

CHRISTIAN, CONSERVATIVE, REPUBLICAN: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF
FORMER VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE'S IMAGE REPAIR STRATEGIES
BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

by

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DEDICATION

To my Nana, Rita Kay Godwin Shires, and my mom, Lisa Marie Shires Cole Saenz.

Thank you for encouraging me to always stay strong and persevere when faced with the greatest of challenges.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Pence's Image Conundrum

Walking out on the stage on day three of the 2016 Republican National Convention, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan had an important task at hand, to introduce the 2016 Republican nominee for Vice President, Indiana Governor Mike Pence. Ryan spent roughly two minutes talking about their work history together in the House of Representatives, Pence's accomplishments both as a representative and also as governor, the conservative principles Pence stands for, as well as brief remarks about his family. Upon welcoming Pence to the stage, the crowd again erupted, bursting into chants of "Mike! Mike! Mike!" as Pence approached the microphone (Crowd members, 2016, as cited in Pence, 2016).

After accepting the party's nomination Pence thanked Ryan "for that gracious welcome" before telling the crowd, "but Paul knows me well and the introduction I prefer is just a little shorter" (Pence, 2016). As part of a hallmark of his speeches Pence then provided his preferred short introduction telling the audience "I am a Christian, a Conservative, and a Republican. In that order" (Pence, 2016). Due to the self-introduction, several people viewed Donald Trump's choice of Pence to be Trump's running mate as politically savvy because it brought "discipline, experience in government, conservative principles, and credibility among Christian evangelicals" to the ticket (Jacobs, 2016). Indeed, from congressional speeches on the floor of the House to vice presidential campaign speeches, Pence often utilized this tagline to influence voters on how they should perceive Pence's image. For Pence, if there were any questions as to

what motivated Pence to engage in certain behaviors one only needed to rely on the tagline to understand Pence's justification.

However, it seems counterproductive for a self-proclaimed Christian to join a ticket with Donald Trump while people talked about contradictions in both supporting Trump and being a Christian (Meza, 2017; Pieper 2019). However, for the Indiana governor who had long been viewed as a potential Republican candidate for president, the end goal was to never be just Donald Trump's vice president. Rather, Pences saw his selection to serve as Trump's vice president as a part of God's plan, with the plan ultimately leading Pence to become president himself (Coppins, 2018; Varvel, 2017). In fact, before announcing his running mate, Donald Trump stated that he would "want someone who could help me with governing" and that he wanted "somebody that's political, because I want to get lots of great legislation we all want passed," (Trump, 2016, as cited in Kopan, 2016). Based on these expectations it could be implied that whoever Trump picked to be his running mate could possibly be one of the most active vice presidents in the history of the United States (Trump, 2016, as cited in Kopan, 2016.). As a result of this more active approach to the vice presidency, Pence could add a great deal of national executive experience to his resume should Pence announce his own candidacy.

Yet even if Pence's ultimate goal is to be president, his actions as vice president seem to counter this point. Throughout the four years Mike Pence served as our nation's vice president, Pence had been presented multiple attempts to replace President Trump and secure the presidency for himself, even once during the lead up to the 2016 general elections. However, for the former Chair of the House Republican Conference keeping intra-party fights away from the party had been a theme of Pence's political career. For

example, while most leaders in the Republican Party were open about their endorsement of or opposition towards Trump, Indiana Governor Mike Pence had a different strategy.

On April 29, 2016, in an interview with WIBC in Indianapolis, Governor Pence was asked who he planned on voting for in the Indiana Republican Primary that was scheduled to take place four days later. For the self-proclaimed Christian, Conservative, and Republican, in that order, the choice between endorsing the most likely Republican candidate or endorsing a candidate with a more similar political ideology would require a nimble tightrope walking across the growing fissure of Republican politics. The task for Mike Pence was clear: should the governor endorse Donald Trump he risked alienating himself against Ted Cruz and others within the Never Trump Movement, should Pence align himself with Ted Cruz he could have gambled away the prospect of a cabinet position under a potential Trump administration. In his response Mike Pence did both stating:

Now, I have met with all three of the candidates as of about Tuesday of this week. And I want to say, I like and respect all three of the Republican candidates in the field. I particularly want to commend Donald Trump, who I think has given voice to the frustration of millions of working Americans with a lack of progress in Washington, D.C. And I'm also particularly grateful that Donald Trump has taken a strong stand for Hoosier jobs when we saw jobs in the Carrier company abruptly announce leaving Indiana not for another state but for Mexico. I'm grateful for his voice in the national debate. Let me say, I've come to my decision about

who I'm supporting and I'm not against anybody, but I will be voting for

Ted Cruz in the upcoming Republican primary (as cited in Glueck, 2016).

This wishy-washy approach to not fully endorsing Trump but instead giving him praise for his policy standpoints worked in Pence's favor. When he introduced his running mate, presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump stated that he learned of "the turnaround and strength of Indiana... when Governor Pence, under tremendous pressure from establishment people endorsed somebody else, but it was more like an endorsement for me" and further claimed "it was the single greatest non-endorsement I've ever received" (Trump, 2016). Even before he officially entered the 2016 general election race Pence was concerned with the public's perception of his image and what his future within the Republican Party would be. William Benoit's Image Repair Theory (IRT) becomes a point of reference that may help to explain why Mike Pence would use rhetorical tactics to maintain a positive perception with voters and what those tactics would look like.

Prior Research

Vice Presidential Rhetoric

Before this research can advance any further, there has to be some establishment of rhetorical expectations for the vice president that may guide Pence's approach to using image repair tactics. After the 1976 election of President Jimmy Carter and Vice President Walter Mondale, the trend of the vice president obtaining more executive power was established. As a result in this shift in power, there became an increase in the exposure of the vice president to the American audience (Blakemore, 2020). Despite this exposure communication research on vice presidential rhetoric is limited. Currently most

research focuses on vice presidents as candidates, with an extensive amount of that research surrounding performances during national debates.

However, in one study Bostdorf (1991) argued that the communicative nature of the president and vice president fits within the dichotomy of masculine and feminine styles, even going as far as to say that “presidential and vice-presidential candidates enter into a commitment of marriage as the first and second officers of the nation” (p. 4). For example, the president engages in more masculine traits: "strong, independent, aggressive, confident, and individualist," while the vice president engages in more feminine traits: "weak, dependent, passive, easily intimidated, and subservient” (Bostdorf, 1991, p. 3). Further Bostdorf (1991) contended that on the spectrum of dramatism, tragedy and comedy, the presidency takes on the role of tragedy while the vice presidency takes on the dramatic form of comedy. In tragedy, the actor's character flaws are responsible for any heinous acts committed and then must be held liable for their actions. Within the elements tragedy, the actor controls their situation. However, within the comedic frame the actor is controlled by the situation. As a result, Americans expect that the president should "control the events of our country, not vice versa" (Bostdorf, 1991, p. 6).

Moreover, Bostdorf (1991) argued that the president "possess[es] unique character traits that set them apart" and often voters blame or praise the president depending on the perceived projection of the nation. However, the vice president is constrained by and operates under the "political traditions and presidents they serve" (Bostdorf, 1991, p. 7). Additionally, Bostdorf (1991) argued that as the vice president assumes that role, they begin to lose their individual identity as it merges as a part of the administration they

serve. Unsurprisingly with this loss of individual identity and due to the actor being controlled by the situation, the vice president will be confronted at some point during their tenure to support propositions they once opposed. As a result Bostdorf (1991) summarized that "the vice president, much like comedy makes such sins inevitable" (p. 7). In other words, because the vice president is an embodiment of the comedic genre they will inevitably face a situation where they are forced to support once opposed policies. However, presidents do not face similar constraints because it is their policies that are expected to control the situation.

Presidential Policy Taking

While the purpose of this thesis is to examine vice presidential rhetoric, that research would be incomplete without also examining how a president approaches stances in policy. More specifically, in understanding how two people from the same party will inevitably force the vice president to change stances on policy there has to be an understanding on what shapes presidential policy taking. Doing so will help to establish the type(s) of audience(s) that the vice president might engage with. Eshbaugh-Soha & Rottinghaus (2013) argue that there are two models of representation: the centralist and partisan model. The centralist model holds "that presidents are highly responsive to national mood", "respond to the national public concerns about foreign and economic issues", and "respond to national public preferences conditionally, by issue area, popularity, and the president's electoral cycle". On the other hand, it is argued that the partisan model of representation "holds that presidents must consider they partisan's policy preference to win their party's nomination". Furthermore, "the president's success in Congress is predicated on party control", that the party predicts how central the

president can be, and the party contributes to public opinion on “presidential representation”. Using data from Presidents George W. H. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, Eshbaugh-Soha & Rottinghaus (2013) concluded these presidents operated more in the partisan model.

The initial thought may be that a vice president's initial hesitation to endorse policies the president is promoting because they are a product of centralist model. However, because of the findings of Eshbaugh-Soha & Rottinghaus (2013) it should be further examined why a vice president may be initially opposed to policy based on the partisan model. Bitecofer (2020) argued that some presidential candidates pick their vice president as a way to balance the ticket. Essentially presidential candidates pick an individual that could help mend any residual intra-party primary conflicts during the general election. In doing so, the president could pick an individual who is either more moderate or more extreme versus the general views of the party. While it is inevitable for all vice presidents to support policy they once opposed driven by the president, reflective of a more partisan representative model, it also then becomes inevitable for all vice presidents to have dissenting views of their party, or vice versa. Thus, these two models and their implications on the switches in policies by vice presidents suggest there are three competing audience members the vice presidents could address: (1) members of the party that are driving the president's policy views, (2) the remaining members of the party, (3) independent, or swing, voters. The perception of these three types of audience members towards a former vice president's image will be critical in establishing credibility amongst voters in a primary election. Having now an understanding of how vice presidents, aspiring to be president, can use image repair strategies to improve

administration and individual images amongst three different audiences, the focus now turns to Benoit (1995) commutative theory.

Literature Review

Image Repair Theory (IRT)

In 1995 William Benoit first introduced the concept of image restoration theory to describe the rhetoric of an individual attempting to shift public perceptions of the individual, organization, and/or administration in a more positive light despite accusations of wrongdoing. In 2000 Benoit (2000) updated his theory by replacing the word restoration with repair, explaining that “restoration might imply that one’s image has been restored to its prior state. Sometimes one must settle for repairs (or ‘patches’)” (p. 40). As such, while this literature review focuses on the foundational work of Benoit’s theory in *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies* (1995), this section will substitute Benoit’s use of image restoration theory with the current iteration, image repair theory.

Foundations of IRT

When William Benoit introduced the theory of image repair in 1995, Benoit explained that in constructing the theory he relied on four different approaches to image repair discourse: “Rosenfield’s analog, Ware and Linkugel’s theory of apologia, Burke’s writings on purification, and Ryan’s kategoria-apologia” (Benoit, 1995, p.9). In discussing Rosenfield’s theory Benoit stated that of the four qualities of apologetic discourse that Rosenfield mentioned that only factor that gave a specific strategy for rhetorical discourse was the second factor of “attacks on the opponent” (Benoit, 1995, p.11). Benoit stated that with the emergence of Ware and Linkugel’s theory of apologia, Rosenfield’s analog started to fall out of academic circulation.

Ware and Linkugel's theory highlighted four different rhetorical self-defense strategies: denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence. When a rhetorician engages in denial, they offer either a "simple disavowal" or try to mitigate the impacts of the offense by "claiming that the act was performed with good intentions" (Benoit, 1995 p. 12; Ware & Linkugel, 1973, p. 276). Ware and Linkugel's factor of bolstering consisted of the speaker focusing not on the cause of the speaker's imagery issues, but rather the rhetorician "attempts to counterbalance or offset the audience's displeasure by associating the speaker with a different object or action" (Benoit, 1995, p.12). The ultimate goal by the speaker using bolstering is to generate a positive perception that counterbalances those negative perceptions at the heart of the speaker's unfavorable image. In the third self-defense strategy a rhetor could use differentiation in which the speaker gives context to the situation. The idea is that the negative context of a given situation is responsible for the harm towards the image rather than the actions performed by the individual. Contrastingly the fourth strategy of apologia is transcendence which places the actions in a more positive context, with the hopes that this new context guides the audience away from the specific details of the public imagery issue and move "towards a more abstract, general view" (Ware & Linkugel, 1973, p. 280). Ware and Linkugel furthered that there are four unique ways an individual can engage in self-defense rhetoric by either using denial or bolstering techniques paired with either differentiation or transcendence.

Benoit also drew inspiration for image repair theory in utilizing the writings of Kenneth Burke. As Benoit (1995) noted, "guilt is a primary motive in Burke's theory of dramatism" and that two critical elements of the drama include the negative and the

hierarchy (p. 17). Benoit (1995) argued that the concept of the negative allows humans to create societal rules to prevent unfavorable conduct which consequently establishes a hierarchical system and that one goal that humans share within this system is to “strive for perfection” (p. 17). However, humans are naturally flawed and at some point, break the rules of conduct established by the society which perpetuates that creates “an undesirable state of affairs, an unpleasant feeling” which Burke refers to as guilt (Benoit, 1995, p. 18). Benoit furthered that those moments where our reputation is questioned within the scope of societal rules constitutes a great motivation for the speaker to mitigate the guilt as much as possible. Burke highlighted two ways an individual can rehabilitate their reputation in order to reduce guilt felt: victimage, in which the speaker makes attempts to “shift[ing] the blame” or through mortification, by which the speaker admits to “wrong-doing and request for forgiveness” (Benoit, 1995, p. 18). Despite the two ways to expunge guilt, Burke suggested that “one’s natural inclination is to use victimage” (Benoit, 1995, p. 18).

The final scholarly work that inspired Benoit was Ryan’s expansion of Ware and Linkuel’s theory of apologia. In his expansion Ryan argued that to fully understand apologia rhetoric one must also take into consideration the reason for the damaged reputation, or what he calls *kategoria*. Specifically, Ryan (1982) argued that comparing the apologia to the *kategoria* must occur so that “the critic is better able to distinguish the vital issues from the spurious ones”, and can assess the caliber of argumentation as demonstrated by both speakers before weighing the success or failure of the speakers (p. 254). For Ryan, damage to the reputation did not come solely from attacks against the

individual but can also emerge from the policies that the individual promoted or struck down.

In expanding Ryan's research, Benoit (1995) focused on the relationship between *kategoria* and *apologia*, stating that a rhetor "may not respond to (some or all of) the attacks" (p. 84). Benoit (1995) highlighted five different ways a critic may view the relationship between attack and defense. The first is to "redefine the attack" in which the accused shifts the nature of attack from policy to character or vice versa (Benoit, 1995, p. 84). Second, the speaker "may attempt to refocus attention on other issues entirely" allowing for the accused to "ignore some or all of the accusation" (Benoit, 1995, p. 84). Third, the accused may choose to respond to the more pressing components of the attack while not immediately responding to other parts of the attack. The fourth way a critic can view the relationship is that there is no clear attack. Benoit (1995) noted that these types of accusations "arise generally in the media" (p. 85). Lastly Benoit (1995) argued that common with political campaigns "attack[s] and defense[s] can become intertwined" and that when this happens "there would be elements of attack and defense in at least one of the key discourses and quite possibly in all of them" (p. 85). Benoit (1995) advised in this situation the critic "should examine the accusations and responses as they occur in the discourse" instead of trying to label "a given discourse as either an attack or a defense" (p. 85).

The Importance of Goals in IRT

In introducing image repair theory, Benoit (1995) argued that "communication is a goal-directed activity" (p. 63). In summarizing Kenneth Burke, Benoit furthered this notion stating that "rhetoric is purposeful-either directly or indirectly purposive" (Benoit,

1995, p. 64). When he described how rhetoric is goal oriented towards the image, Benoit pulled from Fisher who identified four goals of rhetorical situations: affirmation, reaffirmation, purification, subversion. By utilizing the affirmation goals, the rhetor “creates an image”; when imploring reaffirmation goals, the rhetor’s purpose is to bolster the image; in purification the goal is to “reform[s] an image”; with subversion the objective is to “attack an image” (Benoit, 1995 p.64).

Further, Benoit stated that communicators can have several goals that might not be congruous to one another and that behaviors that elevate one goal could come at the expense of the other goals. Benoit argued that “people try to achieve the goals that seem most important to them at the time they act, or to achieve the best mix of the goals that appears possible” (Benoit, 1995. p.65). Although at times the speaker's goals are “vague, ill-formed, or unclear,” regardless, the speaker “will try to behave in ways that help to accomplish them” (Benoit, 1995. P. 66). However even if the orator has a clear vision of their goal, that individual might not know the best strategies to meet their end goal. Additionally, to the degree of importance that goal has on the individual they will engage in communicative behavior that is higher risk and come with “tolerable cost” but is the most likely to achieve the goal (Benoit, 1995 p. 66). Benoit stated (1995) that one particular goal of image repair theory is to “restore[ing] or protect[ing] one’s reputation” but cautions that “this is not the only goal, or necessarily the most important goal, for a specific actor in a given situation” (p. 71). In other words, while an individual might work to repair their image as an immediate goal there could be larger goals, say wanting to win the Republican nomination for president, that has greater value of importance to

the speaker. Despite losing one's own image to the administration, an individual could assess this cost as being necessary to achieve their presidential ambitions.

