

Table 3.1, cont'd.  
Results of Factor Analysis of Participants' Evaluations of the Politician's Behavior

Politician's Traits	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. After hearing Sen. Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would consider Sen. Davis's statement to be APPROPRIATE.+	2.5	1.2			.70			
16. After hearing Sen. Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would react NEGATIVELY to Sen. Davis.+	2.2	.91			.72			
17. D Good – Bad*	2.4	.91		.34		.62		
18. D Likeable – Unlikeable*	2.5	.99				.63		
19. D Trustworthy – Untrustworthy*	2.4	.94	.47			.59		
20. D Ethical – Unethical*	2.3	.95				.75		
21. D Concerned – Unconcerned*	3.0	1.0				.40		
22. Sen. Davis is concerned with the WELL-BEING of the American people.+	2.7	1.0					.78	
23. Sen. Davis is NOT concerned with the well-being of the American people.+	2.9	1.0					.78	
24. D Powerful – Weak*	3.2	.91						.85
25. D Competent – Incompetent*	2.7	.90				.31		.68
26. D Intelligent – Not-Intelligent*	2.9	1.0					.42	.50
Eigenvalues			8.7	2.5	2.0	1.7	1.1	1.0
Percent Variance Explained			33.4	9.6	7.8	6.4	4.4	3.9

Table 3.1, cont'd.

Results of Factor Analysis of Participants' Evaluations of the Politician's Behavior

Notes: \* Indicates that subjects were instructed to “please circle only one number, from 1 to 5, which best describes your thoughts and feelings about *Senator Henry Davis*.”

+ Indicates that subjects were instructed to “please circle one answer which best describes your opinion of how *Senator Davis RESPONDED* to the remarks he made at the retirement celebration from the following choices: Strongly agree=SA, Agree=A, Neutral=N, Disagree=D, Strongly disagree=SD.”

^ Indicates that subjects were instructed to “please circle one answer which best describes your reaction to *Senator Davis's STATEMENT* the day after his remarks at the retirement gala: Very likely=VL, Likely=L, Neutral=N, Unlikely=U, Very unlikely=VU.”

Item #s 1, 2, 4, 5, 16, 18, 21, and 23 were reverse-scored items and were recoded for analysis. All items were scored 1-to-5, or SA-to-SD, or VL-to-VU, with 5, SA, and VL most positive.

Table 3.2

Correlations of Reputation, Supportive Behavior, Account Acceptance, Character Traits, Concern for Others, and Competency Traits

Dependent Measures	Reputation	Supportive Behavior	Account Acceptance	Character Traits	Concern for Others	Competency Traits
Reputation	---	.470*	.279*	.609*	.489*	.300*
Supportive Behavior	---	---	.296*	.583*	.441*	.330*
Account Acceptance	---	---	---	.293*	.253*	.247*
Character Traits	---	---	---	---	.543*	.485*
Concern for Others	---	---	---	---	---	.395*
Competency Traits	---	---	---	---	---	---

\*Correlation was significant at the .01 level.

Table 3.3

One-Way Analyses of Variance and Means of Manipulation Checks for Strategy and Performance History

Item and F Result	Mort+	Mort-	CA+	CA-	Bols+	Bols-	F	Sig. of F
Mort+ = Mortification/Positive; Mort- = Mortification/Negative; CA+ = Corrective Action/Positive; CA- = Corrective Action/Negative; Bols+ = Bolstering/Positive; Bols- = Bolstering/Negative								
1. Senator Davis released a statement saying that he is reversing his stance on affirmative action.	1.75	1.72	<b>4.40</b>	<b>4.32</b>	1.79	1.83	102.7	.000
2. Senator Davis's ACLU rating is 20%, a low rating compared with his colleagues in the Senate.	1.63	<b>4.33</b>	1.60	<b>4.16</b>	1.81	<b>4.24</b>	127.5	.000
3. Following his remarks at the gala, Senator Davis issued a list of his actions honoring slaves and civil rights activists.	1.72	1.71	1.83	1.60	<b>4.04</b>	<b>3.98</b>	75.1	.000
4. Following his remarks at the gala, Senator Davis released a statement clearly saying, "I apologize to anyone who was offended by my statement."	<b>4.18</b>	<b>3.89</b>	1.83	1.79	1.70	1.69	66.5	.000



Table 3.3, cont'd.

One-Way Analyses of Variance and Means of Manipulation Checks for Strategy and Performance History

Item and F Result	Mort+	Mort-	CA+	CA-	Bols+	Bols-	F	Sig. of F
5. Senator Davis's ACLU rating is 78%, a high rating compared with his colleagues in the Senate.	<b>4.32</b>	1.41	<b>4.31</b>	1.46	<b>4.37</b>	1.71	152.3	.000

Note: All items were scored using SA-to-SD. Degrees of freedom for each F test were (5, 342), except item #4, which was (5, 341). On one questionnaire, this question was left unanswered.

