

News Mythologized Two Two-Term American Presidents to Power

Tania Cantrell Rosas-Moreno, Ph.D.
Loyola University Maryland
Department of Communication
Baltimore, Maryland, United States
tcrosasmoreno@loyola.edu

Abstract: With US economic and political prowess in the international public sphere dwindling, opportunity for other nations to step up and provide alternative forms of leadership increases. Since it is often said that hindsight is 20/20, it seems natural to look for a moment in history that might have defined direction to the current international state of affairs. Brazil has been a power to watch, especially since demonstrating its tenacity largely due to strong industrial and agricultural exports for weathering global turbulence during the 2008 global financial crisis. News coverage of the candidacies of two democratically-elected presidents deserves particularly scrutiny: former-US President George W. Bush and former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva. Adapting Trent et al. (1993)’s study, triangulated analysis of 285 US and Brazilian newspaper accounts from the 2000 US and 2002 Brazilian presidential elections—when Bush and Lula, respectively, were first elected to power—expounds previous presidential candidate news coverage research. It does so through the addition of four categories, namely favored, folksy, campaign practicalities and fear. It also offers insight into media and political nation building through news mythmaking while complementing other cross-cultural comparisons that analyze the relationships among national media practices and presidential elections.

Keywords: news; newspapers; myth; presidential campaign; Brazil; United States

Views of US global power have fallen to a 40-year low with growing numbers of Americans believing not only that US global power and prestige are in decline, but that the US should practice more isolationism (Pew, 2013). With US economic and political prowess in the international public sphere dwindling, opportunity for other nations to step up and provide

alternative forms of leadership increases. Two such new influential bodies that have materialized within about the past decade are IBSA and BRICS. IBSA is a south-south consortium formed in 2003 among the three democratic middle powers of Brazil, India and South Africa (Author). Although the group first met in Russia in 2009, BRIC, or BRICS since the 2010 inclusion of South Africa, became an entity to watch as early as 2001 with Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O'Neill's proposal (O'Neill, 2001). Of these two international associations, Brazil has been the power to watch, especially since demonstrating its tenacity largely due to strong industrial and agricultural exports for weathering global turbulence during the 2008 global financial crisis (Hanson, 2012). For that reason among others, Brazil was tapped to host the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics.

The promise and potential of more global players in the international public arena force important questions. Since it is often said that hindsight is 20/20, it seems natural to look for a moment in history that might have defined direction to the current international state of affairs. While many elements are arguable, investigating key moments in national leadership choice cannot be undervalued, since national presidential elections have (inter)national ramifications. As citizens of democratic nations prepare to cast their votes, they usually turn to their national media as information sources to aid them in their decision-making process. News coverage of the candidacies of two democratically-elected presidents deserves particularly scrutiny: former-US President George W. Bush and former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva.

Bush became the leader of the world's largest economy and was in power as the 2008 global recession eclipsed. Lula was the president of Brazil, the rising BRIC and IBSA nation, a nation that seemed not only to weather the global recession well, but come out of it ahead. Many claimed Bush and his administration shared blame for the poor (inter)national economic conditions (see, for example, Miller & Jackson, 2008; Landler & Stolberg, 2008), contributing to his 71 percent *disapproval* rating upon exiting the White House and being called "the most unpopular president in modern American history" (Steinhauser, 2008). Meanwhile, Lula became "The most popular politician on earth" and gained international notoriety for his ability to help his nation weather the international economic downturn; "not a single bank went under, inflation is low, and the economy is growing again" (Newsweek, 2009).

The conditions of the first elections seem strained for comparison. For instance, in the 2000 US election, Bush was competing against the standing vice president in a very close

election and was new to the national political stage, although he carried the name of his father, a previous president. And in the 2002 Brazilian election, Lula was running for the fourth time against a former minister in the previous president's cabinet. The US election was decided ultimately, belatedly, and heatedly in the Electoral College with the popular vote actually favoring Gore; whereas Lula, despite needing a second round, won the runoff in a landslide. Yet, these two national leaders from presidential, federal systems with four-year terms and one possibility for re-election later won consecutive election terms, positioning them as being in power or having recently been in power at what would be key moments not only in each nation's history, but also world history.