Benoit argued that while goals are the motivation to use IRT, the behaviors used in attempts to achieve the goal happen automatically rather than systematically. Essentially there are some "situations that are particularly important to us" in which "we devote as much cognitive effort to producing goal-directed discourse" in a manner deemed sensible or required to the individual (Benoit, 1995. p. 66). Lastly, even while the goals of the rhetorician may be clear to the individual "it may be difficult for others (e.g., critics) to identify a communicator's goal(s)" (Benoit, 1995. P. 66). Having several goals, both known and unknown, could also make it more complex for rhetorical scholars to identify these goals. If the goal is unclear to the speaker the critic will find it tricky to identify them as well. One more issue that could hinder the recognition of goals is that some individuals make deliberate attempts to trick others of the actual goals. As Judith Trent (2011) reminded us, it may take years for an individual to create enough momentum to launch a presidential campaign. For politicians it would make sense for them to deliberately mislead individuals that they are not running for president until the candidate feels as though they are ready to enter the race. Finally, "certain artifacts... may not have readily identifiable persuasive goals, purposes, or intents for the critic to discover" (Benoit, 1995. P.66). Consequently, a rhetorical scholar may only assume what the goal of a speaker is, but it is only the speaker that knows what their goal(s) are.

When the Need for IRT Arises

Building on the concept of goals, the second notion of image repair theory "is that maintaining a favorable impression is an important goal in interaction" (Benoit, 1995 p.

67). Benoit argued that, by human design, we naturally “engage in behaviors that make[s] us vulnerable to attack” because of four unique reasons (Benoit, 1995 p.67): (1) resources are limited, (2) there are events that occur outside our immediate control and can create barriers to meeting our responsibilities, (3) humans make mistakes “some honestly, others because of self-interests”, and (4) what Benoit stresses as “possibly most importantly, we often differ over goals” (Benoit, 1995. P. 67). Semin and Manstead (1983) argued that when these breaks in societal expectations do eventually occur humans become anxious that others will hold negative perceptions of the individual’s image and with an increase in responsibility comes an increased threat to the self-image.

Benoit further noted that “others are often quick to criticize us when this kind of misbehavior occurs” and their objections could range from “what we said or did, about things we didn’t say or do, or even about the manner in which we did or said something” which Benoit explained “is clearly related to Burke’s notion of guilt” (Benoit 1995. p.68). Benoit argued that there are two reasons why an individual's reputation is so critical that attacks on their reputation generate motivation to publicly defend the speaker’s reputation. First, “because it contributes to a healthy self-image” and that in the relationship between “communication and interaction assumes that a person’s face, image, reputation, or perceived character is extremely important” (Benoit, 1995, p. 69). Second, an individual's public image plays a “role in the influence process” via potential negative perceptions of the speaker's ethos, or credibility (Benoit, 1995, p. 69). For the aspiring presidential candidate having the audience perceive the candidate as more credible is one way to separate that individual from the rest of the primary field. Thus, for

the aspiring presidential candidate there becomes an even greater motivation to engage in IRT to have and maintain a positive public image.

Benoit (1995) argued that attacks against an individual's image happen in two ways: first the “act occurred which is undesirable” and second an individual is “responsible for that action” and that individual’s reputation is only at risk if the audience is persuaded by the accuser's attacks (p. 71). In an administration, presidential scandals operate as one example for the first half of Benoit’s attack against the image; the president did something that viewed as undesirable. Yet, in some cases the vice president may share very little, if any, responsibility in the bad act. As a result it would be reasonable to surmise that Benoit would argue that vice presidents do not face harm against their individual image.

This conclusion though would be in conflict with Bostdorff’s argument that vice presidents lose their political identity and therefore would share the responsibility of their political spouse in repairing the image of the administration. However, a third option could be offered to compromise between the competing ideas. While it is the president was the individual who did the undesirable act, the vice president may engage in image repair on two fronts: (1) as an extension of administration as Bostdorff would argue, but also (2) as a means to individually acknowledge an associative guilt to the bad actor/action. The use of associative guilt as a reason to engage in image repair theory also works to justify how a vice president could still have individual goals while simultaneously losing their individuality.

Regardless, should neither one of those original criteria be met, there would be no need for the individual to engage in image repair. Further Benoit (1995) stated that both

undesirable actions and responsibility are on a continuum, stating that some undesirable actions cause greater harm to the individual's image than actions and that some people can be held more responsible for the action than others.

The Role of the Audience in IRT

One last critical element of image repair theory is the audience. As Benoit (1995) highlighted, one of the major factors of IRT is "the rhetor's perceptions of the audience's image of the rhetor" (p. 82). Of course, this perception of one's self-image could be in line with what the audience believes, or it could be completely incongruous with the reality of the situation. However, this perception of the audience's attitude in response to the attacks "are all the rhetoric available to prompt and guide image restoration efforts" (p. 82). As such, Benoit (1995) argued that "critics must also consider the audience's actual perception of the rhetoric, before and after the image restoration attempt, if possible" (p. 82).

With this understanding, Benoit (1995) proclaimed that there are at least two different audiences when a rhetorician engages in image repair discourse: the internal audience and the external audience. The internal audience deals with the rhetorician who may feel a level of self-disdain for engaging in the offensive action. By engaging in image repair strategies, the rhetor "may or may not succeed in making the rhetor feel better about her or himself" (Benoit, 1995, 83).

The external audience are individuals who the speaker engages in image repairing strategies and who can manifest in three different ways. The first external audience consists of a singular person who rejected the speaker's behavior, the accuser. The second external audience includes the accuser but also those who also been made aware

of the accusations. The final external audience type is only those who have been made aware of the accusations. Unlike with the first two external audience types, the third external audience does not include the original accuser.

Due to the nature of political mudslinging, many political candidates will tend to focus on the third type of external audience. One reason for this is that often the attack will come from members of the opposing party who most likely would not vote for the candidate under any circumstance. Thus, it would not make sense to focus on those audience members who will only have negative perceptions of the candidate. Instead that candidate will focus more so on the voters of their own party as well as independent voters who could be persuaded to vote for the candidate being attacked. As will be touched on later in this section, one last reason that a political candidate may focus on the third external type of audience is they may feel inclined to not only defend their public image but also levy their own attacks against their accuser. As such it should be noted that while image repair discourse may include the accuser as a part of the audience, it is not essential that the accuser is always a part of the target audience(s).

Fourteen Strategies of Image Repair

Utilizing these past works Benoit created 14 unique strategies an individual might use to restore their image. Benoit stated image repair strategies can be broken into “five broad categories, three of which have variant or subcategories: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification” (p. 74). In the first broad category of denial, Benoit (1995) offered two subcategories of strategies an individual can use: simple denial and shifting the blame. Whenever an individual offers simple denial strategies they might deny engaging in the wrongful act or that the

wrongful act never even happened. Additionally, a rhetor can also use simple denial to express a lack of agency over the act or could rely on the ideal of mistaken identity. However, Benoit (1995) argued that shifting the blame is more effective than simple denial because “it provides a target for any ill will the audience may feel, and this ill feeling may be shifted away from the accused” (p. 76). A second reason as to why shifting the blame may generate better results is that it answers the one question many audience members have after hearing a simple denial: “if not you, then who?”.

Unfortunately, some people may be caught red handed and cannot rely on denial tactics in order to restore their image. In these situations, Benoit (1995) suggested that an individual could make attempts to evade responsibility in four ways: provocation, defeasibility, accident, and good intentions. Provocation occurs when a speaker makes a claim that a wrongful act was committed in response to “another wrongful act, which understandably provoked the offensive act in question” (Benoit, 1995, p. 76). If the audience believes in the rhetor’s account of events, the individual who initiated the first wrongful act would be held more responsible than those that responded with their own negative actions. A second way an individual might evade responsibility is through defeasibility, in which an individual proclaims a “lack of information about or control over important factors in the situation” (Benoit, 1995, p. 76). Essentially, the speaker does not try to deny the situation ever happened, but they work to reduce the amount of responsibility they had in a certain situation. The third way an individual might evade responsibilities is by providing excuses that are established on accidents. Benoit (1995) argued that humans “tend to hold others responsible only for factors they can reasonably be expected to control” and when a rhetor uses accidents that “attempt to provide

information that may reduce his or her apparent responsibility” (p. 76). The last suggestion for evading responsibility is relying on good intentions. Like the three subcategories of evading responsibilities, the speaker does not deny the action happened, but it did not occur with malicious intent. Benoit argued this could be an effective strategy because “people who do bad while trying to do good are usually not blamed as much as those who intend to do bad” (Benoit, 1995, p 77).

The last broad category that has subcategories is that of reducing offensiveness. In the first strategy of bolstering the speaker makes the attempt to reduce negative public imagery by focusing on the positive public perceptions the audience has towards the speaker. The rhetor “might relate positive attributes they possess or positive actions they have performed in the past” (Benoit, 1995, p. 77). Benoit (1995) noted that while the level of guilt might remain the same “positive feeling toward the actor may help offset the negative feelings toward the act” and that this strategy is most effective when the positive traits give the impression that it is related to the accusation. Another way in which a speaker may try to reduce the offensiveness of the action is through minimization. In using this strategy, a rhetor attempts to dispel the initial negative perceptions of the act itself in hopes that “the amount of ill feeling associated with that act is reduced’ (Benoit, 1995, p. 77). Third, an individual can utilize the subcategory of differentiation, whereby the speaker compares “other similar but less desirable actions” to the initial act in order to lessen the negative attitudes towards both the actor and action (Benoit, 1995, p. 77). The fourth way in which a speaker can make attempts to reduce offensiveness is through transcendence. In doing so the speaker provides greater context to the action in order to “suggest a different frame of reference” or they might provide

“allegedly higher values, to justify the behavior in question” (Benoit, 1995, p. 78). The fifth strategy to reduce offensiveness is to attack the accuser. In doing so the speaker calls into question the credibility of the accuser and as a result can produce a negative image for the accuser. On the other hand, attacking the accuser can potentially redirect attention away from the initial act thereby “reducing [the] damage to the rhetor’s image” (Benoit, 1995, p.78). The final strategy to reduce offensiveness is compensation, either through “valued goods or services as well as monetary reimbursement” (Benoit, 1995, p. 78). As Benoit (1995) noted, compensation operates much like a bribe and if the compensation is both of sufficient value and accepted by the accuser it can work to repair the individual's image.

In the fourth broad category, and the first that does not include subcategories, Benoit (1995) explained a speaker may engage in corrective action, which can happen in two ways. First by reinstating the status quo before action occurred and secondly by issuing promises to stop a potential relapse of the bad act. Benoit (1995) used the response after the Tylenol scare of 1982, in which Tylenol started to implement tamper-resistant bottles, to demonstrate that the rhetorician “can take corrective action without admitting guilt” (p. 79). One major difference between compensation and corrective action is that corrective actions seek to rectify the act at its source while compensation works to counteract the negative action.

The final broad category that Benoit (1995) suggested a speaker could use to repair their image is mortification. In using this strategy, the speaker might admit to engaging in the wrongful act and ask the audience for forgiveness, should the audience believe the sincerity of the apology they may tolerate the wrongful act. Benoit (1995) further offered

that “it may be wise to couple this strategy with plans to correct (or prevent recurrence of) the problem” but added that may not be necessary and that “these strategies can occur independently” (p. 79).

IRT and the Vice President

Due to their sense of identity being shifted from the individual to the administration, vice presidents have been known to engage in one or more instances of IRT in response to kategoria(s) not of their own making but by the hands of their political spouse. Unfortunately, this may come with the risk of defending actions and behaviors that can then be used against the vice president should they have presidential ambitions. As a result, the subsequent public image of the vice-presidential office holder can be forever tarnished by the actions of their boss.

Indeed, vice presidents turned presidential hopefuls often work to regain and maintain their individual political identity and public image while on the campaign trail. For example, during the 2000 election, Vice President Al Gore famously was hesitant to have President Bill Clinton campaign for him, despite pleas from Democrats to utilize Clinton to electrify the base as Gore slipped in polling. However, because of the different controversies that surrounded the Clinton administration, Gore feared adding Clinton to the campaign would alienate independent and undecided voters. For the Gore campaign, the compromise was to have Clinton campaign for Gore in non-swing states (Dizikes, 2000).

Deciding not to run in the election immediately following the Obama Presidency, Joe Biden announced his intentions to run in the 2020 race. A spokesperson for Obama stated that picking Biden as his vice president was “one of the best decisions” Obama had

made, but at Biden's request stopped short of fully endorsing Joe Biden amongst the crowded Democratic primary (Rossman, 2019). As Biden gained traction to become the Democratic nominee, Obama announced his official endorsement for his vice president. However, to separate the Obama administration from what a potential Biden administration would look like, Obama stated, "the world is different- there's too much unfinished business for us to look backwards," insinuating that Obama's own platform would have been different if he were to run in 2020 (Lea, 2020). Echoing those same sentiments, Biden stated that due to the Trump presidency, "we face a totally different world than we faced in the Obama-Biden administration" (Clark, 2020).

Thus, within this context, this thesis will utilize William Benoit's (1995) theory of image restoration by examining the apologia(s) of the vice president in response to kategoria(s) of the president's making. To narrow the field of the 49 vice presidents, this paper will focus on as Vice President Mike Pence who falls under the category of modern vice presidents. While scholars differ on when the era of the modern vice president began, that specific title has been attributed to Walter Mondale, George Bush, Dan Quayle, Al Gore, Dick Cheney, Joe Biden, Mike Pence, and most recently Kamala Harris. Out of the list of modern-day vice presidents Pence is the only vice president who can realistically run for president in the next election cycle, making Pence a unique point of reference for this study.

Mike Pence: A Vice Presidential Case Study in Image Repair Theory

In his pursuit of the presidency, Mike Pence can be studied to understand more clearly how vice presidents may engage in repairing their image with the American voters while being in this subservient role. While these three audiences are not unique to

Pence or any vice president, the events of the Trump administration hyper-displays the existence of such audiences that Pence has to repair his image with.

For example, during the campaign and throughout the administration, all vice presidents are propelled to focus on two audiences: (1) members of the party opposed to president and (2) independent voters. This audience group will constitute a voting bloc that would be wary of any perception of unwavering loyalty to any president. Should the Pence display complete unwavering loyalty to the Trump then there could be justification that Pence would be an extension of the the Trump administration. If a vice president wants to have a successful presidential bid after office, they must establish a way to repair the image of the administration while simultaneously maintaining an individual positive image amongst these two audiences.

In contrast, while members who fully support the president are still a relevant audience group in establishing a positive image during this time, they expect vice president to stay in line with the vows they made to their political spouse. For this audience group they expect “Til death do you part”, as long as vice president maintains a faithful attitude towards the political marriage, then the vice president will continue to a positive perception with this audience group. Indeed, when Pence publicly displayed disloyalty towards Trump, it was this audience group that attempted to assassinate Pence (Jaipurian, 2021). This voting bloc would be unpersuaded by the argument of continuation of a previous administration and may even be inspired to vote based on that credential. Vice presidents such as Al Gore and Joe Biden seemed to at first distance themselves from their political spouse on the campaign. Inevitably though they were forced to go back to their political spouses for help on their presidential campaign. While

most former presidents can help their second-in-command maintain a positive image amongst the former president's base, former presidents can only do so much to someone's image. Ultimately it is the job of the rhetor, in the case the former vice president, to establish their image amongst the three audiences.

While the Clinton/Gore and Obama/Biden marriage was still established going into their respective presidential campaigns, the Trump/Pence marriage ended in a fiery divorce. Like his predecessors, Pence still has to maintain and/or re-establish positive perceptions with these three audiences. However, due to the very public breakup between Trump and Pence, Pence will not be able to utilize Trump on the campaign trail to reestablish credibility with the Trump base and must do this alone. Further as the only one-term vice president who can run for president and has shown interest in running in 2024, Pence may be in a situation in which he faces a primary battle with his former boss.

While Trump still has a formidable hold on the Republican base, independent voters and non-Trump backing Republicans may be relieved to see different Republican options outside of Trump in 2024. Additionally, due to Trump not having made an official bid for 2024, there is still a lack of a true heir apparent, leaving the party's nomination seemingly up for grabs. Further, Mike Pence has for years been seen as a potential candidate for president despite never announcing plans to run and in recent months has started having rallies at the early campaign stated. Despite whether Trump runs again or not, Mike Pence's tenure as the vice president puts Pence in an odd predicament. Thus, Pence becomes a unique case study in how vice presidents can engage in image repair strategies before, during, and after the administration in order to reestablish credibility

with the administration and while maintaining their personal image among the three audiences. Therefore, the question is posed: how is Mike Pence supposed to rhetorically navigate threats to his individual public image while simultaneously losing his personal autonomy to the Trump administration?

To answer this question, this thesis will focus on how the political marriage of President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence helped influence the rhetorical tactics used in image repair strategies. More specifically how did the engagement (campaign), the marriage (the Trump presidency), and the divorce (January 6th) impact Pence's use of image repair with the aforementioned audience members. As the political spouse Pence must issue image repair strategies on behalf of the administration based on a Trump-related scandal that will be utilized as the *kategoria*. Under each scandal, three instances of *apologias* will be examined for the thesis. As such, this thesis will examine the following three *kategorias*: *The Washington Post's* October 7, 2016, bombshell report on *The Access Hollywood* tape featuring reporter Billy Bush and Donald Trump, President Trump's comments in response to the protest and violence in Charlottesville on August 11-12, 2017, and finally President Trump's efforts to cast doubt on the results of the 2020 election and more specifically his efforts to encourage Mike Pence to overturn the election during the January 6, 2021, Joint Session of Congress. Three significant contentious moments of the Trump administration that could be qualified as *kategoria* will not be discussed is the impeachment over President Trump's phone call to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and lawmakers calling on Pence and the rest of the cabinet to invoke the 25th amendment and the impeachment of President Trump after the January 6th riots. While these three instances are clear examples of *kategoria*, even if the

vice president did not take a submissive approach during the administration, the vice president would still have to denounce those tactics of forcibly removing and barring a president from holding office or face the potential of being seen as a power-hungry leader.