Table 3.4

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Evaluations of Politician by Reputation, Supportive Behavior, Account Acceptance, Character Traits, Concern for Others, and Competency Traits According to Strategy and Performance History

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
<i>Pre-Politician Opinion</i>					
Reputation	12.8	1	12.8	25.8	.000
Supportive Behavior	7.1	1	7.1	14.1	.000
Account Acceptance	.62	1	.62	1.2	.269
Character Traits	10.1	1	10.1	23.0	.000
Concern for Others	14.2	1	14.2	18.5	.000
Competency Traits	11.6	1	11.6	24.1	.000
<i>Main Effects:</i>					
<i>Strategy</i>					
Reputation	25.5	2	12.8	25.7	.000
Supportive Behavior	7.2	2	3.6	7.2	.001
Account Acceptance	2.9	2	1.4	2.9	.058
Character Traits	8.3	2	4.2	9.5	.000
Concern for Others	21.1	2	10.5	13.7	.000
Competency Traits	1.6	2	.78	1.6	.200
<i>History</i>					
Reputation	.01	1	.01	.03	.865
Supportive Behavior	2.2	1	2.2	4.5	.035
Account Acceptance	5.2	1	5.2	10.3	.000
Character Traits	7.7	1	7.7	17.5	.000

Table 3.4, cont'd.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Evaluations of Politician by Reputation, Supportive Behavior, Account Acceptance, Character Traits, Concern for Others, and Competency Traits According to Strategy and Performance History

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
<i>History, cont'd.</i>					
Concern for Others	1.1	1	1.1	1.5	.225
Competency Traits	7.6	1	7.6	15.7	.000
<u>2-Way Interactions:</u>					
Strategy*History					
Reputation	.25	2	.13	.25	.776
Supportive Behavior	.67	2	.33	.67	.514
Account Acceptance	.003	2	.002	.003	.997
Character Traits	.111	2	.06	.13	.882
Concern for Others	.07	2	.04	.05	.955
Competency Traits	1.5	2	.76	1.6	.210
<u>Multiple R Squared Values:</u>					
	R Squared				
Reputation	.194				
Supportive Behavior	.094				
Account Acceptance	.049				
Character Traits	.151				
Concern for Others	.127				
Competency Traits	.117				

## CHAPTER 4

### Discussion

This thesis sought to investigate the effects of image repair strategies and performance history on audience evaluations of a politician committing a racial remarks faux pas. This study is the first to experimentally test these effects in this particular crisis milieu. Three sets of hypotheses were presented in Chapter 1 and tested in Chapter 3; these hypotheses predicted the effects that (1) both strategy and performance history, (2) strategy, and (3) performance history would have on six dependent measures. These dependent measures were: (1) the politician's reputation, (2) the audience's supportive behavior, (3) the audience's account acceptance, (4) the politician's character traits, (5) the politician's concern for others, and (6) the politician's competency traits. In all, 18 hypotheses (three sets of six) were analyzed. Table 4.1 presents all 18 hypotheses and the results of data analysis.

Table 4.1. Summary of H1, H2, and H3 Hypotheses.

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Results</b>
H1A: Evaluations of the politician's <u>reputation</u> will be more favorable in the mortification-positive performance history condition than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition	Not supported	( $t(117) = 1.4, p < .243$ )
H1B: Evaluations of the audience's <u>supportive behavior</u> will be more favorable in the mortification-positive performance history condition than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition	Supported	( $t(117) = 6.2, p < .014$ )
H1C: Evaluations of the audience's <u>account acceptance</u> will be more favorable in the mortification-positive performance history condition than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition	Supported	( $t(117) = 6.1, p < .015$ )
H1D: Evaluations of the politician's <u>character traits</u> will be more favorable in the mortification-positive performance history condition than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition	Supported	( $t(117) = 5.1, p < .026$ )
H1E: Evaluations of the politician's <u>concern for others</u> will be more favorable in the mortification-positive performance history condition than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition	Not supported	( $t(117) = .004, p < .953$ )
H1F: Evaluations of the politician's <u>competency traits</u> will be more favorable in the mortification-positive performance history condition than in the bolstering-negative performance history condition	Not supported	( $t(117) = .30, p < .587$ )
H2A: Evaluations of the politician's <u>reputation</u> will be more positive in the mortification condition than in both the bolstering and corrective action conditions	Supported	( $F(2, 338) = 26.5, p < .000$ )
H2B: Evaluations of the audience's <u>supportive behavior</u> will be more positive in the mortification condition than in both the bolstering and corrective action conditions	Supported	( $F(2, 337) = 7.4, p < .001$ )
H2C: Evaluations of the audience's <u>account acceptance</u> will be more positive in the mortification condition than in both the bolstering and corrective action conditions	Partially Supported	( $F(2, 338) = 3.0, p < .050$ )

Table 4.1, cont'd. Summary of H1, H2, and H3 Hypotheses.

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Results</b>
H2D: Evaluations of the politician's <u>character traits</u> will be more positive in the mortification condition than in both the bolstering and corrective action conditions	Partially Supported	( $F(2, 338) = 10.0, p < .000$ )
H2E: Evaluations of the politician's <u>concern for others</u> will be more positive in the mortification condition than in both the bolstering and corrective action conditions	Partially Supported	( $F(2, 338) = 13.4, p < .000$ )
H2F: Evaluations of the politician's <u>competency traits</u> will be more positive in the mortification condition than in both the bolstering and corrective action conditions	Not supported	( $F(2, 339) = 1.7, p < .173$ )
H3A: Evaluations of the politician's <u>reputation</u> will be more favorable in the positive performance history condition than in the negative performance history condition	Not Supported	( $F(1, 338) = .050, p < .824$ )
H3B: Evaluations of the audience's <u>supportive behavior</u> will be more favorable in the positive performance history condition than in the negative performance history condition	Supported	( $F(1, 337) = 4.3, p < .039$ )
H3C: Evaluations of the audience's <u>account acceptance</u> will be more favorable in the positive performance history condition than in the negative performance history condition	Supported	( $F(1, 338) = 9.1, p < .003$ )
H3D: Evaluations of the politician's <u>character traits</u> will be more favorable in the positive performance history condition than in the negative performance history condition	Supported	( $F(1, 338) = 17.6, p < .000$ )
H3E: Evaluations of the politician's <u>concern for others</u> will be more favorable in the positive performance history condition than in the negative performance history condition	Not Supported	( $F(1, 338) = 1.7, p < .199$ )
H3F: Evaluations of the politician's <u>competency traits</u> will be more favorable in the positive performance history condition than in the negative performance history condition	Supported	( $F(1, 339) = 15.8, p < .000$ )