Further, the news media scopes differ. At about the time of the elections in both Brazil and the United States, the US press was ranked as free, coming in at 17 out of 139 countries and territories, and Brazil's press was ranked as partly free, scoring 54 on the same gradient (Reporters Without Borders, 2002). While the actual ranking might fluctuate over time, the general condition of either free or partly free remains. Also, while television has played an indisputably important role in elections in both nations, this study looks at newspapers, since print media are decision makers' medium of choice. While more pertinent to the US, given the fact that the 2000 election was ultimately decided in the Electoral College, which is controversially elitist, this is also important in Brazil's case, for one main reason: The newspaper industry has been on the rise sharply in Brazil while declining in the United States. Further, newspaper reading is strongly associated with political involvement (Kuypers, 2002).

Additional differences include the vast political dissimilarities. Bush is on the right, and Lula is on the left. In addition, political engines work differently in both nations, with Brazilian candidates winning according to absolute majority vote through a two-round system compared with Electoral-College points awarded to US candidates based on state majority votes.

With so many differences, it seems strained, at best, to attempt such a comparison. However, the similarities that arose from the news coverage analysis validate the need for the initial question: How has each nation's newspaper of record, perhaps using that term liberally, mythologized George W. Bush and Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva during their first successful presidential bids, enabling them to win in the first place? Here, "mythologize" means the creation and propagation of the candidates' "ideal" public identities through journalistic stories.

Adapting Trent et al. (1993)'s study, triangulated analysis of 285 US and Brazilian newspaper accounts from the 2000 US and 2002 Brazilian presidential elections expounds previous presidential candidate news coverage research. It does so through the addition of four categories, namely favored, folksy, campaign practicalities and fear. It also offers insight into media and political nation building through news mythmaking while complementing other cross-cultural comparisons that analyze the relationships among national media practices and presidential elections.

The [Print News] Media as Storytellers and Mythmakers

Connecting common journalistic elements, this analysis focuses on social and national functions of journalism. Like a number of recent studies that have addressed the mythological role of news journalism, it considers primarily the narrative dimensions of news (Fürsich, 2002). At the base of journalistic practices, regardless of nationality, is the understanding that journalism is storytelling with a purpose (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 149). Storytelling, or the transmission of narratives,

...is basic to our human culture and exists in every corner of the globe. It is perhaps the most ancient and universal of all art forms... [and] is still a living art... an art that can connect all cultures and times. (Farrell, 1994, pp. 14-17)

Journalistic storytelling is particularly unique:

'We live for stories—whether they're movies or TV shows or plays or poems or even newspaper pieces. We want stories told to us over and over. ... They comfort us, they arouse us, they excite us and educate us, and when they touch our hearts we embrace them and keep them with us.' (Lawrence, 2004)

Part of the international national appeal for journalistic storytelling may be the inherent perspective it offers; it can "lead us to discoveries about ourselves and how they absorb the reader into the emotions of the characters" (Giles, 2004).

Contemplation of identity with regard to journalistic stories establishes a secondary or tertiary level of storytelling. In other words, it connects the journalistic motive from reporters who believe that journalism has a purpose akin to improving the quality of civic life with audience civic participation and debate. Thus, "civic" or "public" journalism invites a shift from

a focus on a “journalism of information” to a “journalism of conversation” (McQuail, 2000, p. 159), creating an open environment of discourse, a public sphere of debate.

The *purpose* of storytelling, particularly during presidential campaigns, then, connects five specific journalist roles. Those include that of the press being the *mentioner*, one who helps with candidate name recognition; the *categorizer*, one who places labels on candidates to differentiate them; an *agenda-setter*, one who helps shape the issues and events perceived as important; an *expectation-setter*, one who establishes then assess expected standards of electoral performance of candidates; and *critic*, one who scrutinizes candidates (Davis, 1994, pp. 178-179).

As journalists fulfill these roles during each step of the presidential campaign reporting process, journalists practice responsible journalism. Responsible journalism solicits professional and ethical journalism, which suggests a certain morality to reporting. Moral journalism graduates turn to reporting from storytelling to mythmaking. Journalists are mythmakers when they perpetuate myths. A myth is a traditional story “which embodies and provides an explanation, etiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon... [and] it is often used interchangeably with... allegory and legend” (Oxford English Print Dictionary, 2010). As reporters recount their narratives of presidential candidates during their campaigns, they create public identities for the candidates. Often, those identities are the best sides of the candidates extrapolated, perhaps because of a public desire for the candidate to represent more of what s/he does.