While only 15 of 49 vice presidents have gone on to become president the American people expect the vice president to demonstrate a certain level presidential fitness (Carlin & Bicak, 2007). This is because at any moment during their tenure as vice president they can be elevated to that office; potentially giving the vice president a unique executive experience to launch a presidential campaign. As presidential candidates, former vice presidents have had to answer to the shortcomings of the administration they served. In line with these attacks, former vice presidents will sometimes be faced with accusations that they will push the exact same agenda as their former boss (Lea, 2020). Therefore, any hope of completely ridding oneself of the image of the subservient political spouse at the end of the administration is all but wishful thinking.

For the self-proclaimed Christian, Conservative, and Republican, certainly one explanation in agreeing to run with Trump would be the opportunity for higher visibility amongst American voters. However, many who believed Trump was antithetical to Pence's self-proclamation were puzzled at the Indiana governor's decision (Varvel, 2017). Given that Pence had a clear understanding of how he wished the public to perceive his image and provided that many in the public believed Trump to be the perfect foil to Pence, this thesis seeks to answer two questions. (1) Within the political marriage of Trump and Pence, how did Pence engage in Image Repair Theory in order to save face for the administration he served? (2) Seeing that American's expect their vice president

to be presidential, how might these rhetorical expectations influence Pence's use of some IRT tactics over other tactics defined in the theory?

Overview of Thesis

Thus, this rhetorical study will be split into four separate sections. The first chapter operates to provide both an overview of the current research as well as provided prior research on vice presidential rhetoric. A literature review of Benoit's theory of image repair was then conducted and demonstrated how vice presidents, specifically Mike Pence, may utilize image repair strategies.

The second chapter offers a historical context in two parts. The first part presents a biography of Mike Pence in order to break down his self-image as Christian, Conservative and Republican. Doing so will help to establish how Pence justified engaging in behaviors that harms his public perceptions amongst the three audiences. Additionally looking into Pence's past may offer some ideas of any goal(s) that Pence have had that motivates his use of image repair. The second portion focuses on the evolution of the office of the vice president and how recent exposure of that office have allowed a pathway to the presidency for those that may have those goals in mind.

The third chapter will offer as a textual analysis of Pence's image repair strategies. Operating within the scope of Pence joining the Trump ticket, this chapter will advance in a linear progression of time starting from the 2016 campaign, the Trump Presidency, and Pence's time since the 2020 election. Under each moment of time mentioned, a kategoria of President Trump's will be discussed in detail to give reason as to why Pence had to use image repair strategies. After a description of each kategoria,

three texts authored by Pence in response to the kategoria will be used to analyze Pence's image repair strategy.

The fourth chapter of this study will examine the effectiveness of Pence's image repair strategies within the context of three different groups of audience members with each kategoria. After analyzing the difference image repair strategies Pence used a comparative analysis will utilized to first see how Pence's strategies over the course of time with a specific category. Then a comparative analysis of all 9 texts used by Pence will be applied to see how the image repair strategies changed throughout Pence's tenure as vice president. The fourth chapter will also include potential areas for future research.

II: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF MIKE PENCE AND THE OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT

One critical element of Benoit's Image Repair Theory is to establish one or more goals for Mike Pence. In order to determine the goals Pence may have this chapter will provide historical context in two ways: (1) through a biography of Mike Pence and (2) through evolutionary examination of the Office of the Vice President. In constructing a biography of Mike Pence one can start to understand any goals Pence may have that motivate Pence to maintain a positive perception with American voters. Additionally, Pence has long often referred to himself as a Christian, Conservative, and Republican. In breaking down the biography of Mike Pence, one can start to see how his self-perceptions acted as hierarchal moral compass to guide Pence in many political matters. Pence's self-image operated in the hierarchal since in that, if the Republican Party were to advocate for an anti-conservative policy like a large spending package Pence would not be afraid to voice his opposition. However, if Pence is compelled by God to do, Pence will do it no matter the personal cost.

The second part of this chapter seeks to identify how the evolutionary changes in visibility for Office of the Vice President could present Pence an opportunity for reaching his goal. Historically the Office of Vice President has been viewed and treated as insignificant until around WWII. This section will first examine the creation of the office and how the vague description of the office in the Constitution provided for several constitutional crises throughout our nation's history. The next part of this section will look at how post-World War II vice presidents started to gain executive power which resulted in an increase in national visibility for the vice presidents.

The Biography of Mike Pence

Early Life of Mike Pence

Mike Pence was born on June 7, 1959, in Columbus, Indiana, to an Irish Catholic family (Miller et al., 2016). Raised in a household based on Democratic beliefs, one element that contributed to Pence's future life in politics was his family's fascination with the United States' first Irish Catholic president, John F. Kennedy. During his teenage years, Pence worked for the Bartholomew County Democrats as their youth coordinator (Biography.com, 2021). In 1978, while studying history at Hanover College, Pence started to question both his faith in the Catholic church and his liberal leanings (Khawaja, 2017). Yearning for a more intimate relationship with God than what the Catholic church allowed; Pence remarked on the floors of Congress years later that he found himself gazing at a golden cross hanging around a Phi Gamma Delta fraternity brother. Pence remembered that his fraternity brother advised him that "you have to wear it in your heart before you wear it around your neck" (as cited in Mahler & Johnson, 2016).

Not long after Pence was given this advice, Pence attended a Christian musical festival in Kentucky where he "gave [his] life to Jesus Christ" and became a "born-again, evangelical Catholic" which "changed everything" for the future vice president (as cited in Mahler, 2016; as cited in Tikkanen, 2022). While simultaneously undergoing a reformation on his beliefs in the Christian faith, Pence's political learnings also experienced a similar shift during his college years. Despite having voted for incumbent President Jimmy Carter in 1980, Pence would embrace the fierce opposition to abortion rights led by the Republican Party under President Ronald Reagan (Mahler, 2016). By 1983 Pence would move to Indianapolis to attend Indiana University McKinney School

of Law, receiving a Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree in 1986. As a law student, Pence attended Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Church where he met Karen Batten playing the guitar and nine months later the two married in 1985 and would be “the best part of [his] life” (Chokshi, 2017; as cited in Rudavsky, 2013).

Early U.S. Representative Campaigns and Radio Career

Shortly after graduating Pence would get into politics first by serving as the precinct committeeman for the Marion County Republican Party, before making an unsuccessful bid for Indiana’s 2nd District in the U.S. House of Representative against incumbent Representative Phil Sharp in 1988, losing by seven points (“Biography.com”, 2021; Viser, 2016). Inspired by both Mike and Karen’s approach to campaigning in the 1988 election, Indiana radio personality Sharon Disinger called Pence while he was sitting at a law office Pence was employed at to remind him that President Reagan had once lost an election but used radio to keep his name out there (Ferhman, 2018). After the conversation, Pence would commute from Indianapolis to Rushville to host the weekly Washington Update (Ferhman, 2018). Two years later, in what would become one of the more defining moments of Pence’s political career, Pence would unsuccessfully try again to defeat Sharp in the 1990 election.

Despite Pence being only in his early 30s, the 1990 election was one that could have cost Pence his political career. Both the Sharp and Pence campaigns lobbed major attacks against the other's ethics. Sharp’s campaign manager, Billy Linville, went to the Indiana Statehouse and received Pence’s financial-disclosure forms (Rodrick, 2019). What the Sharp campaign discovered led the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee to file a formal complaint with the Federal Election Commission (F.E.C.) on

August 8, 1990 (U.S. House, 2009). While there were F.E.C. laws that prohibited incumbents from using campaign funds for personal use; there were no restrictions on non-incumbent candidates. Consequently, the actions of the Pence campaign led the F.E.C. to create rules that also prohibited non-incumbent candidates from using campaign funds for personal reasons (Helderman et al., 2016).

As a result of this, the Pence campaign sent out a thirty-second advertisement that attacked Sharp's role as a subcommittee chairman on energy issues as being too reliant on Arab oil producers in the lead up to the first Persian Gulf War. However, the ad backfired tremendously for the Pence campaign when the Arab American Institute called the political ad offensive and called for its removal. The *Indianapolis News* stated the ad was "insulating and derogatory" and that it was "appealing to racist sentiments", and the *Greensburg Daily News* labeled it "one of the worst negative campaigns in Indiana has ever witnessed" (as cited in Nussbaum & Samuelsohn, 2016). Both events worked heavily against Pence who would lose to Sharp by nineteen points (Nussbaum & Samuelsohn, 2016).

Indiana Policy Review Foundation

After the 1990 election, Pence went on to become the President of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, a conservative think-tank, in 1991. As President, Pence was able to not only immerse himself in a greater understanding of Republican policies, but he also tripled the group's fundraising (Fehrman, 2018). After having just started his position at the Indiana Policy Review, Pence received a phone call from a journalist who told Pence the journalist "never really thought of [Pence] as a conservative" a comment that "pierced [Pence's] heart" (as cited in Nussbaum & Samuelsohn, 2016). To Pence the

interview suggested just how little of Pence’s policies were known after an election that was engaged in heavy negative campaigning.

In 1991 Pence wrote an essay that appeared in the summer edition of the Indiana Policy Review titled “Confessions of a Negative Campaigner” in which Pence publicly apologized for his tactics in the 1990 election. More specifically, Pence recognized the effectiveness that negative campaigns can have but added that negative campaigning is wrong because it prevents the candidate from bringing an issue that is critical to them to the voters. Pence concluded his essay by outlining three main purposes of a campaign. First, campaigns can demonstrate how decent a human being is and that “means your First Amendment rights end at the tip of your opponent's nose - even in matters of political rhetoric” (as cited in Fehrman, 2013). Second, a campaign should be about issues whose outcome, good or bad, is more important than the candidate themselves. The candidate should strive to leave a legacy for future generations to build upon. Finally, and Pence stressed this was the very last purpose, a campaign should be about winning. In stressing this point, Pence reflected on the words of Vince Lombardi who stated that “winning isn’t everything but wanting to win is” (as cited in Fehrman, 2013). Following this sentiment, Pence wrote that “negative campaign is born” out of the belief that “winning was the most important thing we could do” (as cited in Fehrman, 2013).

Pence Syndicated

Due to Pence wanting to focus on more social issues whereas the Indiana Policy Review had a preference towards publishing papers on economics and policy, the two mutually split ways in 1994. Even while Pence was president of the Indiana Policy Review, Pence was still involved in his radio career; he launched *The Mike Pence Show*

in 1992. After leaving the Indiana Policy Review, Pence expanded his radio platform to a three hour a day, five days a week program (“Ex-veep”, 2021). Pence’s radio show “had no sidekick, and there was no computer” allowing the audience to get an “unplugged” version of Pence (Samuelson, 2016). *The Mike Pence Show* allowed Pence to reshape his image “by offering a right-leaning spin on the world around him” while also “questioning the political wisdom of GOP leaders like [Newt] Gringrich and [Trent] Lott” and “condemning local mainstream media” (Samuelson, 2016).

Indiana Democrats also saw the value in *The Mike Pence Show* in their attempts to reach an older and more conservative audience that was “integral for winning elections in the state” (Samuelson, 2016). During this time Pence would also get advice on “how to be more authentic, relevant, innovative, and fun” (Samuelson, 2016). In 1994 Indiana Network syndicated the broadcast statewide amongst 18 radio stations and the following year Pence hosted a local morning talk show host (“Mike Pence, n.d.; Tikkanen, 2022). As a radio personality, Pence would describe himself as “Rush Limbaugh on decaf” because while they shared the same view, Pence believed he approached topics in a bit milder manner (as cited in Staff, 2018).

U.S. Representative for Indiana

In 1994, Representative Sharp decided not to run again and would see his House seat being handed over to Republican Representative David McIntosh. In turn, McIntosh would also decide against running as the incumbent in the 2000 and instead sought to challenge Indiana Governor Frank O’Bannon, leaving Indiana’s 2nd congressional district without an incumbent (Samuelson, 2016). It was during this time in 1999 that Pence ended his radio and television programs and went back on the campaign, having

success raising money via the same individuals that paid advertisements for his radio and television shows (Samuelson, 2016). Unlike the campaigns of 1988 and 1990, Pence would find success in his third campaign winning the primary by about 21 percentage votes and would win the general by 12 percentage points (U.S. Federal, 2000). Pence would be elected to Congress for five terms, representing Indiana's 2nd congressional district from 2001 until 2003 and then Indiana's 6th congressional district from 2003-2012 ("Mike Pence congressional", n.d.).

As a freshman congressman, Pence broke from party lines to vote against President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind law because he viewed "the measure as a federal intrusion into education policy he believed rested with the state" (Strauss, 2020). Growing "tired of Bush's fondness of expanding government" with the "nation's debt increasing," Pence led the congressional effort to block President Bush's plan to expand Medicare in 2003 (Cusack, 2016). Even though the expansion package was eventually passed, because of efforts led by Pence, what was expected to only be a fifteen-minute vote turned into a three-hour vote (Cusack, 2016). Both of these events would propel Pence's visibility amongst other House Republicans and in 2005 Pence served as the committee chairman for the Republican Study Committee, a group of "like-minded House members together to promote a strong, principled legislative agenda that will limit government, strengthen our national defense, boost America's economy, preserve traditional values and balance our budget" (About, n.d.; History, n.d.). On November 8, 2006, Pence announced his candidacy for Republican Leader but lost to Representative John Boehner of Ohio (Associated Press, 2006; Newsdesk 2006).

Running unopposed in 2009 Pence was selected to chair the Republican Conference becoming the third ranking Republican in the House. In 2010 National Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman John Cornyn started to make active attempts to persuade Pence to launch a campaign for a Senate seat in Indiana; however, Pence saw the move as too risky and declined (Sherman & Bresnahan, 2010). On May 5, 2011, Pence announced that he would not seek a sixth term but instead would opt to campaign in Indiana's 2012 gubernatorial election (Blake, 2011). During the 12 years Pence served in Congress he would introduce ninety bills and resolutions of which none would become law (Barbaro & Davey, 2016).

Governor of Indiana

Due to restrictions in Indiana's Constitution, incumbent Republican Governor Mitch Daniels was unable to run for a third term leaving the 2012 Indiana gubernatorial election wide open. In a contest between Pence, Democratic former Speaker of the Indiana House of Representatives John Gregg, and Libertarian Rupert Boneham, Pence became Indiana's 50th governor by just 80,000 votes in the "closest governor's race in 50 years" (Garcia, 2016; Greenhouse, 2012). As governor Pence received national attention for two controversies that occurred during Pence's gubernatorial term. First, despite ample warnings Governor Pence did not enact certain safety measures being requested by the Indiana State Health Department. As a result, in this inaction Scott County saw an explosion in cases of the Human Immunocompromised Virus (HIV). Next, as Governor Pence signed a controversial bill that LGBTQ+ rights activist argued that allowed businesses to discriminate against same-sex couples.

While still a member of Congress Pence, told *Politico* in 2011 that “if Planned Parenthood wants to be involved in providing counseling services and HIV testing, they ought not be in the business of providing abortions, as long as they aspire to do that, I’ll be after them” (as cited in Kliff, 2011). That year Indiana passed legislation supported by Representative Pence that stripped funding to Planned Parenthood. This effectively shuttered the doors of the state’s five Planned Parenthood clinics, one of those clinics being Scott County’s only method to test HIV which had performed zero abortions (Gonsalves & Crawford, 2020; Redden, 2016; Rutter, 2019).

When Pence became governor in 2013, national HIV infection rates via intravenous drug use were going down; however, in southern Indiana drug abuse had become rampant and Hepatitis C infections via injection were on the rise, signaling that a similar HIV outbreak could occur (Gonsalves & Crawford, 2020). To prevent such an outbreak, experts recommend a needle exchange program to provide clean needles to users, which was against Indiana state law. In November 2014, Scott County diagnosed the first HIV infection that was attributed to drug use; two months later an additional sixteen people would be diagnosed. However, public health officials with the Indiana State Department of Health failed to notify local authorities about the rising cases in Scott County until late February in 2014.

After a telephone call with Scott County Sheriff Daniel McClain on March 23, 2015, Governor Pence would “go home and pray on” the idea of allowing a needle exchange program to occur in the county (as cited in Gonsalves & Crawford, 2020). Two days later Pence finally declared the outbreak as a public health emergency that allowed needle exchange programs in the county without state or federal funding to help

(Gonsalves & Crawford, 2020; Twohey, 2016). In total 215 people were diagnosed with HIV and reports suggest that if earlier action had taken place in 2013 the number would be fewer than 56 (Greenwood, 2018).

The second instance that gave Governor Pence national attention occurred on March 26, 2015, when Pence signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which gave Indiana businesses the legal right to object services to same-sex couples (Nueman, 2015). Upon signing the bill into law, Pence stated that the U.S. and Indiana Constitutions “provide strong recognition of the freedom of religion but today, many people of faith feel their religious liberty is under attack by government action” adding that “if [he] thought it legalized discrimination in any way in Indiana, [he] would have vetoed it” (as cited in Nueman, 2015).

Despite similar laws being passed in 19 other states and at the federal level, Indiana faced swift backlash from across the nation (Lopez, 2015). George Takei, Star Trek actor and LGBTQ+ advocate, called for a boycott of Indiana; the online consumer rating company Angie’s List withdrew plans of a \$40 million expansion on their headquarters in Indianapolis; and Apple CEO Tim Cook argued that “the days of segregation and discrimination... must remain in the past” (Cook, 2015; Lopez, 2015). In addressing the controversial bill in a March 31, 2015, press conference, Governor Pence stated that he did not “believe for a minute that it was the intention of the General Assembly to create a license to discriminate or right to deny services to gays, lesbians or anyone else in this state” before adding that he “can appreciate that that’s become the perception, not just here in Indiana but all across this country” (as cited in Washington Post Staff, 2015).