The following pages discuss key findings. Also, limitations of the study are addressed, and possible future research is suggested.

#### Summary of Hypotheses Test Results

It was generally hypothesized that the mortification strategy – positive performance history condition would yield more favorable audience evaluations than the bolstering strategy – negative performance history condition. It was also hypothesized that, when taken separately, the mortification strategy would yield more favorable evaluations than both the corrective action and bolstering strategies, and the positive performance history would yield more favorable evaluations than the negative performance history.

#### Strategy – Performance History Hypotheses

In this study, strategy and performance history independently affected evaluations of a politician's behavior in a faux pas involving racial remarks. Strategy or performance history had effects on evaluations of supportive behavior, account acceptance, and character traits, but none of these effects was in combination.

The dependent measure of reputation boasted some of the most interesting findings in this experiment. In many of his case studies, Benoit begins by immediately and directly addressing the notion of reputation and individuals' motivation toward repair of a tarnished image (Benoit, 1997b; Benoit & Brinson, 1999; Benoit et al., 1991; Blaney & Benoit, 2001; Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004). Thus, the dependent measure of reputation was generally believed to reveal a great deal regarding the effectiveness of image repair strategies.

There were no significant effects on the dependent measure of reputation regarding mortification strategy-positive performance history. The results of this analysis of reputation were surprising, since Benoit states that the mortification strategy is usually the most

successful recourse of action (Benoit et al., 1991; Blaney & Benoit, 2001; Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004). Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton both utilized the mortification strategy and their effort was deemed generally successful; Richard Nixon, Newt Gingrich, and Gary Condit did not use this strategy and paid dearly. But neither the strategy nor the performance history worked for the politician in this study.

Mortification is simply less effective in this crisis situation than in previous circumstances. When a politician either makes a mistake of such personal nature, or a mistake of such enormity, forgiveness is difficult to attain. Neither did Gary Condit concede wrong doing nor did he apologize, and as a result he lost his congressional seat (Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004). Moreover, Len Rios and Benoit (2004) state that Condit should have apologized, used mortification, and illustrated more contrition. Does this mean that if Condit had used these strategies he would still hold his office? Or could it be that Condit's sins were simply unforgivable and no image restoration strategy could have worked, much less helped him win re-election?

Additionally, Richard Nixon consistently hedged on the Watergate scandal, evading explanation, shifting blame, and scapegoating (Benoit, 1982). His mistakes were monumental, but when Nixon continued with his ineffective strategies, the situation mushroomed, and its enormity became irreparable. If Nixon had simply apologized and conceded wrong-doing – even from the very beginning – does Benoit contend that the President would have avoided impeachment? Or could it be that certain crises have no solution. As previously thought, the strategy of mortification does not help even the most embattled politician.



This finding brings up further questions, not the least of which is: in a crisis situation such as this, is there a more effective strategy than mortification? Only further investigation and testing could determine whether there is a more effective strategy or if mortification is the best a politician can do in a situation such as this.

In addition to reputation, the dependent measures of concern for others and competency traits also yielded no significances in the mortification strategy-positive performance history condition. According to Coombs (1999), a positive performance history should encourage the public to view this type of conflict as a faux pas – a one-time occurrence that should be generally forgivable. But this is not the case for Senator Davis' reputation, his concern for others, or his competency traits. Although the factor of performance history was thought to further substantiate the strategy of mortification, it could have appeared to some respondents as inconsistent and inexplicable: Why would a seasoned U.S. senator with a notable record on civil rights indirectly endorse an issue such as segregation? This idea is exemplified by the dependent measure of competency traits more than any other – this trait calls his judgment and intelligence into question.

Lastly, the mortification strategy-positive performance history condition *was* an effective strategy for the dependent measures of supportive behavior, account acceptance, and character traits. This is good news for politicians in their time of need. However, the mean scores for all three of these measures were the lowest throughout this entire set of a priori hypotheses, specifically the supportive behavior measure. This means of this measure ranged from 1.7 to 2.0; all other dependent measures ranged from 2.0 up to 3.1. While the strategy and/or the performance history were effective for this measure, the respondents' scores remained low, illustrating a distaste for the politician. This distaste could signal an

ultimate unwillingness to vote for, accept the account of, or perceive the politician as a man of character.

### Strategy Hypotheses

The mortification strategy was partially effective in five of six dependent measures. There is little question that a politician who makes questionable statements about issues such as civil rights should apologize and admit fault if they have offended the public. However, implicit racism is such a volatile issue that total forgiveness is difficult to attain. Moreover, mortification was, once again, not effective in evaluations of the politician's competency traits. Again, this measure deals with the notion of inconsistency – an experienced senator with a positive civil rights record speaking out on behalf of segregation may confuse the public. Senator Davis' intelligence and competency are severely compromised in the eyes of the respondents.