In offering a solution to remedy the problem Pence stated that “you should do unto others as you would have them do unto you” adding that Pence believed that “no one should be harassed or mistreated because of who they are, who they love, or what they believe” (as cited in Washington Post Staff, 2015). Pence then stated that the problem lies in the perception and that he wished to have an amendment to the RFRA that clears up the language. On April 2, 2015, Pence signed an amendment making it clear that the RFRA could not be used by “businesses and individuals from using the law to refuse employment, housing, or service to people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity” Lopez, 2015).

Vice Presidential Candidate Mike Pence

On June 18, 2015, at a Republican fundraising dinner, Governor Pence announced his intention to run for reelection in the 2016 Indiana gubernatorial election (WRTV Indianapolis, 2015). Despite having won the primary, because of Indiana election laws Pence was forced to withdraw his name from the Indiana gubernatorial race on July 15, 2016, after accepting Donald Trump’s offer to be the 2016 Republican vice presidential nominee (Bradner, 2016). However, this decision could be viewed as polarizing even within the Republican Party. In the lead-up to the 2016 Republican primaries, 17 individuals announced their intentions to seek the party’s nomination for the 2016 Presidential election; out of the crowded field one name especially stood out: Donald Trump. At the time of Trump’s announcement in June 2015, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, and U.S. Senator from Florida Marco Rubio were seen as the front-runners for the Republican nomination, while Trump was viewed more as a “joke” (Hennessey, 2015).

By October 2015 Political Action Committees such as Club for Growth spent about one million dollars in negative campaign ads that helped curb polling momentum for Donald Trump in Iowa. In response to the shifts in polls Club for Growth President David McIntosh stated that “Trump loses when voters know the truth about him. He is not a real conservative” (as cited in Easley, 2015). Two weeks before the Iowa caucus, Katie Packer, the deputy campaign manager for Mitt Romney’s 2012 bid, founded the Our Principles PAC with the sole purpose to prevent Donald Trump from being nominated dubbed the Never Trump Movement. In the lead up to the Iowa caucus, Our Principles PAC spent roughly \$45,000 on mailers and \$3,000 on radio ads attacking Trump (Isenstadt & McCaskill, 2016).

Although efforts by members of the Never Trump Movement failed at consolidating for one candidate to stop Trump in the primaries, talks persisted into the general election. One month before the general election on October 8, 2016, The Washington Post released the recordings of the infamous Access Hollywood tape featuring Donald Trump. After it was revealed what Trump had said, many prominent Republicans called for Trump to officially withdraw his candidacy and have the RNC replace him with Governor Pence (Wellford, 2016).

In what can only be described as Mike Pence’s first true test of loyalty towards Trump, privately Pence expressed his doubts to Trump about continuing to campaign while simultaneously pressuring the Republican National Committee to remove Trump from the ticket and give Pence the promotion (Mayer & Lizza, 2017, Coppins, 2017). Despite the uphill battle in gaining support from established Republicans and Political Action Committees, and facing a contentious convention, Donald Trump was still able to

secure the initial nomination for the Republican Party. Even as party leader, Trump was never able to fully unify the Republican Party going into the general election and was even being threatened to have his nominee status revoked. Oddly enough the Trump-Pence ticket received 92 percent of the Republican support, a level of party support that Trump would keep comfortably for most of his presidency (Pew, 2020, Gallup, 2021).

50th Vice President of the United States Mike Pence

In the early days of the Trump administration, Pence was regularly seen on major news networks trying to sell Trump's policy especially "when it's an issue where Trump himself may not appear to have a total grasp of the policy being discussed, such as health care" (Molly, 2017). On January 27, 2017, Mike Pence became the first sitting vice president to speak at the March for Life rally, an annual anti-abortion rally (Mcgraw & Hansler, 2017). Upon reestablishing the U.S. Space Council, "a group meant to coordinate space policy among government agencies and departments", Trump named Pence as chair for Pence's first executive assignment (Witze, 2017). After numerous claims by Trump of mass voter fraud in 2016 Trump signed an executive order in 2017 establishing Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, giving Pence an even larger presence as an executive figure in July 2017 (Brennan Center for Justice, 2017).

However, there were two specific assignments that Trump gave to Pence that put Pence in the national spotlight. On January 29, 2020, Trump created the Coronavirus Task Force to provide a government response to the 2019 Coronavirus, naming Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar as the chairperson. Nearly a month later, on February 26, 2020, President Trump announced that Vice President Pence would oversee

the White House's response to the Covid pandemic. This announcement prompted backlash because of Pence's handling of the HIV outbreak in Indiana (Santucci, 2020).

A second assignment that gave Pence major national attention was to decertify the Electoral College vote from the 2020 election. Shortly after meeting with his vice president, Trump retweeted a call to action for Pence to not certify the Electoral College vote when presides over Congress on January 6, 2021 (Brown et al., 2020). For Trump, having Pence certify the election results would be viewed as the ultimate act of disloyalty (Swann, 2020). Publicly Pence supported lawmakers' efforts to overturn the election, privately Pence asked former one-term Vice President Dan Quale if there was anything Pence could do, adding that "you don't know what position I'm in" (Broadwater, 2021; as cited in Indianapolis Star, 2021). However, despite the welcomed efforts, on Pence's way to the Capitol, Pence sent a letter to the member of Congress addressing that he does not have the authority to overthrow the election, effectively ending the Trump/Pence administration (Krawczyk, 2021). While President Trump held a sendoff at Joint Base Andrews, Pence opted to attend the inauguration of President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris giving some symbolism of a transfer of power (Kilander, 2021).

Former Vice President Mike Pence

Since leaving office Pence has gone back to his roots in radio, starting a podcast in September 2021 with the young conservative group Young America's Foundation (Lonas, 2021). Starting in June 2021 Pence made several stops in both Iowa and New Hampshire, the first two states to vote in the presidential primary. In these appearances, Pence made attempts to distance himself from Trump and January 6th (DiSato et al., 2021; Isenstadt, 2021; Pfannenstiel, 2021; Sobey, 2021). Interestingly when asked about

his plans for 2024 regardless of whether Trump decided to run again, Pence remarked that “I can honestly tell you in 2023, my family and I will do what we have always done. We'll reflect, we'll pray and determine where we might best serve, and we'll go where we're called” (as cited in Manchester & Samuels, 2021).

Embracing the words of Pence, we can gather that his self-perceived image is that he is first and foremost a Christian, next a conservative, and finally a Republican. This is made noticeably clear in Pence’s action over the course of his life. For example, when President Bush wanted to pass legislation that was antithetical to Pence’s conservative values, Pence was not afraid to break away from the Republican Party. However, in cases like the HIV breakout in Scott County, Indiana, when Pence was forced to go against his conservative values, he would either consult scripture or pray for his options. With this hierarchical system of Pence’s self-perception one can start to imagine how Pence falls back on either one of these three pillars when making attempts to reshape his public image.

Mike’s Motivation

Additionally, through this examination of Mike Pence’s life we can gather that Pence has had a long history of political ambitions. To be more specific in establishing Pence’s goal, his motivation for going into radio was to create a political path similar to that of President Reagan. While Reagan never held a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, Reagan did find a successful path to the White House via a gubernatorial seat. Historically governors hold an advantage in presidential elections more than any other office, and though the sample is too small to be reliable, vice presidents hold an advantage over governors. Through the historical analysis of the evolution of the Office

of Vice Presidency one can also see how the office went from irrelevant to having more visibility with the American people. Therefore, one can reasonably conclude that one goal that drives Mike Pence to save face is that he wants to follow in the footsteps of Ronald Reagan and become President of the United States.

The Evolution of the Vice Presidency

Introduction

However, historically the Office of Vice Presidency has not been the most appealing office to seek. The first Vice President, John Adams, called the office “the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived” and said that as vice president “I am nothing, but I may be everything (as cited in Dahl, 2020). When mulling over the idea of being John F. Kennedy’s running mate, Lyndon Baines Johnson called President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s first Vice President, John Nance Garner, for advice, who would tell Johnson that the office “isn’t worth a pitcher of warm piss” (as cited in Dingus, n.d.). However, Johnson knew of Kennedy’s various health conditions and upon accepting Kennedy’s offer Johnson told a journalist that “I looked it up: one out of every four Presidents has died in office. I’m a gamblin’ man, darlin’, and this is the only chance I got” (as cited in Fraga, 2018).

While some Vice Presidents like Hubert Humphrey viewed the office as a place for a person to never be “heard of again”, the question then becomes if Pence’s goal is to become President, why would he accept a position that has been viewed as a political graveyard (as cited in Dahlm 2020)? To answer this question this section will focus on the evolution of the office of Vice President in two ways. First by examining the nomination process of the Vice President. In doing so, this will help to identify those that

are responsible for selecting the Vice President and who a candidate would need to appeal to become Vice President. The second section focuses on the importance the Vice Presidency has gained in American politics, and as a result has grown in visibility.

Vice-Presidential Selection Process

Considered a “governmental afterthought”, the office of vice presidency was not created until the end of the 1787 Constitutional Convention, with initial plans for the Senate leader to take on the role of presidency should the office become vacant in between election cycles (Blakemore, 2020). On August 31, 1787, just days before the close of the 1787 Constitutional Convention the founders had yet to decide how Presidential elections would occur, so the issue was presented to the Committee of Eleven, which was constructed to resolve any remaining disputes (Lim, 2014). Eventually the Committee settled for the creation of the Electoral College that would meet every four years and to calm fears of state loyalty-based deadlocks, electors could not vote for a candidate from the same state. The candidate that got the most votes became President and the candidate with the second most votes became Vice President (Blakemore, 2020). The original construction of the Constitution gave the role of Vice President limited powers, “they would preside over the United States Senate, serve as a tie-breaking vote, oversee impeachment trials, and supervise the counting of the Electoral College vote” (Blakemore, 2020).

While the political parties emerged in the infancy of American Democracy it was only after President Washington left office where the election of 1796 saw the election of President and Vice President of opposing parties. To prevent this from happening the two major political parties at the time, the Federalist, and the Democratic-Republicans,

worked with electors to decide the President and Vice President so they could be of the same party (Smentkowski, n.d.). However, because there was not a separate ballot for President and Vice President, the Electoral College gave both Democratic- Republicans Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Burr 73 votes during the election of 1800 (The Editors, n.d.). Due to a clear winner not being determined, the House of Representative was tasked with deciding the election and voted 36 different times to determine a winner (Smentkowski, n.d.; The Editors, n.d.). With the election of 1800 showing a major flaw in the election process, Congress worked to create the 12th amendment. The 12th amendment established that the Electoral College would use separate ballots to cast votes for President and Vice President, and that in the event a majority of electoral votes is not established the House of Representatives votes for one of the top three candidates. The candidate receiving the most votes is elected to become President and the Senate would oversee elections for the Vice President based on the remaining two candidates (U.S. Const. Amend., XII).

While congressional caucuses had emerged as a way for political parties to choose candidates for public office since the 1796 election, it was only until the ratification of the 12th amendment that these caucuses became an effective tool for the party to nominate both the President and the Vice President (Morgan, 1969). In 1832 congressional caucuses were replaced with national conventions to elect the President. While delegates would arrive at the conventions understanding who the leading contenders are, usually there were still days of negotiating needed to come to a consensus on who the party would nominate. While at the negotiation table, the vice-Presidential candidate became “the most important bargaining chip and was often chosen to placate

the region of the country or the faction of the party that did not win the Presidential nomination” (Kamarck, 2020). Unsurprisingly, due to the disregard of the Presidential candidate this method of selecting the Vice President still resulted in an incongruous relationship between the President and their Vice President. As a result of this, Presidents would oftentimes largely ignore their Vice Presidents (Karmarck, 2020). The selection of the Vice President relied primarily on two factors: the candidate “competence to become President” and to bring “some form of political balancing - - geographical, religious, ideological, etc.” (Karmarck, 2020).

Breaking the mold of national conventions, President Andrew Johnson became the first President to personally select his running mate in 1932, President Lincoln in 1864 dropped his first-term Vice President in favor of the U.S. Senator from Tennessee Andrew Johnson, and FDR refused to run for a third term if he was not able to select his own Vice President (Py-Lieberman, 2014). It was not until 1986 that President Jimmy Carter established the precedent a presidential candidate selecting their own vice-presidential candidate (Blakemore, 2020). Due to the precedent set by Carter, individuals seeking the office of Vice President no longer must appeal to the convention at large, rather the candidate who the American voters decided to nominate. While candidates still try to balance the ticket in some manner, it is easier for an individual to persuade one over one hundred.

The Tyler Precedent of Presidential Accession

Indeed, after Washington invited Adams to attend cabinet meetings, no other President had their Vice Presidents regularly attend cabinet meetings until President Woodrow Wilson asked Vice President Thomas Marshall to do so while Wilson was in

Paris. It was not until the election of President Roosevelt and Vice President John Nance Garner that vice presidents' participation in Cabinet meetings became a norm. However, the biggest constitutional faux pas of the vice presidency occurred in 1841 when President William Henry Harrison became the first President to die in office. Within an hour after the death of the President the Cabinet held an emergency meeting to draft and send a letter to Vice President John Tyler. It was during this meeting that members of Cabinet concluded that "Mr. Tyler, must, while performing the function of President, bear the title of 'Vice-President acting President'" (as cited in Dinnerstein, 1962).

Though this difference in title may seem like a minute issue, Dinnerstein (1962) stated that:

It is necessary to remember that prestige, although an intangible, is an important factor in determining the actions of the heads of government. Depending on the personality involved, there might have been a great difference in the exercising of the powers of the chief executive by a person who bore the title of 'acting President. (p. 450)

For Vice President John Tyler, the Constitution was clear that in the absence of a sitting President the Vice President ascended the presidency and became President as if that individual was elected to the office. With no objections being heard from members of the Cabinet nor from a substantial number of members from Tyler's Whig Party, Tyler took the presidential oath on April 6, 1841 (Dinnerstein, 1962). This event would create the Tyler precedent, by which there was no clear constitutional dictation of the Vice-President acting President debate, but the future accessions of Millard Fillmore, Andrew Johnson, Chester A. Arthur, Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Harry S. Truman, and Lyndon B. Johnson was never substantially challenged.

Vice Presidents in the Dawn of the Nuclear Age

However, questions about both a vice president role within an administration and the ascension in the event the sitting President cannot fulfill their duties started to arise when President Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. In 1941 President Roosevelt authorized the top-secret project titled The Manhattan Project, in which American scientist worked to develop the atomic bomb. The Manhattan Project was kept so secret that while Vice President Henry Wallace was in the meeting that authorized the project, Vice President Harry Truman had no knowledge of the project (A Tentative, n.d.; History.com, 2021). It was only on April 24, 1945, 12 days after the death of President Roosevelt, that President Truman was fully briefed on the atomic weapons project (History.com, 2021).

Due to his own health issues and being horrified at how ill prepared Truman was, President Dwight D. Eisenhower allowed Vice President Richard Nixon to be more “intimately involved in executive life” (Blakemore, 2020). Other issues that worried Eisenhower were the advancements in medical technologies and the prospects that “a seriously ill president might live on for years without being able to carry out his duties and be too incapacitated to resign and transfer them to anyone else” (Blakemore, 2021). Arguments for a constitutional amendment were led by Senator Estes Kefauver starting during the Eisenhower administration, were renewed in 1963, and cultivated into the 25th Amendment in 1967 as a result of the Kennedy assassination.

The assassination of President Kennedy displayed another limitation of the constitutional construction of the vice president. Because Johnson had suffered a heart attack in July 1955, there were concerns about Johnson's health as he became president. Due to the Constitution not having a provision to replace a vice president that meant

should Johnson also become incapacitated before the election the presidency would be passed to the Speaker of the House 71-year-old John McCormack and then Senate Pro Tempore 86-year-old Carl Hayden (Bomboy, 2021). The creation of the 25th amendment worked to solve these issues in four ways. First, it clearly defined that the vice president ascends to the presidency should the sitting president become incapacitated. Second, it established a clear path to fill vacancies in the office of Vice President in between election years. Third, it laid the foundation for presidential powers to be transferred voluntarily from the President to the Vice President and back in the event of a presidential medical emergency. Fourth, it described how the Vice President, along with a majority of the Cabinet, could determine that the President is unable to conduct their duties (Blakemore, 2021).

The Eagleton Affair and the Rise of the Modern Vice President

Due to the recent string of Presidents that either died in office or experienced health concerns, the ratification of the 25th Amendment, and the Cold War, the vice-presidential nominee started to gain more national attention. As a result, the election of 1972 would be the last time the national convention would nominate a Vice President. In July 1972 under pressure to find a vice presidential candidate for Senator George McGovern, Senator Thomas Eagleton was hastily picked without a background check being performed. On three separate occasions in the 1960s Eagleton was hospitalized for depression and had received electroshock therapy as treatment. This information plagued the McGovern campaign because of voter perceptions about Eagleton's mental illness and nuclear weapons should Eagleton ascend to the presidency (NPR Staff, 2012).

Prior to being nominated in 1976 Jimmy Carter reflected on the Eagleton affair and concluded that because Presidents had an irrational fear of the second-in-command and as a result Vice Presidents have largely been a wasted asset. Moreover, Carter also felt the President had a duty to the American people “to use available resources and to make certain that the vice president was able and sufficiently prepared to assume the presidency” (Goldstein, 2016). The Carter campaign started the first ever vetting process for a vice presidential candidate and Carter, with the help of some advisors, would select the running mate not the convention. However, Carter waited to announce his selection until the national convention to generate news coverage about the campaign, a tool used by campaigns to this day (Blakemore, 2020).

Carter chose Walter Mondale as his running mate and included him in briefs and press conferences; after the election, Mondale helped Carter to set policy for their administration (NPR Staff, 2012). President Carter also established an official office in the West Wing for the Vice President and included Mondale in almost all matters and would consider Mondale’s opinion, even if they disagreed on a topic (NPR Staff, 2012). This new version of the vice presidency is also known as the “modern vice president” who “are often selected to widen a presidential candidate’s appeal or to balance out perceived political or policy deficiencies” (Goldstein, 2016). As a result of this new model of vice presidency, this office would have a greater public profile and has been used as a basic model for every Vice President since Mondale (Goldstein, 2016).

Through this examination of the evolution of the vice presidency one now has a better understanding of the office from little significance to being seen as a potential springboard to the presidency. Since the dawn of the nuclear age, Americans have had 12

new Vice Presidents. Of those, six went on to win their party's nomination and four became president. Historically, the Office of Vice President was seen as the place for politicians to despair but certainly in the post-war world the office has transformed to include more executive authority. As a result, post-war former vice presidents can bring something to the campaign trail unique to any other candidate, executive experience in the White House. While Carter believed that many of his predecessors feared their Vice Presidents, if a Vice President were to give substantial cause to these fears, there is always the risk being dropped from the ticket in the subsequent election. Considering that Donald Trump stated that "I put people who are loyal to me on a high pedestal and take care of them very well"; should Pence not want to be dropped from the ticket he must quell any fears Trump may have and to display unfettering loyalty until it is ready to jump off the ship (Shesol, 2017).

III. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF MIKE PENCE'S IMAGE REPAIR STRATEGY

Introduction: Marriage in Politics

Now that some insight is given into Pence's target audience, Pence's potential goals, and the evolution of Office of Vice Presidency that benefit those goals; the focus of this chapter explores how Pence engaged in image restoration as a sitting vice president. More specifically, how Pence operates within the constraints of a subservient political spouse to re-establish credibility for the administration while attempting to maintain a positive perception. Before one can look at Pence's use of image repair, insight must be provided as to what it means to be a subservient political spouse.

In an interview with TIME Correspondent Leo Janos (1969), President Johnson's Vice President, Hubert Humphrey, stated that:

It does not matter who happens to be President. Anyone who thinks that the Vice President can take a position independent of the President or his administration simply has no knowledge of politics or government. You are his choice in a political marriage, and he expects your absolute loyalty (para. 2).

Furthering this notion of a political marriage, Denise Bostdorff (1991) argued that the relationship between the president and vice presidents acts like a heteronormative marriage in which the second in command might "take on the old-world wifely role which command women to 'submit yourselves unto your husband'" (pg. 4). In continuing, Bostdorff (1991) explains that during the presidential campaign period, public discourse between the President and Vice President "gradually begins to focus more on the presidential hopeful and less on the vice presidential nominee as an

individual,” and that should the voters not object to the political union on election day then the “second’s subservient relationship with the presidential nominee becomes complete” and the vice president “lose their individuality and become part of an administration identified by the chief executive” (pg.12).

Due to their sense of identity being shifted from the individual to the administration, vice presidents have been known to give an apologia(s) in response to kategoria(s) not of their own making but by the hands of their political spouse. Unfortunately, this may come with the risk of defending actions and behaviors that can then be used against the vice president should they have presidential ambitions. As a result, the subsequent public image of the vice-presidential office holder can be forever tarnished by the actions of their boss.

Indeed, vice presidents turned presidential hopeful often work to regain and maintain their individual political identity and public image while on the campaign trail. An example of a former vice president who made attempts to regain their individual identity occurred during the 2000 election when Vice President Al Gore had reservations about having President Bill Clinton campaign for him, despite pleas from the Democratic Party to utilize President Clinton to electrify the base as Gore slipped in polling. However, because of the controversies that surrounded the Clinton administration, Gore feared adding Clinton to the campaign would alienate independent and undecided voters. For the Gore campaign, the compromise was to have Clinton campaign for Gore in non-swing states (Dizikes, 2000).

In contrast Joe Biden, the next Democratic vice president, decided not to run in the election immediately following the Obama presidency, but announced four years later.

While a spokesperson for Obama stated that picking Biden as his vice president was “one of the best decisions” Obama had made. However, and at Biden’s request, the spokesperson stopped short of fully endorsing Joe Biden amongst the crowded democratic primary (Rossman, 2019). As Biden gained traction to become the Democratic nominee, Obama announced his official endorsement for his vice president. However, to separate the Obama administration from what a potential Biden administration would look like, Obama stated, “the world is different- there’s too much unfinished business for us to look backwards,” (Lea, 2020). This insinuated that Obama’s own platform would have been different between his 2012 campaign and a theoretical 2020 campaign. Echoing those sentiments, Biden stated that due to the Trump presidency, “we face a totally different world than we faced in the Obama-Biden administration” (Clark, 2020).

Chapter Overview

Accordingly, Mike Pence had an ambitious drive to run for the presidency that can be traced back as far as the late 80s, signaling he has been playing long game. From the start of his political career Pence was meticulous in his decisions to enter a campaign, ensuring he would win whatever office he sought after in order to advance his national visibility. Therefore, it would not be surprising to find out that Pence had some acute awareness of the rhetorical challenges a vice president faces after leaving office. That is, Pence would have known before agreeing to be Trump’s vice president that Pence would have to rhetorically regain his autonomy. Given the above information, one could conclude that Pence would engage in behaviors as vice president that would work to more quickly reestablished his political autonomy after leaving office.

Thus, this chapter examines Mike Pence's attempted use of Benoit's Image Repair Theory (IRT) while he served as vice president. More precisely since Pence lost his political autonomy to the Trump administration, this chapter seeks to understand how Pence used IRT in attempts to maintain a positive public image. To get better understanding of Pence's use of Benoit's theory this chapter will be split in three main sections based on kategoria performed by Trump. Each kategoria mentioned correlates to a standard moment in the political life cycle of a vice president. The first section's kategoria revolved around the infamous 2005 Access Hollywood Tape and three instances in which vice-presidential candidate Mike Pence embarked on image repair strategies. The second section's kategoria centered Trump's comments about the protest in Charlottesville followed with three instances where Vice President Pence utilized IRT. Finally, the last section's kategoria involved Trump's attempt to overthrow the election and former Vice President Pence's deployment of image repair tactics to maintain a positive public image.

On the Campaign Trial

Kategoria: Access Hollywood

The first of three kategorias came in response to the controversy of the *Access Hollywood* tape as reported by *The Washington Post*. As part of Trump's October surprise, on October 7, 2016, *The Washington Post* published a bombshell news story with the headline "Trump recorded having an extremely lewd conversation about women in 2015". *The Washington Post* detailed the events in 2005 captured by a video camera. During the video, Trump is heard talking to Billy Bush of *Access Hollywood* making such claims as "I've got to use some Tic Tacs, just in case I start kissing her. You know

I'm automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait" (Fahrenthold, 2016) Trump then furthered his claim stating, "and when you're a star, they let you do it, you can do anything" before infamously saying "grab them by the pussy, you can do anything" (Fahrenthold, 2016).

Almost immediately the same day *The Washington Post* published their reporting, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan disinvited Trump to a Wisconsin rally scheduled to take place on Saturday, October 9, 2016. Instead, Ryan asked Pence if he would take over Trump's spot to represent the ticket that Pence initially agreed to. However, at 11:56 am on October 8, 2016, Mike Pence tweeted a photo with the caption reading "my statement below" (Pence, 2016a).

First Use of IRT During the Campaign: Pence Takes to Twitter

In the first case of Pence's use of image repair, the vice president used five strategies in total, flip-flopping in between denial strategies and reducing the offensiveness. More specifically, Pence started his statement by shifting blame, making sure that the audience knew the "words and actions" were from Donald Trump while simultaneously expressing that his individual identity "as a husband and father" also invoked similar sentiments of being "offended" that many American people shared (Pence, 2016a).

However, after immediately lambasting Trump and working to separate himself from the Access Hollywood scandal, Pence leaned into minimization tactics by highlighting the "eleven-year-old" age of the video (Pence, 2016a). In doing so, Pence attempted to negate the offensiveness of the tape by placing the tape within a timeframe in which Trump could have had some character growth between 2005 and 2016.

However, even after saying that, Pence doubled down on Trump's remarks expressing that not only could he "not condone" but he also "cannot defend them" to shift blame away from Pence and place it directly at Trump's feet (Pence, 2016a).

Despite Pence informing his audience that he could not come to Trump's defense, Pence again attempted to reduce the offensiveness of the tape by reflecting on Trump's use of mortification. In doing so, Pence engaged in bolstering Trump by stating that Trump "expressed remorse and apologized to the American people," adding that he was "grateful" for Trump taking such action. Pence concluded the construction of his apologia cake when applying a corrective action, expressing that he "look[ed] forward to the opportunity he has to show what is in his heart" when Trump was set to debate Hillary Clinton the following day on October 9, 2016 (Pence, 2016a). Once again Pence allowed Trump to take Trump's case to the national audience to take some corrective action to mitigate any potential impacts the Access Hollywood tape would have on the Trump campaign.

Second Use of IRT During the Campaign: Charlotte, North Carolina Rally

Despite Pence's noticeable absence at the 2nd 2016 Presidential Debate to distance himself from Donald Trump, Pence publicly presented his second usage of image repair in response to the Trump Access Hollywood tape after a two-day campaign hiatus. Speaking in front of voters at a campaign rally in Charlotte, North Carolina, on October 10, 2016, after a brief introduction, Pence publicly acknowledged "it's been an interesting few day" and that he is "kind of new to this level... it's high wire without a net... but I'm honored to be here, and I couldn't be more honored that you all would take time to come out and see me" (Pence, 2016b). Almost immediately after the introduction,

Pence jumped right into the apologia using three strategies to reduce offensiveness: bolstering, transcendence, and attack the accuser.

In his attempt to bolster Trump, Pence employed two strategies. The first strategy was to bolster the Republican nominee by means of Trump's own character values. In his second strategy to bolster Trump, Pence used his own character values to equate and bolster the best values of Trump. First, Pence attempted to reaffirm his commitment to joining the ticket by justifying that the people of North Carolina, and the National Republican Party in general, "nominated a man for President who never quits. Never backs down," and through his fighting spirit, Pence believed that Trump can still go on to become President. Pence again noted how Trump has admitted to being wrong and that it is one thing for "a big man to know when he's wrong" but it speaks volumes that Trump has "the humility to apologize and be transparent and be vulnerable with people" (Pence, 2016b).

Additionally, Pence worked to booster Trump's character by highlighting the similarities between Trump and "the spirit of America" as Trump shown to be "strong, freedom-loving, independent, optimistic, and willing to fight every day for what he believes in and what makes this nation great" (Pence, 2016b). Toward the end of the campaign speech Pence changed tactics to compare his own character to Trump, comparing both of their grandfathers' experiences passing through Ellis Island, both of their father's experiences as businessmen, and that they "were both raised to believe to whom much is given, much will be required" (Pence, 2016b). Pence summarized that he, as well as Trump, "both believe in the American Dream, because we've lived it, our families lived it" (Pence, 2016b). In doing so, Pence gave the American voter an

alternative to Trump's character so that way even if the American people do not believe in the subjective nature of Pence's description of Trump's character, through the narrative description of their similar upbringings, Pence sought to use his own public image with the voters to elevate Trump's public image.

Much like in his deployment of bolstering strategies, Pence engaged in two acts of transcendence. The first way that Pence used transcendence was to compare Trump's own apology to the values of the Christian faith. Secondly, Pence differentiated the values between Trump the individual and Trump the politician. Being an avid believer in Christ as part of his public image, Pence directly confronted the idea that one could not be a Christian and still support Trump. Pence proclaimed that "my faith informs me that we're to hold up a Godly standard, and we're to aspire to live Godly lives"; however, realizing that most people would disagree whether Trump was living up to a Godly standard, Pence informed the audience that "we all fall short of the glory of God, that there's no one righteous, other than the One" (Pence, 2016b). By invoking inclusionary language in that the collective mass falls short at some point or another, Pence helped humanize Trump under the guise of Christian value that we will all have moments of moral faux pas. Additionally, Pence reflected on the Christian values of grace and forgiveness to reduce the offensiveness of Trump's comments to justify to the American people how a self-proclaimed Christian could still lend their support to Trump, despite what may appear as a conflict of value. In using Christian values relating to the Access Hollywood tape, Pence suggested that while the comments were obscene, even the president can also fall short to the glory of God and therefore justify Trump's comment.

Second, because this was a campaign speech, Pence used transcendence to explain how the values of politician Donald Trump should hold more importance to voters than the values of Donald Trump, the person. Pence told the crowd when he and Trump arrived in Washington D.C that they were going to follow in the footsteps of two prominent presidents from both parties, President John F. Kennedy and President Ronald Reagan, and “cut taxes across the board for working families, small businesses, and family farms, get rid of . . . death taxes, once and for all we’re going to lower business taxes” (Pence, 2016b). Using this bipartisan metric on tax cuts suggested that Donald Trump would share similar values as two well-respected presidents from either side of the political spectrum. Pence further stated that “Trump is going to sign a moratorium on . . . any new federal red tape” and dismantle “every single Obama executive order that is stifling jobs and growth in the American economy” and that “the war on coal will come to a crashing halt” (Pence, 2016b).

In this, Pence shifted away from appealing to a bipartisan audience and focused more on an audience that shared more conservative Republican values, essentially creating a cost-benefit analysis between personal and politician Trump. Lastly, Pence even offered that Trump the individual could help Trump the politician. Recalling his status as a business leader, Pence stated, “when Donald Trump becomes negotiator-in-chief,” Trump will not only “renegotiate NAFTA” but will also “get out of this multination deal in the Asian Pacific Rim” and hold “trading partners accountable for the commitments that they make to the American people” (Pence, 2016b). In reflecting on how Trump’s past as a businessperson would benefit working families, Pence also

showed how even the flawed Trump in the 2005 Access Hollywood tape could still have some redeeming qualities.

Finally, in this campaign speech, Pence attacked the accuser to reduce offensiveness by attacking two entities: the media and Hillary Clinton. After giving direct attention to the kategoria, Pence leveled with the crowd stating that the 2016 election was “a choice between two futures ... despite all the distractions, this election is really about big things” (Pence, 2016b). In providing his explanation as to who was responsible for these distractions, Pence stated that the significant issues “tend to get lost in the den of whatever the media is talking about on any particular day” (Pence, 2016b). Later in the speech, Pence again attacked the media in airing his grievances that “the media continues to ignore the avalanche of controversies and corruptions” coming primarily during her tenure as Secretary of State (Pence, 2016b). In framing his attack on the media in such a way, Pence created a juxtaposition that suggests that the media is not reporting on the big issues and their coverage of the candidates is bit one-sided. However, Pence took this campaign speech to offer his attacks on Clinton, who during the October 9, 2016, 2nd Presidential Debate accused Trump of being unfit for office, stating:

Well, like everyone else, I've spent a lot of time thinking over the last 48 hours about what we heard and saw. You know, with prior Republican nominees for president, I disagreed with them on politics, policies, principles, but I never questioned their fitness to serve. Donald Trump is different. I said starting back in June that he was not fit to be president and commander in chief. And many Republicans and independents have said the same thing. What we all saw and heard on Friday was Donald talking

about women, what he thinks about women, what he does to women, and he has said that the video doesn't represent who he is. But I think it's clear to anyone who heard it, that it represents exactly who he is (Clinton, 2016).

In making his attacks against Clinton, Pence argued that Secretary of State Clinton made “our allies less secure” and proclaimed that “our enemies are more emboldened” and that “we cannot have four more years apologizing to our enemies and abandoning our friends” (Pence, 2016b).

Further, Pence placed blame on the rise of ISIS, the events of Benghazi, and Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, among a list of other foreign policy blunders during the Obama administration on both Obama and Clinton before stating that “Hillary Clinton is essentially running on a promise for a third Obama term” (Pence, 2016b). In his last major attack on Clinton, Pence brought up some conversations that Clinton had behind closed doors, much like Trump's Access Hollywood tape. According to Pence (2016b) these conversations included potential ties between a foreign government and The Clinton Foundation, the Clinton email scandal, and “the Wall Street speeches that Bernie Sanders was so interested in.” Additionally, Pence brought up speeches Clinton gave about an economy that has a “common market with open trade and open borders” at a Brazilian Bank, as well as advocating for “socialized medicine” in Canada (Pence, 2016b).

Third Use of IRT During the Campaign: CBS This Morning Interview

Unfortunately for the Trump/Pence campaign, Trump's apologia at the 2016 2nd Presidential Debate prompted the response of PEOPLE Magazine writer Natasha

Stoynoff who, in an October 12, 2016, PEOPLE Magazine article, accused the presidential candidate of non-consensual kissing, stating “talk is talk. But it wasn’t just talk in my case, it was very much action. And, just for the record, Mr. Trump, I did not consent” (Stoynoff, 2016). Again, the Trump/Pence campaign had to address the new claims and how they appear within the context of the Access Hollywood tape released five days prior. On Sunday, October 14, 2016, Vice Presidential nominee Mike Pence joined Charlie Rose and Norah O’Donnell on CBS This Morning to address the new claims against Trump.