Another substantive finding involves the corrective action strategy in this faux pas situation. According to Benoit (1994), apologies are oftentimes not enough. In the midst of a crisis, many organizations not only need to apologize, but also take corrective action to convince the public that there will be no future recurrence. Additionally, Coombs and Schmidt (2002) tested the corrective action strategy in an organizational crisis and maintained that there is a strong need to convey to the public that steps are being taken to prevent the repeat of a crisis. Also, in this study, the corrective action and bolstering strategies had the same mean (3.14). However, in the current *political* crisis, corrective action consistently remained the lowest rated strategy throughout this set of hypotheses; respondents found this strategy to be the overall, least effective. Thus, the research question (do the same image repair strategies work as effectively for politicians as they do for

organizations?) begins to be answered. Based on this experiment, corrective action does not work as well for the politician as it has, in the past, for organizations and corporations. When devising responses after a volatile political crisis, this particular strategy should not be seen as an effective recourse of action.

### Performance History Hypotheses

Surprisingly, a positive performance history was not always more effective than a negative performance history. Regarding the dependent measures of reputation and concern for others, there were no differences. Previous research has revealed a negative perception of reputation when an organization has maintained a negative performance history instead of a positive or even neutral performance history (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). This negative attachment to crisis situations is termed the “velcro effect” by Coombs and Holladay (2001, p. 335). But the velcro does not seem to be sticking to Senator Davis when the public judges his reputation and concern for others.

From his speech, the Senator could be perceived as a man who disregards other people. No matter what meaning his words intended, they were probably better left unsaid. Thus, considering his apparent disregard for the feelings of other, marginal groups of people, it would seem logical that his concern for others is not affected by *even* a positive performance history on civil rights.

The questions that comprised the dependent measure of reputation dealt specifically with trust, honesty, and the respondents’ propensity to believe Senator Davis. This could explain why a positive performance history had no effect on the politician’s reputation. Recalling the notion of inconsistency, it would seem more difficult to believe someone such as Senator Davis, who makes contradictory statements. This contradictory nature could

contribute to the lack of a velcro effect (Coombs & Holladay, 2001) on the politician's reputation.

Additionally, this politician's past record on civil rights is similar to what Coombs and Holladay (2001) term relationship history. In dealing with a crisis, Coombs and Holladay (2001) found that, compared with *crisis* history, relationship history accounts for three times the variance for evaluations of reputation of organizations in a crisis. In this study, organizations with positive or unknown relationship histories were given the benefit of the doubt and were viewed more positively (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). This directly contradicts the politician's crisis situation; relationship history is not having an effect in this crisis milieu.

#### How Would a Crisis Manager Advise a Politician?

With this crisis situation in mind – and based on the claims made by outside groups regarding the incident – a faux pas crisis situation exists (see Table 1.3, Coombs' Matrix of Crisis Types). The politician's performance history on this issue will not be as important as the response strategy employed. Keeping *only* strategy in mind, to maintain reputation, character traits, perceived concern for others, the public's supportive behavior, and their account acceptance, the politician should apologize and admit fault. However, this strategy will not win back the politician's perceived competency and intelligence in the eyes of the public. Mortification will help repair the image – but it will not restore the image to its previous state (Burns & Bruner, 2000). From this point forward the public's perception of the politician's judgment will be somewhat compromised.

Moreover, some crisis situations involving political issues may be unforgivable, and a possible racist view of civil rights could be one of these issues. Thus, further substantiating

the strategy of mortification may assist in repair of the image. The politician should use the news media as a vehicle to convey sincerity and contrition. Additionally, the strategy and the message should be consistent, especially since the opposing political party may try and keep the crisis in the news for as long as possible (Benoit, 1997b). The politician should not become overwhelmed by the controversy and take corrective action. Utilizing the strategies of mortification and bolstering in combination would be effective, but in this type of political crisis, corrective action would backfire; based on this experiment, attempting to win favor with the public and civil rights groups by changing stances on a pertinent issue (such as affirmative action) would only dissatisfy the public further.

#### Effects of Age and Gender

Subjects were evenly divided into three age groups (aged 18-19; aged 20; aged 21-42) for analysis of the dependent measures. The older group, consisting of seniors and graduate students, evaluated the politician more favorably regarding his character traits and his concern for others. Research has shown that there are distinct “generational cohorts” that display different value priorities (Schnell & McConatha, 1996, p. 289); this could be one explanation as to why the older age group evaluated the politician more favorably on these dependent measures.

Additionally, gender was a factor in this experiment. Men evaluated the politician more favorably in the measures of supportive behavior and concern for others. This could be explained by previous research regarding women’s political beliefs. Women tend to be more liberal, they identify more with the Democratic Party, and a higher number of women vote for Democratic presidential candidates than for Republican candidates (Kaufman, 2004). Thus, women would be more critical of a politician caught in a crisis of this nature.

However, a chi-square analysis of ideology and gender revealed that more female subjects classified themselves as conservative (N = 107) than liberal (N = 56) versus their male counterparts (N = 12 conservative, N = 20 liberal). This conflicting result could be attributed to the young age ( $M = 20.2$ ) of the subjects; their political leanings could still be intertwined with those of their parents, and the parents could classify themselves as conservative. Also, this finding could be due to the strong tie that this area of the country has with the conservative, Republican Party, especially in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.