In this interview, Pence used a hodgepodge of image restoration tactics previously in addressing this kategoria: attacking the accuser, minimization, and bolstering. Despite the hosts’ attempts at keeping Pence on track with talking specifically about the Trump/Pence campaign, Pence managed to attack Clinton on two different occasions, primarily centering her time as Secretary of State and her involvement with the Clinton Foundation. In his third attack, Pence focused on the reporters of the Washington Post article “who wrote a similar story six months ago for the New York Times have wrote this story and that story was completely discredited” (Rose, 2016). In his final attack on the accuser, Pence combined both Clinton and the media as one entity, stating that “we’re simply not going to allow the slander and lies emerging from the Clinton political machine and being propagated in the media to distract attention from the real issues affecting the American people” (Rose, 2016).

Another more common image repair strategy Pence used during this interview is minimization. Throughout the interview, Pence attempted to minimize the significance of the accusation by reminding the hosts and American voters that the Access Hollywood

tape was eleven years old. When asked if any legal action was going to occur because of what Pence argued was unsubstantiated claims, Pence reminded the host that Melania Trump had already put “*PEOPLE Magazine* on notice that ... the claims from twelve years ago... are potentially actionable in a court of law” (Rose, 2016). In placing a reference of time on the accusation from the *PEOPLE Magazine* article, Pence again tried to attempt to minimize the seriousness of the allegation because of the passage of time.

One last tactic Pence used in this apologia is that of bolstering. When asked by Rose if Pence believed Trump, Pence not only lamented how Trump is “someone who has a long record of ... loving his family” and “lifting his family up” (Rose, 2016). Immediately following that statement, Pence drew on the business aspect of Trump, stating that he has a history of “employing and promoting women in positions of authority” to show Trump has respect for women. In his last attempt to bolster Trump, Pence again remarked about how Trump “showed humility. He showed heart. He focused that national presidential debate back on the issue” (Rose, 2016).

The Trump Administration

Kategoria: Trump’s Comments After Charlottesville Protest

The second scandal of the Trump presidency to be examined arose from the president’s comments about the 2017 protest in Charlottesville, just seven months after Trump took the oath of office. On August 11, 2017, white nationalists infamously “marched in a torchlight procession,” chanting slogans such as “blood and soil,” “you will not replace us,” and other antisemitic chants (Heim, 2017). It would be the start of a 24-hour rally dubbed “United the Right” featuring white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and members of the Ku Klux Klan as they joined together to protest the removal of a statue of

Robert E. Lee as well as the change in name for the park that dawned his name (Katz, 2017). At his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, President Trump released a statement on August 12, 2017, assuring that “we condemn the in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry, and violence on many sides - many sides” (Keneally, 2018). Trump received initial pushback for not explicitly condemning the actions of white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and the Ku Klux Klan but he did eventually do so two days later in a televised address.

First Use of IRT During the Trump Administration: Cartagena Press Conference

During a joint press conference with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos on August 13, 2017, in Cartagena, Colombia, Mike Pence was given the opportunity to address the criticism Trump received. In response, Pence engaged in four different tactics of image restoration: mortification, corrective action, good intentions, and Pence ends by attacking the accuser. In his opening remarks on Charlottesville, Pence described the beauty of both the community and the University of Virginia before adding that the events in Charlottesville were “in no way a reflection of the good and decent people of Charlottesville or America” and that President Trump “clearly and unambiguously condemned the bigotry, violence, and hatred” that occurred (Pence, 2017a). Pence then reflected on the deaths of “the young woman” and “the two police officers” as well as to those who were injured that day, telling them “our hearts go out” to those individuals (Pence, 2017a).. Pence then took a firmer stance on Charlottesville, doing what Trump did not do, stating that “we have no tolerance for hate and violence, from white supremacist, neo-Nazis, or the KKK” and added that “the President also made clear that behavior by others of different militant perspectives are also unacceptable” (Pence,

2017a). In this account of mortification, Pence worked to remind the audience of the true beauty of Charlottesville and that Trump condemned those actions that were seen as antithetical to Charlottesville. Similar to his political spouse Pence then expressed sorrow for the loss of life and the injuries that resulted from the protest. However, in order to repair the image of the administration Pence breaks away from his political spouse and calls out the white supremacist groups responsible by name. Suppose though that was not enough to repair the image of the administration, Pence did provide some corrective action that was taking place in the aftermath of Charlottesville, stating that the Trump administration was going to pull all the levers of the Department of Justice “to investigate and prosecute those responsible. And we will hold them to account, under the law” (Pence, 2017a).

Next, Pence attempted to evade responsibility by noting Trump’s good intentions before reducing the offensiveness by attacking the accuser. One major issue at the heart of the kategoria that arose after the Bedminster address was Trump's failure to call out by name those responsible. However, Pence highlighted Trump's good intentions in Trump’s “call for unity” that is needed in “these divided times in our country” (Pence, 2017a). Essentially Pence is telling the audience that while Trump might have fallen short in Trump’s response to Charlottesville, Trump was coming from a good place when doing so. Pence then moved to reduce the offensiveness by attacking the media, which Pence argued that they “spent more time criticizing the President’s words than they did criticizing those who perpetrated the violence, to begin with” (Pence, 2017a). In making this comparison, Pence accused those in the national media of doing the same they accused Trump of doing.

Second Use of IRT During the Trump Administration: Santiago Press Conference

However, two days later on August 15, 2017, at a press conference intended for infrastructure, Trump doubled down on his previous statements. Trump attempted to defend his initial statement and when pressed about his initial response, Trump retorted, stating that “I think there is blame on both sides. You look at both sides. I think there is blame on both sides” (Keneally, 2018). On August 16, 2017, while on a diplomatic trip to Latin America, Vice President Mike Pence and Chilean President Michelle Bachelet held a joint news conference where The Washington Post’s Phil Rucker asked Pence if blame could be placed on both sides and should confederate monuments be taken down. In a short statement that did not answer the second question, Pence offered two tactics for restoring the image of the Trump administration: mortification and good intentions.

In making attempts at mortification, Pence simply referred to the initial apologia he gave in Colombia and doubled down, stating that he “stands by those words” (Pence, 2017b). Pence again offered remorse in the death of Heather Heyer and said that he had “been praying for God’s peace and comfort for her family and her friends and her loved ones. And we’re also praying that in America that we will not allow the few to divide the many” (Pence, 2017b). Pence reminded the audience that “the president said so eloquently when we are united around our shared values” (Pence, 2017b). Utilizing the tactic of good intentions, Pence relied on his political spouse’s apologia that expressed in order to repair the image of the administration.

Third Use of IRT During the Trump Administration: 2020 Vice Presidential Debate

The third time Pence would have to reflect on Charlottesville during the 2020 Vice Presidential Debate on October 7, 2020. With Joe Biden making Charlottesville a central

pillar for his reason to run and mounting racial protests in response to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, it became no surprise that racism and hatred were a topic of conversation. In a segment of the debate that focused on criminal justice reform, Senator Kamala Harris brought in President Trump's remarks from the September 29, 2020, presidential debate in which "the President of the United States took a debate stage in front of 70 million Americans and refused to condemn white supremacist" (Pence, 2020). At this point, Mike Pence started shaking his head in negation while offering a simple denial by twice stating "not true" (Pence, 2020). As Senator Harris continued, she stated, "he on the issue of Charlottesville... said there were 'fine people on both sides'" after which Harris's time ended and moderator Susan Page allowed Pence one minute to respond (Pence, 2020). In this part of the apologia, Pence started to immediately attack the accuser stating that "I think this is one of the things that makes people dislike the media so much in the country, Susan. Is that you selectively edit, just like Senator Harris did, comments that President Trump and I...make" before then attacking the record of Senator Harris during her time as district attorney for San Francisco and Attorney General for the State of California (Pence, 2020).

After the 2020 Election

Kategoria: Trump Attempts to Overthrow the 2020 Election

The third and final kategoria includes events leading up to and including January 6th, 2021, more precisely President Trump's demands that as Presiding Officer of the Joint Session of Congress, Vice President Mike Pence reject votes from the electoral college vote in a few key states to keep them both in power. In a now since-deleted tweet on December 22, 2020, Twitter user @Raiklin tweeted a photo of a memorandum

demanding that “@VP @Mike_Pence MUST do this, tomorrow,” with the subject line “Operation ‘PENCE CARD’-Dec 23rd”, in which legal reasoning was used as an attempt to justify Pence rejecting votes from the electoral college (Alemany, 2021). This caught the attention of President Trump, who retweeted the post on December 23, 2020. From that moment, Trump publicly expressed his belief that Pence did have the constitutional authority to decertify the election.

First Use of IRT After the 2020 Election: Dear Colleague

As the vice-presidential motorcade was getting ready to leave Number One Observatory Circle, the vice president's residence, en route to the Capitol on January 6th, Pence sent a letter to his colleagues on the Hill in a “Dear Colleague” letter (Pence, 2021a). Through this letter, Pence offered two image restoration strategies: defeasibility and shifting blame. In the first part of the letter, Pence explained he shared “concerns of millions of Americans about the integrity of this election” and that voters are entitled to “a full investigation of electoral misconduct” and Pence as the presiding officer will make sure a hearing takes place in Congress on these objections (Pence, 2021a).

However, Pence also made sure to point out that the elected representatives from both Houses of Congress would ultimately be the ones to decide if the Electoral College votes were free and fair. In doing so, Pence already established a foundation that he could not unilaterally make those decisions. Pence then gave a history of the formation of the Electoral Count Act, and Congress has used these guidelines “without exception” since its ratification. Furthering, Pence stated that after studying “our Constitution, our laws, and our history,” he concluded that he could not “accept or reject electoral votes unilaterally” but also resisted the idea that the “electoral vote should never be challenged

in a Joint Session of Congress” (Pence, 2021a). On the concept of having unilateral authority over the counting of the electoral votes, Pence stated that “the Presidency belongs to the American people, and to them alone,” and this idea is “entirely antithetical” to the “separation of power and checks and balances under the Constitution” that the Framers envisioned (Pence, 2021a).

Pence also relied on the words of Supreme Court Justice Joseph Bradley and Appeals Judge J. Michael Luttig to further this notion that he lacked the authority that some expected from him. However, Pence also started to shift the blame once he made it clear he did not have the power to count the electoral votes unilaterally; Pence also made it known through his interpretation of the law that only the congressional elected representatives can contest electoral votes. Pence stated that those who “suggest that raising objections under the Electoral Count Act is improper or undemocratic improper” or undemocratic” failed to acknowledge the entire history of the Electoral Count Act (Pence, 2021a). Pence the reminded those who have made such a suggestion that they “fail to acknowledge that Democrats raised objections in Congress each of the last three times that a Republican candidate for President prevailed” (Pence, 2021a).

Second Use of IRT After the 2020 Election: New Hampshire Lincoln-Reagan Dinner

After the events of January 6th and after the Inauguration of President Joe Biden on January 20th, Mike Pence remained relatively quiet until his attendance at the Lincoln-Reagan Dinner hosted by the Hillsborough County Republicans in Manchester, New Hampshire. For the most part, Pence talked about the Trump/Pence administration's success compared to what he believes to be the failures of the Biden/Harris administration. In describing his vision of the current Republican Party, Pence remarked

that “our Republican Party has now become the home party for the America agenda,” an agenda marked by “a strong military, secure borders, free enterprise, support for law enforcement” and that Republicans recognize that “at the center of our Democratic institution is the principle of one person, one vote” (Pence, 2021b). The concept of one person-one vote was at the heart of Pence’s decision not to reject the electoral votes on January 6 unilaterally.

In one of the first strategies of image restoration, Pence shifted blame by stating that “the leadership of Nancy Pelosi and the Democrats in Washington want to nationalize our election,” essentially blaming Pelosi for engaging in the same tactics Pence refused to do on January 6. When discussing the events of January 6 in greater detail toward the end of the speech, Pence also engaged in the image restoration strategy of provocation when stating that “President Trump and I have spoken many times since we left office, and I don’t know if we’ll ever see eye to eye on that day” before attacking his accuser which he sees as the “Democrats or their allies in the media to use one tragic day to discredit the aspirations of millions of Americans” (Pence, 2021b).

Third Use of IRT After the 2020 Election: Florida Federalist Society

The final attempt by Pence at image restoration occurred on February 4, 2022, when Pence gave a keynote speech at The Federalist Society’s Eighth Annual Florida Chapters Conference in Lake Buena Vistas Florida. Like his speech in New Hampshire, Pence focused much of the speech lauding the Trump/Pence administration and condemning the actions of the Biden/Harris administration. Toward the end of the address, Pence stated that “in these times when our nation seems so divided... we must do as Americans have done through much more challenging times in our history. We must stand strong on the

Constitution” (Pence, 2022). Pence then alluded to the oath he took on January 20, 2017, to become Vice President, remarking that it was the same oath many in the audience have taken. The same oath Pence’s father and son took when going into the military. Pence then warns the audience, “as Constitutional Conservatives; the American people must know that we will always keep our oath to the Constitution, even when it would be politically expedient to do otherwise” (Pence, 2022). Pence reflected on the words of the late Justice Antonin Scalia, who talked about applying the Constitution despite what the personal outcome might be and advised the audience that “the American people must know as the Bible says, that we’ll keep our oath even when it hurts” (Pence, 2022).

At this point, Pence shifted his focus to the events of January 6th using four different image restoration strategies: transcendence, shift blaming, defeasibility, and attacking the accuser. In embracing the language of Article II Section I of the Constitution, Pence explained that “our Founders were deeply suspicious of consolidated power in our nation’s capital,” and it was for this reason that the “Constitutional Convention settled on state-based elections” and that the Senate was right in voting against legislation that would “nationalize our elections” (Pence, 2022). In doing so, Pence laid the foundation of greater ideals found within Article II Section I of the Constitution that should triumph any call to decide the outcome of an election in the nation’s capital.

In reflecting on the attempts of some within the Republican Party who held the belief that Pence could overturn the election. Pence asserted that he “heard this week that President Trump said I had the right to overturn the election. President Trump is wrong” (Pence, 2022). Through this condemnation of the former president, Pence engaged in

shifting blame by expressing who Pence believed was on the wrong side in the debate of whether a sitting vice president can nationalize an election by overturning its result during the Joint Session of Congress. Pence then began to engage in differentiation when referring to the idea that “the Presidency belongs to the American people and the American people alone” before asserting that it is un-American for one person to decide the outcome of an election and concluding that “under the Constitution, I had no right to change the outcome of our election” (Pence, 2022). Here Pence used the Constitution and the ideals of fundamental American Democratic values and beliefs to argue his hands were tied in certifying the votes once all objections were heard. Pence concluded his image restoration within this speech by attacking “Democrats or their allies in the media,” who Pence claimed used “the actions of those who ransack the Capitol” to discredit those that voted a second Trump/Pence term (Pence, 2022). Using this line of attack, Pence worked to reduce the offensiveness of his decision not to overturn the election by coming to the defense of those who voted for him in 2020 despite what Pence claims in his attack to be Democrats and the constant media focus on January 6th.

IV. CONCLUSION

Introduction: Walking the Political Tightrope

During the Trump/Pence administration, the relationship between Trump and his vice president was seen as one where Trump gave “his vice president an astounding degree of autonomy to execute his vision and pursue the core goals of his presidency, asking only for dutiful subservience in return” (Alberta, 2017). As a result of this Pence was seen as having to walk a tightrope between President Trump and Pence’s presidential aspirations (Alberta, 2017; Collinson; 2022; Karni, 2020; Mike Pence, 2016). At the Charlotte campaign rally Pence would even remark that being a vice presidential nominee is like a “high wire without a net” (Pence, 2016b).

However, much like the President, the Vice President can only be constitutionally removed from office in the cases of resignation, impeachment, or death, so a President may not replace a sitting Vice President until a vacancy occurs or until the next election. Due to this, “all Vice Presidents who serve under a first-term President are subject to dismissal before the next campaign” (Sirgiovanni, 1994). Indeed, rumors circulated in 2019 that Trump was going to dump Pence in favor of former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley as a way for Trump to appeal to more moderate Republican women (Cillizza, 2019). Historically though, of the 51 individuals to hold the title of Vice President only 8 have been a one-term Vice President, and “various evolutionary factors in the Office of Vice President” seemingly have “made it more difficult to dump a reluctant Vice President from the ticket” (Sirgiovanni, 1994). Thus, within this context one can gather that when walking the vice-presidential tightrope, Vice President Pence’s target audience is not President Trump. Rather Pence’s tightrope is strung between a

series of different competing audiences that changes in part because of the state of politics at any one moment in time in tandem with his presidential ambitions.

Much like other former vice presidents who have launched their own campaigns, if Pence were to announce his own run it should be expected that the Never Trump Movement (NTM) and independent voters may be wary of Pence's close proxemics to the Trump administration. However, if Pence wants any hopes at securing the Republican Party's nomination, he cannot draw a line in the sand and forget about those that elected him to become Vice President, President Trump's supporters. As a result, while target audiences will change over the course of time, Trump's base is a consistent audience as Pence navigates each kategoria. To maintain a positive image with American voters with the goal of becoming President, Pence had to delicately walk in between these three competing audiences. Should Pence fail at repairing his image in the eyes of either of these audiences he risked falling into a political schism where political careers go to die. However much like a professional tightrope walker, Pence had a balancing pole to quickly shift weight and regain their center of balance, Pence had a similar pole he can use to maintain balance, his own image perception of being a Christian, Conservative, and Republican.