Additionally, research has shown a generational difference in the way that men and women view political issues, such as civil rights. An experiment conducted by Howell and Day (2000) found that, “women who entered adulthood after the social movements of the 1950s and 1960s are more likely to differ from their male peers on racial issues than are women who were born earlier in the century” (p. 870). The study found that these younger women were more supportive than men (and older women) of issues that dealt with civil rights and race.

### Limitations of the Study

#### Reliability

Reliability is achieved when a measure consistently gives the same answer (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Cronbach’s alpha, a measure of internal consistency, was used to determine the reliability of measures in this experiment. Alpha coefficients on all six dependent measure indices ranged from moderate (.67) to very strong (.92). Some of the reliabilities for scales used in this study were higher than they were in previous research

which tested the same dependent variables (reputation, supportive behavior, and account acceptance).

#### Internal and external validity

Validity is achieved when a measuring device measures what it is supposed to measure (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). The content validity of this experiment was achieved by submitting the measure to the scrutiny of experts within the field. Additionally, the dependent variable scales for this experiment were drawn from relevant literature and based on scales used in previous experiments which measured similar constructs. The structure of the experiment was derived from a recent political crisis case study (Sheldon, 2006), and the experimental manipulation was directly modeled after actual newspaper accounts of this crisis situation. The manipulation items were reviewed by academics who have conducted numerous, similar tests.

The construct validity of this experiment was achieved by utilizing items that were successfully employed in previous studies. Additionally, correlations between all the dependent variables were significant (all  $p < .01$ ).

Benoit frequently attempts to make predictions based on single case studies, but the superior method by which to make crisis response predictions is the experimental study (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). Moreover, experiments can often control for threats of internal and external validity, thus, the experimental design was selected for this thesis research (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). External validity refers to how well a study can be generalized across populations, settings, and time (Cook & Campbell, 1979). This experiment incorporated random assignment, one suggestion for eliminating external invalidity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Additionally, the experiment used a covariate measure in

data analysis as a pretest to compensate for any participants' existing attitudes regarding politicians, supplementing the effects of random assignment (Kennedy & Bush, 1985). Further, numbers were successfully randomly assigned when chi-square analyses were run with the experimental manipulations and the age groups and the recollection of the scenario.

There were potential threats to internal validity in this experiment. It can be argued that the use of a homogeneous sample of undergraduate students is not generalizable to the public at large. However, this was the most efficient method to recruit the sample. Additionally, Sallot (2002) found in an experiment with 585 subjects, half students and the other half non-students, that there were no differences between the two groups. Coombs (1998) and his colleagues (e.g. Coombs & Holladay, 1996) have also used student populations in experiments. Coombs and Schmidt (2000) noted that:

Neither a single case study nor a single experimental study using students is perfect for assessing image restoration strategies. Although not perfect, the experimental design gives us greater control over the factors and a clearer picture of the effect image response strategies have on people than does the single case study – it provides stronger evidence for drawing causal inferences. (p. 174)

### Implications for Political Communication Research

Generally, this research set out to answer the question: which crisis response strategies are most effective for politicians? With each case study, experiment, survey, or focus group, the answers become clearer. By questioning and testing the current theories, practitioners and politicians can make better, more informed decisions regarding the most effective ways to communicate with the public during a crisis.



Politics personal and voting is even more personal. We hold our candidates and political representatives to a high standard. As such, politicians should know the expectations of the public and be willing to communicate with the public to that extent. Politicians should be willing to tell the truth, admit fault, reassure the public of their stance on issues, remind the public why they are in office, and pledge to live up to certain standards.

However, based on the research there is good and bad news for the politician-in-crisis. The good news is, as illustrated by this experiment, strategies and tactics can indeed improve a tarnished image. Unfortunately, though, not all of the aspects of forgiveness can be attained. For instance, apologizing and admitting fault (mortification) may win the public's acceptance of your account and their supportive behavior, but it may not reinstate a reputation. A damaged politician may never fully recover from a crisis. Perhaps, it is only possible to repair the reputation and move on with a new public image (Burns & Bruner, 2000).

Moreover, further research should be conducted to answer more questions regarding the fate of politicians and effects of the communication strategies they choose in the midst of a crisis. As previously thought, the strategy of mortification is not always effective. Perhaps pairing this strategy with other, victim-oriented strategies will increase effectiveness. Or, perhaps, there are just some crisis situations from which politicians cannot successfully emerge.

Critics and researchers would probably all agree to the answer of the research question: do the same strategies work as effectively for politicians as they do for organizations? As determined in this experiment, apparently not. It does not help a politician

to change his or her stance on an issue in the middle of a crisis, perhaps because their credibility is already compromised in the eyes of the public – and this sort of corrective action further compromises that credibility. So, where does one go from here?

### Future Research and Conclusions

The present research is offered as a potential starting point for a thoroughly tested and exhaustive model of political crisis communication. Benoit's typology may include all the strategies and tactics necessary for crisis situations – even in the political realm – but without precise testing and experimentation we have no accurate, predictive value to offer crisis managers. This research method and design could be used to continue testing other political crisis situations; the results of subsequent testing could be compiled toward a political crisis model for more prescriptive, detailed use by crisis managers. Further testing situations could include senators, members of the House of Representatives, former and current presidents, and even state and local officials. This potential crisis model could include different levels of government cross referenced with crisis type to yield the most effective strategies.