Chapter Overview

After having now assessed Pence's potential goals and how the era of the modern vice presidency may aid in those goals, and after analyzing Pence's image repair strategies after three kategoria, this chapter will weigh the effectiveness of Pence's image repair strategies in attempting to tightrope walk between conflicting audiences in two ways. First by examining the changes in the target audience of Pence's image repair in

the context of each kategoria. More specifically, how Pence's rhetoric changed from his first apology to the third apology within each of the three kategoria. The second part of this chapter will conduct a holistic examination of Mike Pence's image repair rhetoric as Vice President from the 2016 campaign to the 2022 Florida Federalist Society Conference. By doing so this thesis seeks to identify any similarities or differences in Pence's usage of image repair strategies in relation to the different audiences Pence engaged with. After which this chapter will then shift focus and provide recommendations for future areas of research.

2016 Vice Presidential Nominee for the Republican Party, Mike Pence

Establishing the Target Audience: Trump's Base, Never Trump Movement, and Independent Voters

When Pence was asked to join the Trump campaign it was largely to appeal to the Evangelical Christian voters. The self-proclaimed Christian, conservative, and Republican would become a critical asset to the Trump campaign in the aftermath of the Access Hollywood tape. Given that there were closed door meetings in which the Republican Party was actively trying to convince Pence to take the nomination away from Trump, it is surprising that Pence opted to tweet an apology instead of taking a more direct route to the presidency. However, considering Pence's past political behavior one could speculate that Pence would view such actions of governmental intervention as antithetical to conservative values. As such, Pence would not accept the Republican nomination for President in a way that would go against his conservative values. With this context, Pence has three main audiences he has to balance between: Trump's base supporters, members of the NTM, as well as independent voters.

First Response to Access Hollywood: Statement via Twitter

Despite not privately agreeing to replace Trump, Pence still displayed his frustrations with Trump in his first use of image repair via a Twitter post. While Bostdorff (1991) reminds us that Vice Presidents lose their autonomy, Pence made the attempt to shift the blame in order to remind the NTM and independent voters that Pence was not the one who engaged in the unacceptable behavior. In utilizing what fleeting autonomy Pence had left, Pence specifically called out Donald Trump as the individual responsible for the Access Hollywood tape. Immediately after condemning Trump by name, Pence, like a tightrope walker who experienced a strong gust of wind, pivoted his balancing pole to rebalance himself among the Trump base using minimization tactics. After regaining balance, Pence again appealed to the NTM and independent audiences in offering a second condemnation of Trump. Pence again tried to rebalance himself among the Trump base by praising Trump's apology. Finally in utilizing corrective action strategy, much like when Pence turned towards Christianity to justify changing his stance, Pence offered a divine hope for the NTM and independent audiences that Trump is able to truly express "what is in his heart" (Pence, 2016). While Pence is unsure of his future on the ticket the usage of these image repair strategies is interesting in that Pence made ardent attempts to address all three target audiences.

Second Response to Access Hollywood: Charlotte Campaign Speech

If there was ever a specific moment in time where Pence fully embraced being Trump's Vice President, his campaign speech in Charlotte, North Carolina, would be a good point of reference. Here we saw Pence use bolstering strategies to display the better qualities of Trump. Interestingly, Pence also used his own image to help boost Trump's

image, thus initiating the merger Bostdorff (1991) stated would inevitably lead to Pence losing his autonomy. Consequently, Pence could have potentially placed his public image among the NTM and independent voters at risk.

Using his balancing pole, Pence attempted to rebalance himself among these audience members, using his own image as both a Christian and a Conservative. In engaging in the image repair tactic of transcendence, Pence used his Christian faith to persuade the NTM and independent audience members that “we all fall short of the glory of God” and that “we are called to forgive as we have been forgiven” (Pence, 2016a). The last part of the image repair strategy is interesting because while Pence swore off negative campaigning in 1991 after a decisive defeat, he seemingly goes against one of his initial political philosophies in attacking his opponent.

While the attacks might not have been as direct as Trump’s own attacks, it offers yet another moment of Pence accepting the inevitable moment when he would lose political autonomy in favor of the Trump administration. In attacking the Clintons and the outgoing Obama administration, Pence used his image as a Conservative as a driving device in two ways. First as a means to attack the accuser, but also as a means of highlighting how a Trump/Pence administration would be different. In its entirety the Charlotte campaign speech offered a moment of rhetorical evolution for Pence. After coming to a decision about Pence’s future on the ticket, the image repair strategies used in the Charlotte campaign speech were targeted more so towards the NTM and independent voters.

Third Response to Access Hollywood: CBS This Morning interview

Much like the end of the Charlotte speech, the CBS This Morning interview acts more as a candidate running for office than offering an apology. After publicly accepting the loss of Pence's political autonomy in Charlotte, in order to maintain a positive image Pence had to rebalance himself amongst the NTM and independent audiences by offering attacks both on Clinton as well as the media. In doing so, Pence made the attempt to divert attention away from the Access Hollywood tape by placing focus on some of the actions conducted by Clinton while she was Secretary of State. Here Pence is attempting to downplay Trump's private comment by comparing it to the decisions made while Clinton worked in the White House. Even if the NTM and independent voters did not immediately make the comparison, Pence also brought up speeches Clinton gave in Brazil and Canada to make a more direct comparison.

By referring to the age of the tape, Pence further attempted to rebalance himself with the NTM and independent voters using minimization in two ways. First, by minimizing the kategoria in its entirety but also in minimizing Pence's relationship with Trump in 2005. As Bostdorff (1991) noted, the merger of political autonomy is only finalized once the ticket has been elected. Should the Trump/Pence ticket lose and Pence publicly side with Trump on this issue it could have lasting negative impacts to his image amongst NTM and independent voters. Thus, in pointing out the age of the recording Pence was able to suggest that the Access Hollywood tape in relation to Pence is not indicative of who Pence is. Simply because while Trump was in Burbank, California, engaging in behaviors that violate social norms, Pence was on the opposite coast overseeing the Republican Study Committee as chairman.

By the CBS This Morning interview the fallout of Trump's comment had been known and showed Trump was falling behind in key swing states (Wright, 2016). Thus, it seems to appear that the CBS This Morning interview was used as a public relations tactic for the Trump campaign to save face specifically with independent voters. However, Pence co-opted the moment to not only save face amongst the independent voters but also those in the NTM.

Holistic Approach to the Target Audience: Access Hollywood

In collectively looking at the changes in focus of different target audiences used throughout to reestablish credibility post-Access Hollywood. While still holding on to the fleeting individual identity, Pence engaged in denial strategies to separate Pence from the Access Hollywood tape. However, Pence also utilized strategies to reduce the offensiveness. Collectively both of these strategies worked to heavily appeal to all three audiences. Thrown into political turbulence with unknown consequences, Pence tried to prevent impacts to his image by balancing between the conflicting audiences. However, after accepting the fate of his political autonomy and solidifying his loyalty to Trump, Pence did not have to worry about his image amongst the Trump base as much as he had to worry about public perception amongst the NTM and independent voters. Thus, we see in both the Charlotte campaign speech and the CBS This Morning interview Pence used image repair strategies that appealed more directly to the NTM and independent voters.

50th Vice President of the United States Mike Pence

Establishing the Target Audience: Trump's Base, members of the Republican Party, and independent voters

Despite Clinton winning the popular vote, Trump won the electoral college with 98% of those who were ideologically consistently conservative, 87% amongst those who were somewhat conservative, and one percentage point more amongst independent voters than Clinton (Pew Research Center, 2018). As a result of the election, those who initially supported the NTM would soon start aligning themselves with the incoming President (Leibovich, 2019). Due to both Trump having a slight advantage over independent voters and with the NTM losing a lot of steam after the election, Pence's tightrope walk would include just Trump's base and independent voters. However, like with Nixon or Clinton, should Trump do anything egregious Trump could face dissent from his own party. As such Pence's tightrope included both the Trump's base and independent voters as well as any Republicans that may publicly rebuke Trump.

First Response to Charlottesville: Press Conference in Cartagena, Colombia

In one of his first apologies as Vice President, Mike Pence fell into the servitude nature that Bostdorff (1991) describes of the Vice President. Specifically, Pence relied more on what Trump said as opposed to Pence's opinion on the subject to draft his apology. Specifically, Pence used the language of the Bedminster address to appeal to the Trump voters. However, to appease the independent voters that would have liked a stronger condemnation from President Trump, Pence specifically called out by name the groups responsible. In doing so Pence attempted to save face with the independent voters

while simultaneously not losing face with the Trump base by not appearing to overstep the president's word.

Interestingly, Pence appeared to use his transformed identity as a member of the Trump administration to maintain his public image amongst both audiences in his use of corrective action. For the Trump voters, this worked to show that the Trump administration was going to make good on Trump's campaign promise of being tough on crime (Lopez, 2016). For the independent voters it expressed that while Trump did not call those groups out by name, independent voters can rest assured that members of those groups will be held accountable. Pence then focused more so on the independent voters by attempting to show the good intentions of the Bedminster address, despite the shortcomings some people saw in it.

In his last strategy Pence again had the independent voter in mind as he attacked the media for criticizing Trump more than the individuals involved in the violence. In this instance of image repair, Pence's primary target audience are those individuals that may be on the fence about a Trump/Pence 2020 ticket. In attacking the media, Pence made Trump look like the victim in this situation allowing room for independent voters and Republicans to sympathize with Trump. As a means of not alienating any of the audience groups, Pence concluded that only few in America "cherish the values that are at the foundation of our nation" (Pence, 2017a).

Second Response to Charlottesville: Press Conference in Santiago, Chile

Unfortunately for Pence, after Trump made comments about blame being placed on both sides many top Republicans rebuked Trump's words (Berman, 2017). In handling this change in audience, Pence simply dismissed the kategoria by referring to his initial

apology instead of specifically addressing Trump's latest comments. By doing so, Pence continued to display his loyalty towards President Trump and the voting base but risked distancing himself from those appalled by the President's latest comment. However, Pence's decision to rely primarily on the stance he took in Colombia would allow Pence to avoid alienating the Trump base while simultaneously giving upset Republicans the condemnation of white supremacist groups that they wanted from Trump.

However, Pence employed his balancing pole in order to rebalance his image among those that were upset with the President's words. Still subject to being conflated with the administration, Vice President Pence reflected on Trump's belief that Americans are the strongest when united around shared values. Using his identity as a Christian to engage in transcendence, Pence told the upset Republicans and independent voters that he prayed for this unification to occur. In doing so Pence attempted to primarily merge back together the disgruntled Republicans and Trump supporters through divine intervention. However, this could also be seen as a means to appeal to the independent voters who might not want to be a part of "the few" that Pence argues "divide the many" (Pence, 2017b)

Third Response to Charlottesville: 2020 Vice Presidential Debate

The last apology Pence gave in response to the Charlottesville protest would occur during the 2020 vice presidential debate. Despite having been primaried, Trump still won all but one delegate in the 2020 primary (Republican Primary Results, 2019). It can therefore be implied at this moment in time that the NTM was made up of an insignificant number of members for Pence to worry about saving face with. Further, when it came down to engaging in more image repair strategies for this specific

kategoria, Pence did not have to worry about saving face amongst the Trump base. Rather he only needed to engage with the independent audience.

As a result, when Harris brought up Trump's refusal to condemn white supremacist in the first 2020 presidential debate, Pence appealed to the independent voters offering a simple denial of the account by shaking his head in disagreement. Pence then attempted to shift blame on both the media and Harris. In doing so, Pence argued to the independent voters that the media "selectively edit[s]" quotes from Trump, Pence and other Republicans (Pence, 2020). Thus, Pence attempted to place blame on the two accusers as a way of expressing to the independent voters that neither Pence nor Trump is at fault, but rather they are both victims. Pence then placed his 1991 lesson on the backburner again in his attacks against Harris. More specifically, Pence attacked Harris's record in prosecuting and incarcerating African Americans at "disproportionate" levels (Pence, 2020). Through these attacks Pence is attempting to show the independent voters that Harris used policies to actively disenfranchise African Americans, whereas Trump is only being accused of things he said.

Holistic Approach to the Target Audience: Comments on Charlottesville

In examining these three apologies through the course of Mike Pence's time as vice president, Pence relied more on the notion that American voters expect the vice president to be loyal. As such, Pence only ever needed to appear loyal to Trump to maintain face with the Trump base. Additionally, due to the outcome of the 2016 election, it would seem reasonable for Pence to present image repair strategies primarily to the Republican and independent voters who picked Clinton over Trump. Indeed, Pence's primary audience between these three apologies falls more towards the independent voter. Yet

even when Republicans were willing to jump off the ship, Pence remained steadfast in his loyalty towards Trump. However, doing so also ran the risk of Pence alienating himself amongst independent voters. Had Pence shown disloyalty while serving as vice president, Pence could have faced an even greater risk to his public image from the Trump base, independent voters, and what remained of the NTM by violating this societal expectation. As a result, during Pence's tenure as vice president, Pence had to walk a tightrope between loyalty to Trump's base on one side and independent voters on the other.

Former Vice President Mike Pence

Establishing the Audience: Trump's Base, Constitutional Republicans, and Independent Voters

The final kategoria that this thesis examined was Trump's attempted effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Exit polling showed that while Trump and Biden got equal support from members of their party with 94%, by a percentage point more Republicans voted for Biden than Democrats who voted for Trump. Further, while Trump enjoyed winning the 2016 independent vote, in the 2020 election Trump would see a 13%-point deficit behind Biden among these voters (National Exit Polls, 2020). As a result of the election the Trump/Pence ticket became the first incumbent to lose the presidential election in almost 30 years and the first presidential incumbent in almost 90 years to lose both chambers of Congress (Blake, 2021). While much of Pence's time as vice president was spent with a unified Republican Party, after Trump's attempt to overthrow the 2020 election more Republicans started publicly condemning Trump. Additionally, the overwhelming difference in support Trump received from independent voters between the 2016 and 2020 election, suggests that at some point during the Trump

administration these voters had a change of heart. As a result, outgoing and former Vice President Pence has to walk a tightrope between the Trump base, Constitutional Republicans, and independent voters.

First Response to Attempt to Overthrow the Election: Dear Colleague Letter

While Pence was rarely seen after the result of the election and before January 6, 2021, Trump worked to persuade his base that it is a societal norm for the vice president to be able to overturn the election. This placed Pence in a rather peculiar spot; should Pence violate this faux societal norm he risked destroying his image among the Trump base. However, if Pence went along with Trump's plan it would have surely eviscerated Pence's image amongst the Constitutional Republicans and Trump to Biden (TTB) independent voters.

Having now had a bit more experience in walking this tightrope in between competing audiences, Pence again stepped onto the high wire in his Dear Colleague letter on January 6, 2021. However, on this tightrope walk Pence will experience the highest levels of turbulence since he joined the Trump campaign in 2016. With Pence running as an incumbent in 2020, Trump's base expected Trump's vice presidency to remain loyal. On the other side are Republicans who would later identify as "Constitutional Republicans" as well as TTB voters (Tabony, 2022). These audience groups expected Pence to only certify the results after the counting of the electors.

Much like Representative Pence, who valued his conservative beliefs above the party he served and stood up against Republican President Bush on the floor of the House, Vice President Pence stood up against Trump on the House Rostrum. In Pence's Dear Colleague letter Pence acknowledged that he has concerns about the integrity of the

election to immediately appeal to the Trump base. Pence then used his conservative value of a limited federal government and his reading of the Constitution to justify to the Trump base his inability to act. Additionally, Pence used the words Justice Bradely, a Republican, and conservative Appeals Judge Luttig to incorporate a coequal branch of government into the conversation to further rationalize his inaction. Using the defeasibility strategy allowed Pence maintain face with TTB independent voters and Constitutional Republicans in that Pence confirmed he would not overturn the election.

However, using his balancing pole to regain footing with the Trump base, Pence used his third pillar image of being a Republican to engage in party politics by shifting blame. In the debate of whether a vice president can or cannot overturn an election as a societal norm, Pence has clearly sided with the idea that societal norms dictate the vice president does not have the authority to do so. To still save face with the Trump base after reaching such a conclusion, Pence responded to attacks by congressional Democrats expressing the fact that Democrats offered similar plans to decertify the election for the past three Republican presidents. By doing so, Pence hoped to preemptively save face with the Trump base by placing Trump's misinterpretation of the Constitution as a product of precedent established by members of the Democratic Party.

However, it may be safe to say that because the Trump base sought to hang Pence just hours after he sent this letter that he was not successful in saving face with the Trump base. Regardless if this was a motivating factor or not, it should at the very least be noted that in between the Dear Colleague letter and the assassination attempt, in a speech at The Ellipse President Trump stated that it "will be a sad day for the country" if Pence did not "come through for us" because Pence had "sworn to uphold our Constitution" (as cited in

Haberman, 2021). Later in the speech Trump would tell members of the audience that “you will never take back our country with weakness” (as cited in Haberman, 2021).

Additionally, even Democratic members of Congress like Representative Jamie Raskins, who originally thought Pence “went along way too much,” ultimately called him a “hero” adding that he “was a constitutional patriot”. Thus, it may also be safe to say Pence has a positive image amongst Constitutional Republicans and TTB independent voters (Relman, 2022). However, details that emerged in Bob Woodward and Robert Costa’s *Peril* showed that behind the scenes’ Pence was seeking to justify overthrowing the election. Which could also create new perceptions about who Mike Pence really is among the Constitutional Republicans and TTB voters.