Additionally, experimental design could be used to further test the effects of different manipulations, such as political blogs. When Trent Lott delivered his racial remarks speech in 2002, the issue was at first lost in the monotony of C-SPAN and the questionable newsworthiness of the incident. Ultimately, Lott's speech was kept alive by numerous bloggers, determined to bring the situation to the country's attention (Grossman, Hamilton, Buechner, & Whitaker, 2004). Compared with other types of traditional media, how powerful have blogs become in raising awareness of political issues? Does crisis reporting on a blog (such

as the Trent Lott incident) serve as an indicator of larger problems to come? Only future research will tell.

These issues are just the beginning of possible experimentation regarding political image repair. In the fluid world of politics where day to day operations change before the press secretary hits the “send” button, identifying your situation and knowing your strategy can mean the difference between majority leader and early retirement. Some politicians may never recover from a crisis, and some may emerge changed, but not destroyed. But by knowing what the public wants – and expects – to hear, crisis managers can maximize and cultivate a better relationship between the public and its elected official.

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## APPENDIX ITEM A

### Political Crisis Response Survey

January 2006

You are invited to participate in the research study, "Political Crisis Messages," conducted by Cassie A. Sheldon, an M.A. candidate in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, under the direction of Lynne M. Sallot, Ph.D., Department of Advertising and Public Relations, phone 542.4999. This survey is for Ms. Sheldon's thesis, and results may be published.

The following questionnaire seeks to gather information and develop a greater understanding regarding the effects of message responses in political crisis situations.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous. No names or any other identifying information will be written on any of the questionnaires. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without any consequences to your grade or class standing. You may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

In order to make this study a valid one, some information about your participation will be withheld until completion of the study. Participation in the experiment will take approximately 20 minutes. Neither discomfort nor stress is foreseen, and no risk exists. This may be an enjoyable experience.

Completing this questionnaire will indicate your consent to participate in this project. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask them now or at a later date. Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Cassie A. Sheldon  
M.A. Candidate, Public Relations  
Grady College of Journalism & Mass Communication  
University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30602  
csheldon@uga.edu  
706.254.4083

**Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Dr. Benilda P. Pooser, Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.**



**Section I.** Please answer the following questions by circling either “Yes” or “No.”

1. I am registered to vote.

Yes                  No

2. I was eligible to vote in the last presidential election.

Yes                  No

3. I voted in the last presidential election.

Yes                  No

4. I have voted in local and/or state elections.

Yes                  No

5. I have put political bumper stickers on my car and/or displayed political signs where I live.

Yes                  No

6. I have contributed money to a political candidate.

Yes                  No

7. I have contacted (via phone, email, etc.) a politician’s office to express my concern or opinion regarding an issue.

Yes                  No

8. I have worked as a campaign volunteer for a political candidate.

Yes                  No

9. I have attended a meeting or rally in support of a political candidate or political issue.

Yes                  No

10. I have called in to a radio or television show to discuss a politician or a political topic.

Yes                  No

11. I have written a letter to the editor of a newspaper to discuss a politician or political topic.

Yes                  No

12. I have visited a political Web site to learn more about a candidate or a cause.

Yes                  No

**Section II.** For all questions in this section, please circle one answer from the following choices: Strongly agree = SA, Agree = A, Neutral = N, Disagree = D, Strongly disagree = SD. Please answer each question as accurately as possible.

1. My parents are very involved with politics.

SA                  A                  N                  D                  SD

2. I am very involved with politics.

SA                  A                  N                  D                  SD

3. When it is an election year, I pay close attention to all the candidates so I can make the best decision at the ballot box.

SA                  A                  N                  D                  SD

4. There are political issues (i.e., health care, the war in Iraq, education, taxes) about which I care deeply.

SA                  A                  N                  D                  SD

5. Someday, I hope to work in politics or a related field.

SA                  A                  N                  D                  SD

6. Someday, I hope to run for a political office.

SA                  A                  N                  D                  SD

**Section III.** In this section, please indicate how you think and feel about *POLITICIANS* in general. On each line, please circle only one number, from 1 to 5, which best describes your thoughts and feelings about *POLITICIANS* in general.

Good	5	4	3	2	1	Bad
Unlikeable	5	4	3	2	1	Likeable
Powerful	5	4	3	2	1	Weak
Competent	5	4	3	2	1	Incompetent
Dishonest	5	4	3	2	1	Honest
Trustworthy	5	4	3	2	1	Untrustworthy
Ethical	5	4	3	2	1	Unethical
Insincere	5	4	3	2	1	Sincere
Believable	5	4	3	2	1	Unbelievable
Unconcerned	5	4	3	2	1	Concerned
Intelligent	5	4	3	2	1	Not-Intelligent

**Section IV.** For all questions in this section, please circle one answer from the following choices: Strongly agree = SA, Agree = A, Neutral = N, Disagree = D, Strongly disagree = SD. You will answer each question three times. The first, or item “a,” is your opinion of yourself; the second, or item “b,” asks your opinion of a majority of people; the third, or item “c,” asks your opinion of politicians. Work your way across the page. Remember, there is no right or wrong answer; your first thought is what we want.

1a. I will tell a lie if I can get away with it.  
SA A N D SD

1b. A majority of people will tell a lie if they can get away with it.  
SA A N D SD

1c. Politicians will tell a lie if they can get away with it.  
SA A N D SD

2a. By nature, I am an honest person.  
SA A N D SD

2b. By nature, a majority of people are honest.  
SA A N D SD

2c. By nature, politicians are honest people.  
SA A N D SD

3a. I will do anything to get out of trouble.  
SA A N D SD

3b. A majority of people will do anything to get out of trouble.  
SA A N D SD

3c. Politicians will do anything to get out of trouble.  
SA A N D SD

4a. I would rather cover up the truth than admit fault.  
SA A N D SD

4b. A majority of people would rather cover up the truth than admit fault.  
SA A N D SD

4c. Politicians would rather cover up the truth than admit fault.  
SA A N D SD

5a. I am an ethical person.  
SA A N D SD

5b. A majority of people are ethical.  
SA A N D SD

5c. Politicians are ethical people.  
SA A N D SD

6a. I would never change my ideas or opinions in order to please other people.  
SA A N D SD

6b. A majority of people would never change their ideas or opinions in order to please other people.  
SA A N D SD

6c. Politicians would never change their ideas or opinions in order to please other people.  
SA A N D SD

7a. I tell small, white lies.  
SA A N D SD

7b. A majority of people tell small, white lies.  
SA A N D SD

7c. Politicians tell small, white lies.  
SA A N D SD

8a. If my job were at stake, I would do anything to salvage it.  
SA A N D SD

8b. If their job were at stake, a majority of people would do anything to salvage it.  
SA A N D SD

8c. If their job were at stake, politicians would do anything to salvage it.  
SA A N D SD

9a. I really care about other people.  
SA A N D SD

9b. A majority of people really care about other people.  
SA A N D SD

9c. Politicians really care about other people.  
SA A N D SD

10a. I hold politicians to a high standard.  
SA A N D SD

10b. A majority of people hold politicians to a high standard.  
SA A N D SD

10c. Politicians hold themselves to a high standard.  
SA A N D SD

**For the NEXT SECTION,**

**You will be reading a newspaper article about a politician who finds himself in a crisis situation, based on remarks he made at a colleague's retirement celebration.**

**Please read the article carefully. You will be asked to recall some details.**

**You may NOT TURN BACK to the newspaper article or pages you have already completed.**

**Now please turn to the next page which contains the article.**

**Remember, DO NOT TURN BACK to look at pages you have already completed.**

**DO NOT LOOK BACK**

**Section V.** DO NOT LOOK BACK AT PREVIOUS PAGES! Please answer the following questions by circling one answer from the following choices: Strongly agree = SA, Agree = A, Neutral = N, Disagree = D, Strongly disagree = SD.

1. Senator Henry Davis made questionable remarks at the retirement celebration of his colleague, Senator Waterton.

SA            A            N            D            SD

2. Senator Waterton was an avowed segregationist in the 1950s and 1960s and ran for president as a third-party candidate in 1964.

SA            A            N            D            SD

3. The audience fell silent at one point during Senator Davis' speech in tribute to Senator Waterton.

SA            A            N            D            SD

4. Senator Davis released a statement saying that he is reversing his stance on affirmative action.

SA            A            N            D            SD

5. Senator Davis's ACLU rating is 20%, a low rating compared with his colleagues in the Senate.

SA            A            N            D            SD

6. Following his remarks at the gala, Senator Davis issued a list of his actions honoring slaves and civil rights activists.

SA            A            N            D            SD

7. Following his remarks at the gala, Senator Davis released a statement clearly saying, "I apologize to anyone who was offended by my statement."

SA            A            N            D            SD

8. Senator Davis's ACLU rating is 78%, a high rating compared with his colleagues in the Senate.

SA            A            N            D            SD

**DO NOT LOOK BACK**

**DO NOT LOOK BACK**

**Section VI. DO NOT LOOK BACK AT PREVIOUS PAGES!** In this section, please indicate how you think and feel about ***SENATOR HENRY DAVIS***. Please circle only one number, from 1 to 5, which best describes your thoughts and feelings about ***SENATOR HENRY DAVIS***.

Good	5	4	3	2	1	Bad
Unlikeable	5	4	3	2	1	Likeable
Powerful	5	4	3	2	1	Weak
Competent	5	4	3	2	1	Incompetent
Dishonest	5	4	3	2	1	Honest
Trustworthy	5	4	3	2	1	Untrustworthy
Ethical	5	4	3	2	1	Unethical
Insincere	5	4	3	2	1	Sincere
Believable	5	4	3	2	1	Unbelievable
Unconcerned	5	4	3	2	1	Concerned
Intelligent	5	4	3	2	1	Not-Intelligent

**DO NOT LOOK BACK**

**DO NOT LOOK BACK**

**Section VII. DO NOT LOOK BACK AT PREVIOUS PAGES!** In this section, you will be asked to rate how much you *AGREE* or *DISAGREE* with the following statements based on the previous newspaper article. For all questions in this section, please circle one answer which best describes your opinion of how *Senator Davis RESPONDED* to the remarks he made at the retirement celebration from the following choices: Strongly agree=SA, Agree=A, Neutral=N, Disagree=D, Strongly disagree=SD.

1. Senator Davis is concerned with the WELL-BEING of the American people.

SA            A            N            D            SD

2. Senator Davis is basically DISHONEST.

SA            A            N            D            SD

3. I do NOT trust Senator Davis to tell the truth about this incident.

SA            A            N            D            SD

4. Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what Senator Davis says.