Second Response to Attempt to Overthrow the Election: New Hampshire Lincoln-Reagan Dinner

After certifying the election and the Inauguration of Joe Biden, Pence again became removed from public life. In one of his first appearances since the inauguration, Pence attended the Lincoln-Reagan Dinner in the early voting state of New Hampshire. This would also mark the first time Pence would vocally express his thoughts on the events of January 6. With Trump still being a prominent figure in Republican politics and given that members of Trump’s base were actively seeking to assassinate Pence, one could surmise that Pence now perceived that his public image among the base was tarnished. However, if Pence ever wants to achieve his goals of winning the Republican presidential nomination and to experience a successful general election, Pence must repair his image with the Trump base.

Within this context, we see Pence's tightrope walk occurring between the Trump base on one side and Constitutional Republicans and TTB voters on the other. Experiencing turbulence the moment Pence steps on the tightrope, Pence immediately started this apology by lamenting the successes of the Trump/Pence administration. Afterwards Pence then set his eyes on attacking the Biden/Harris administration. In starting his speech off this way, Pence tried to invite Trump's base to be a part of Pence's conversation. Having used his conservative beliefs to justify not certifying the election of January 6, Pence then relied on the third pillar of his image, being a Republican. Pence proclaimed that one of the principal beliefs of the Republican Party is the idea that one person equals one vote. In doing so Pence is reaching out to the Trump base who believed Trump's claim that people registered in multiple states are casting ballots in each of those states (Lee, 2017).

While still trying to repair Pence's image amongst the Trump base, Pence shifted blame on Pelosi and the congressional Democrats who Pence claimed was attempting "an overreach of federal authority that would render New Hampshire's Constitution null and void" (Pence, 2021b). In using this image repair strategy Pence outwardly engaged with the Trump base, but subtly also engaged with the Constitutional Republicans and TTB voters. By expressing concerns of Democrats engaging in federal overreach, Pence gave a subtle reminder of his middle tier image of being a Conservative to the Constitutional Republicans and TTB voters.

Later in the apology Pence's use of provocation worked to again appeal to the Trump base, essentially telling the base that the perceived offensive act of Pence certifying the election occurred because Trump misled voters. However, recognizing that

stance could hurt his standing with the base, Pence preempted his use of provocation by telling the base that Pence and Trump still had some form of relationship with each other. After affirming his continual relationship with Trump, Pence added that Trump and Pence would probably never see “eye to eye on that day” (Pence, 2021b). Doing so allowed Pence to provide an avenue for the Trump base to continue to issue their frustrations with Pence while still being able to be seen as Trump’s vice president.

In the final image repair strategy used during the Lincoln-Reagan Dinner, Pence’s apology still focused primarily on the Trump base by attacking both Democrat and the media’s attempt to use January 6 to discredit all of Trump’s voters in 2020. Knowing that as long as January 6 is being discussed, Pence’s actions that day will constantly be brought up, impairing his ability to repair his image with the Trump base. As Pence concluded his speech, he again used his self-perception balancing pole to express his Christian faith as a solution. More specifically, much like Pence used his faith to guide him to engage in policies that were antithetical to Pence beliefs, Pence proclaimed that the Republican party needed to use faith to move forward beyond the 2020 election. Using his balancing pole in this way, Pence reached out not only to the base, but also the Constitutional Republicans, and TTB voters as a means of unification. Seeing that Pence’s reputation with the Trump base was shattered, in order to regain balance Pence more outwardly expressed image repair strategies directed towards the base. However, some of the strategies dually worked to reaffirm Pence’s self-perception to the Constitutional Republicans and TTB voters.

First Response to Attempt to Overthrow the Election: Florida Federalist Society Conference

Much like with any politician, Pence giving a speech at a major political reception in an early voting state led to speculations of a future presidential run (Steinhauser, 2021). However, having still not fully repaired his image with the Trump base, Pence's tightrope was very much the same as that which was used in the Lincoln-Reagan Dinner. Another similarity with the Federalist Society speech and the Lincoln-Reagan Dinner is that Pence again highlighted the accomplishments of the Trump/Pence administration while attacking the Biden/Harris administration. While engaging in image repair rhetoric, Pence used his balancing pole to embrace his Conservative ideology to use transcendence to express that neither he nor the Senate Democrats had the power to nationalize an election. Doing so appealed to the Constitutional Republicans and TTB voters but by comparing what Pence was asked to do with what Senate Democrats tried to do, Pence offered another way for the Trump base to support Pence.

The most interesting of all of Pence's image repair strategies came when he engaged in shift blaming. In what could only be described as Pence trying to regain his political autonomy post-vice presidency, Pence made it clear to all three audiences that Pence did not violate societal norms but rather it was former President Trump who attempted to violate these norms. While this was the strongest condemnation Pence gave towards Trump, Pence created a level of hearsay when he engaged in shifting blame. Essentially Pence implied that someone else had told Pence what Trump had said, as opposed to referring specifically to the January 31, 2022, Conroe, Texas rally in which

former President Trump again suggested Pence had the power to overturn the election (Pengelly, 2022).

Even as Pence appealed to the Constitutional Republicans and TTB voters by shifting the blame directly onto Trump, Pence is still walking on the tightrope by attempting to save face amongst the Trump base. After presenting Pence's strongest remarks against Trump, Pence engaged in defeasibility in order to express to all three audiences that Pence lacked the ability to overturn the election. However, when using defeasibility Pence switched his focus specifically to the Trump base in explaining that while, Pence did not have the ability to overturn the election, the same would be true of Vice President Harris. By doing so, Pence worked to highlight that if he were to overturn the election it would set a constitutional precedent that would allow the Democratic Party to use those very levers to circumvent Republicans from taking back the White House.

Much like in his first attempt at image repair, Pence used his Christian faith to justify policy stances that he otherwise would not be on the side of without spiritual guidance. In attempting to reach out to the disappointed Trump base, Pence reflected on the words of John Quincy Adams stating that "duty is ours, results our God's" (as cited in Pence, 2022). Warning the Trump base that if faith in the Constitution is lost that same fate will happen to the country.

Pence then advised all three audiences that to tackle issues like inflation and crime, and that the audiences need to stop focusing on the past and look towards the future instead. Pence then found a common enemy for the audience members to unite against by shifting blame. As with the Lincoln-Reagan Dinner, Pence blamed Democrats and the media for their continual coverage of the attack on the Capitol as the entities responsible

for the division in the Republican Party. In shifting blame, Pence worked to rhetorically eliminate the Trump or Pence debate for the three audiences to become a singular voting base in two ways. First by alluding that the Trump or Pence debate only took place on January 6, 2021, in telling the three audiences to stop looking at the past. Instead, Pence offered to the audience to focus on the problems of today and tomorrow that have occurred under Democratic leadership. Second, Pence pointed out that it is also the Democrats “and their allies in the media” who are constantly bringing up the past, resulting in the ongoing divisions in the Republican Party (Pence, 2022). Thus, suggesting that the Trump base does not have to be pro-Trump and the Constitutional Republicans and TTB voters must be pro-Pence, but rather all three can unite under a common enemy.

In concluding his address to the any remaining Trump base audience members Pence again relied on the first tier of his self-perceived image. Using his Christian faith, Pence (2022) reminded the audience to keep faith in the ideas enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution:

keep faith with those millions of Americans who know in their heart that the sun has not set on the land of the free, and most of all let’s keep faith with Him who has ever guided this great experiment in freedom as we do our duty to God and country.

Pence used his balancing pole one last time to sympathize with the Trump base but also to give one last justification that it was divine forces that guided Pence’s decision to not overturn the election.

Given that by this point Pence had been seen as a potential candidate for 2024 it seems within reason that Pence would be trying to establish some coalition of voters composed of the Trump base, Constitutional Republicans, and TTB audiences. However, given that Trump was also seen as a 2024 candidate when Pence gave this speech, Pence's voting coalition would not include many within the Trump base. To make up for the deficit it would make sense that Pence offered his strongest condemnation against Trump in order to potentially appeal to more TTB independent voters. Even as Pence condemned Trump through the rest of the speech, Pence still made it known to the Trump base that they still have a seat at the table.

Holistic Approach to the Target Audience: Attempts to Overturn the 2020 Election

In looking at the evolution of last image repair strategies this thesis examined, one can see Pence's attempt to separate himself from his 2016 political marriage. Knowing that the separation would essentially create a custody battle between Trump and Pence with the Trump base, Pence focused his image repair strategies primarily on the Trump base. While doing so Pence also offered two different ways for the Trump base to justify a switch from Pence to Trump. Given that Constitutional Republicans would probably not vote for Trump again and that Pence established a strong positive public image during January 6, Pence does not have to worry too much about repairing his image with the Constitutional Republicans.

However, as time passed and Pence started testing the waters of a 2024 presidential run, Pence utilized image repair strategies towards TTB independent voters to win them back. As a result, we see Pence starting to rhetorically separate Pence from Trump at the Lincoln-Reagan Dinner. Unsure of the backlash he would receive, Pence first appealed to

the TTB voters before quickly and more noticeably appealing to the Trump base. However, with ongoing speculation of a third Trump campaign it appeared that Pence was expecting to lose the Trump base. Thus, when Pence went to speak in front of the Federalist Society, Pence became more forceful in attempts to save face with the TTB voters. Much like the Lincoln-Reagan Dinner, Pence almost immediately followed up with attempts to save face with the Trump base, but this time more subtly. In doing so Pence accepted the idea that his 2024 voting coalition would not include many in the Trump base, though he would still welcome them.

Holistic Examination of Six Year of Repairing Image

In taking a holistic approach in the evolution of Pence's image repair strategies from 2016 to 2022, an interesting pattern started to develop. In comparing the Access Hollywood kategoria with the attempts to overturn the election kategoria one sees an almost inverse of behavior. More specifically, within the evolution of the first kategoria Pence first engaged in image repair strategies in attempts to save face with the Trump base, NTM, and independent voters. However, as Pence accepted the terms of the marriage his strategies focused more towards saving face only from the NTM and independent voters and would remain throughout his vice presidency. Inversely Pence focused his image repair on the Trump base first before addressing independent voters in response to his actions on January 6. Yet as Pence accepted the terms of separation the focus on image repair broadened out to include the Trump base, Constitutional Republicans, and TTB voters.

Potential Areas for Future Research

Vice Presidential Rhetoric

Despite being heartbeat away from the presidency, there is surprisingly major gaps in our academic understanding of how the vice president communicates with the American people. Further his thesis has established that in addition to being a heartbeat away from the presidency, post-World War II vice presidents have gained both significant executive powers as well as a greater exposure to the national voting audience. As such I propose communication scholars should engage in studies that focus on the rhetorical relationship between the vice president and the American people. For example, one could expand on this thesis and see if other vice presidents, who have a goal of becoming president, engaged in a similar high stakes' tightrope walk. Expanding even further on that concept, one could also apply a comparative analysis between vice presidents who won the general election versus those that failed to become chief executive. Outside the purpose of this thesis, scholars could also use vice presidential debates or vice-presidential convention acceptance speeches. While only Vice President Gore and Harris are the only vice presidents in recent history to give an election night victory speech, should this become a growing trend for future vice presidents it could present itself as a potential area of research.

Additionally, scholars could expand on Bostdorff's research to further expand on the marriage metaphor that is presented. For example, not all marriages end happily ever after and some lead to a divorce. Therefore, the question then becomes are presidents and vice presidents able to engage in a divorce? If so, in what ways do either one or both communicate that to the American public? One final area of potential research involving

the rhetoric of the vice president builds off that last concept of the relationship between the president and vice president. In public displays of their interpersonal relationship how might a president and vice president communicate either harmony or dissonance within the administration?

Associative Guilt: A New Approach to Image Repair Strategy

When examining future areas of research to expand on Benoit's Image Repair Theory one concept presented itself within this thesis. Benoit (1995) stated that the same image repair tactics presented in this thesis are used by individuals who feel guilt for committing a certain act. Yet in each one of the kategoria that was covered it was Trump that was responsible for committing a certain act. Therefore, Pence should not feel the level of personal guilt needed to justify a motive to communicate with an audience.

However, for vice presidents like Pence that want to eventually regain their autonomy, the motivation does not arise from guilt of the kategoria. Rather because of the close association between vice president and president, the foundations of guilt can be found within this association. Thus, vice presidents, like Pence, are motivated to engage in image repair due to their associative guilt. While in the final kategoria I mentioned that Pence started to separate himself from Trump. Perhaps this idea of separation could constitute the creation of at least a 15th strategy of Image Repair Theory. One way that this separation concept could be expanded upon is seeing how other individuals engage in image repair due to their associative guilt. For example, in addition to Pence a researcher could examine if and how Vice President Gore made attempts to repair his image that was marred by the Clinton administration.

Vice presidents may not be the only individuals that can experience associative guilt and may want to use similar separation tactics. For example, a researcher more interested in organizational communication might examine how businesses attempt to rhetorically separate themselves from an individual bad actor in order to repair public perceptions of the organization. Specifically, following the aftermath of the #MeToo movement a researcher could analyze the responses of major corporations and organization who had members accused of engaging in sexual assault. Corporations like NBC in the wake of allegations against Matt Lauer or organizations like the Academy Awards repairing its image after the Harvey Weinstein allegation and conviction are just two potential areas of research.

Should future research generate a justification for this 15th image repair tactic, scholars who focus more on interpersonal communication could also add contributions to this tactic. For example, how might two individuals closely associated with the bad actor communicate their emotions of associative guilt to each other or a larger audience in a way that works to repair their image. NBC's Savannah Guthrie and Hoda Kotb's on air conversation following NBC's decision to fire Matt Laurer. Additionally, a scholar could examine the on-air conversation between Steve Kornacki, Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski after Chris Matthew sudden departure from MSNBC's Hardball.

In addition, much like Benoit argued that a speaker can engage in multiple image repair strategies, a speaker using separation tactics could also employ the 14 tactics that focus more on personal guilt. In the wake of the Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell fallout, there became high profile individuals who tried to rhetorically downplay their connections to Epstein and Maxwell as a means of separation. However, for Prince

Andrew, Duke of York, his guilt went beyond just being associated with Epstein and Maxwell. Having been accused of child sexual abuse one could examine Prince Andrew's November 19, 2019, Newsnight interview to research how an individual may use the original 14 tactics to atone for personal guilt while also using separation tactics to appease the guilt felt through association.

One final area to potentially expand on Benoit's theory acts as a counter to the proposed separation tactic. What happens if an individual is closely associated with a bad actor, but instead of trying to separate themselves from the bad actor the individual doubles down on the association. Benoit's tactics of good intentions, compensation, corrective action, and mortification could act as a mirror for this counter separation tactic. These four image repair tactics that Benoit details implies that the speaker accepted some level of responsibility for performing the action that violated societal norms. While an admission of guilt of any kind might seem counterproductive to repairing one's image, Benoit still considered these tactics potential tools a speaker can use to engage in image repair.

Likewise, while doubling down on the relationship could be viewed as an ineffective means for image repair, rhetorical research could suggest otherwise. For example, Guthrie and Brzezinski both gave high praise to Lauer and Matthews, respectively, seemingly coming to their defense. Afterwards both news anchors would then go on to express the importance of the social change that was occurring because of the #MeToo Movement. In both these instances it appears that if a speaker wants to double down on the relationship, they must also condemn the inexcusable act in some

capacity. However, this is a conclusion based on a quick assessment of these potential texts and further research would be needed to establish a 16th tactic for image repair.

Conclusion

Mike Pence made the assessment that despite losing political autonomy for at a minimum of four years and a maximum of eight years, the vice presidency could help achieve Pence's presidential aspirations. However, because of kategoria created by Trump, Pence's public image could have been placed at risk and with-it Pence risked not fulfilling his aspirations. As a result, this gave Pence the motivation to engage in image repair strategies despite Pence not being the bad actor.

This thesis first established Williams Benoit's Image Repair Theory in detailing the 14 different strategies an individual could use to repair one's image. Next this thesis focused on Pence's biography as well as a historical evolution of the vice presidency, establishing not only Pence's self-perception and goals but also detailing how the vice presidency could aid in those goals. After which this thesis conducted a textual analysis to examine different strategies Pence used to repair his image in the wake of three kategoria Trump was responsible for. Finally, this thesis evaluated the effectiveness of Pence's image repair across a variety of audience members within the context of an individual walking across a tightrope.

In first chapter, two question were presented: First, given that there would be legitimate threats to Pence's public image how might Pence go about maintaining a positive public perception while agreeing to be Trump's vice president? Second, do American voters have certain rhetorical expectations for the vice president, and if so, could the expectations hurt or help Mike Pence in keeping his image positive? Let me

start by answering the second question first. In short, the American voters do not have to many expectations that they place on the vice president. Mostly American voters expect the vice president to be able to present themselves as presidential, because at any moment the vice president can be the face of the United States. One other expectation that the American people have of their vice president is they must be loyal to the president.

With that established we can move back up to the first question. In large part Vice President Pence allowed President Trump to give initial explanations so that Pence could draft a statement based on Trump's. Doing so allowed Pence to get an initial feel to the public's immediate perceptions of the president image. For example, even after Trump apologized for the *Access Hollywood* tape his image among the public was still hanging on a cliff. As a result, we see Pence initially reached out to those voters before shifting focus back to Trump's base. Using Trump's apologies to help draft Pence's own image repair strategies, allowed Pence to repair his own image while still embracing the servitude role expected by the vice president.

In the immediate sense it appeared that Pence was able to effectively use his self-perception alongside Benoit's image repair tactics to appeal to either one, two, or all the audience members. As a result, Pence was able to effectively transition both in and out of the subservient role. This allowed Pence to lose and regain political autonomy the moment Pence believed it would be beneficial to do so in achieving his presidential goals. However, in the long term only time and the 2024 election will truly determine just how effective Former Vice President Mike Pence was at political tightrope walking.

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