SA            A            N            D            SD

5. Senator Davis is NOT concerned with the well-being of the American people.

SA            A            N            D            SD

6. After hearing Senator Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would react FAVORABLY to Senator Davis.

SA            A            N            D            SD

7. After hearing Senator Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would be ACCEPTING of Senator Davis.

SA            A            N            D            SD

8. After hearing Senator Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would be SATISFIED by Senator Davis's statement.

SA            A            N            D            SD

**DO NOT LOOK BACK**



**DO NOT LOOK BACK**

9. After hearing Senator Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would consider Senator Davis's statement to be APPROPRIATE.

SA            A            N            D            SD

10. After hearing Senator Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would BELIEVE Senator Davis.

SA            A            N            D            SD

11. After hearing Senator Davis's statement the day after his remarks at the retirement gala, the public would react NEGATIVELY to Senator Davis.

SA            A            N            D            SD

**Section VIII. DO NOT LOOK BACK AT PREVIOUS PAGES!** In this section, you will be asked to rate how **LIKELY** you would be to do each of the following four items based on the previous newspaper article. For all questions in this section, please circle the one answer which best describes your reaction to **SENATOR DAVIS' STATEMENT** the day after his remarks at the retirement gala: Very likely=VL, Likely=L, Neutral=N, Unlikely=U, Very unlikely=VU.

12. Say nice things about Senator Davis to other people.

VL            L            N            U            VU

13. Attend a rally designed to show support for Senator Davis.

VL            L            N            U            VU

14. Sign a petition in support of Senator Davis.

VL            L            N            U            VU

15. Vote for Senator Davis when he runs for re-election.

VL            L            N            U            VU

**DO NOT LOOK BACK**



**DO NOT LOOK BACK**

**Disclaimer:**

**Please note that the newspaper article you read,  
including all details such as the circumstances  
and all the persons described in it,  
are entirely fictitious.**

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.**

**PLEASE HAND IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE  
AS DIRECTED BY THE SURVEY ADMINISTRATOR.**

**DO NOT LOOK BACK**

## APPENDIX ITEM B

### Experimental Manipulation Newspaper Stories

News | Opinions | Sports | Arts & Livings | Classifieds | Jobs | Cars | Real Estate

## **Davis Decried for Remarks at Waterton's Retirement Gala**

**Senator Says "I'm Sorry"; Achieves 78% ACLU Rating**

*By Howard Merck*

Staff Writer

Wednesday, April 21, 2000; 1:18 PM

U.S. Sen. Henry Davis has provoked criticism by saying the United States would be a better place if Sen. Donald Waterton had won the presidency in 1964.

Davis made the statement at a gala luncheon in the Capitol commemorating Waterton's retirement. Waterton was the controversial presidential candidate who avidly opposed civil rights legislation during the divisive decade of desegregation.

"When Donald Waterton ran for president, I voted for him, and I'm proud of it. If the rest of the country had followed suit, perhaps we wouldn't have had certain problems over all these years," stated Sen. Davis to the more than 200 government officials gathered to pay tribute to Waterton.

Waterton, an avowed segregationist during the 1950s and 1960s, carried six states and 26 percent of the popular vote as a third-party candidate in the 1964 presidential election.

"All the laws of Washington cannot force desegregation of our homes, our schools, our churches," Waterton declared during his 1964 campaign against President Lyndon Johnson, a staunch supporter of civil rights legislation.

"I could not believe I was hearing those words," stated Rep. Marcus Ponder, a leader of the civil rights movement in the 1960s reacting to C-SPAN's live telecast of Davis's remarks.

"In 1964 Waterton was one of the unyielding proponents of segregation in our country," said Ponder. "Is Davis now saying that the country should have voted to continue segregation?"

In addition to the government officials attending the retirement party were many Waterton family members, friends, and past and present staffers.

Many of the guests stood and applauded when Davis said he was proud of his 1964 vote for Waterton.

But when Davis said, “We wouldn’t have had certain problems over all these years,” the crowd fell silent.

Amid heated criticism the next day, Sen. Davis released a statement saying, “I am sorry that my poor choice of words conveyed to some the impression that I embrace the discarded policies of the past.

“Nothing could be further from the truth, and I apologize to anyone who was offended by my statement.”

Since the late 1960s, Davis has gradually supported civil rights positions. This past fall, the senator lobbied vigorously for additional grant monies for states to invest in minority nursing and medical school programs.

Additionally, the senator this year achieved an American Civil Liberties Union rating of 78%, an above-average rating compared with his colleagues in the Senate.

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Senator Says "I'm Sorry"; 20% ACLU Rating Stands

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In the mid-1990s, Davis was censured after disclosures that he had been a speaker at meetings of the Council of Citizens, an organization formed to succeed the segregationist White Citizens’ Councils of the 1960s.

Additionally, Davis’s American Civil Liberties Union rating is currently 20%, one of the lower, failing grades on civil rights issues in the Senate.

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Statement Lists Support for Minorities; Achieves 78% ACLU Rating

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A three-page list of the senator’s legislative achievements on behalf of minorities accompanied the statement. The list included Davis’s vote to support a congressional medal of honor for Rosa Parks, his chairmanship of task forces to pay tribute to slaves who built the Capitol and a day honoring minority World War II veterans.

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