... [J]ournalists accomplish these goals by telling stories and creating characters who stand for something larger than themselves, something that is cultural and historical rather than personal and momentary... [and] the audience tends to put faith in those ‘specialists’ who have access to the ‘truth’. (Kitch, 2002, p. 296)

In the trusting relationship between journalist and audience through myth transmission, a new identity is formed. The identity is one that fosters a relationship between the presidential candidate and audience members as both being better than what each needs the other to be, something hopeful, something larger than what really is.

The discussion and acceptance of these “truths” is a transaction between journalists and audiences. Both groups inscribe national identity and ideals in individuals or occurrences that come to stand for the country, its history and potential. But it is journalists who articulate these

concepts, gaining “an even larger responsibility for explaining [one’s nation], as well as the meaning of [that nation], to [that nation’s citizens] and others” (Kitch, 2002, p. 305).

Recounting stories helps to “forge a collective rather than individual identity, a distinct national myth... within a global culture” (Silcock, 2002, pp. 341-342). In this sense, as the print news media tells its stories and/or its myths, it not only creates ideal candidates from public candidate identities, but it also creates “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1991) to which storytellers, storyhearers and storycharacters belong and within which they act.

Methodology

One general research question has guided this study: How has each nation’s newspaper of record, perhaps using that term liberally, mythologized George W. Bush and Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva during their first successful presidential bids, enabling them to win in the first place?

The New York Times, or *NYT*, was selected as the newspaper of record for the US, given its consistently large national daily circulation, readership and (inter)national notoriety for setting the standard for journalism reporting in the United States. Brazil’s *Folha de São Paulo*, or *Folha*, has evolved since Brazil’s 1985 transition from military dictatorship to democracy to be one of Brazil’s consistently large nationally circulating dailies and, without doubt, the most influential on public opinion. That either the *NYT* or *Folha* is each nation’s newspaper of record could also be arguable, but the prominence and influence of either, a leading daily in its native land, is not.

To address this question, an initial sample of 440 articles, retrieved through a systematic random sample with a random start point (Poindexter & McCombs, 1999) of *NYT* (keyword: Bush) and *Folha* (keyword: Lula) newspaper articles from LexisNexis and Factiva databases, respectively, was whittled to 285 stories. Unique conditions surrounding the US 2000 presidential election—the Florida recount—and consistent coverage following the 2002 Brazilian president elect forced the adjusted sample to include stories from approximately one month prior to one week after each presidential election. Hence, 135, or 49 percent, stem from the *NYT*, and 140, or 51 percent, come from *Folha*. Letters to the editor were included because of the indirect representation of newspaper bias; editors demonstrate newspaper organizational agendas through basic gatekeeping practices of selecting which editorials will and will not be printed. Ninety-five percent of the sampled articles were judged as “relevant,” or offering some kind of insight into the media’s mythologizing of the candidate.

By no means is this methodology the most comprehensive way to analyze these articles. Some faults could include how the categories have been defined by the researcher or how stories with more than one theme have been summarized into one encompassing majority-attribute; language and cultural barriers that inhibit a truly standardized qualitative analysis of the articles from the two somewhat similar countries; basic differences in American and Brazilian journalistic reporting styles; keywords used to generate the sample (for example, is the sample inherently biased for having analyzed articles that surfaced from a search using the keyword “Bush” rather than the keyword “Gore” or “Bush and Gore”?); and that only one newspaper, albeit *the* newspaper of record, from each country has been consulted. Nevertheless, a major strength of this study strength rests in triangulated quantitative and qualitative measurements of how two different democracies’ national press have mythologized, or created and propagated, their respective presidential candidates’ ideal public identities. As noted, two two-term presidencies have followed.

Article analysis followed a simple format. Using an Excel spreadsheet, each article was qualitatively content analyzed, with special attention given to the main theme of the news article. This was determined by placement or prominence; given that news articles are written in the inverted pyramid, with the most important ideas prioritized, the first theme mentioned was considered the most important. Once articles were coded, data was entered into SPSS, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, for basic nominal and ordinal computations. Adapting Trent et al.’s 1993 study of US ideal presidential candidate qualities, news articles have been read and analyzed according to familiar candidate news attributes. Those include: reference to the candidate’s *experience* (is the candidate capable of being president given his current political resume?); *leadership* (is the candidate energetic and aggressive, yet calm and cautious, and offer solutions to his nation’s problems?); faithful to spouse, or a *family man, or religious man*; moral character, or *integrity*; honest, or *trustworthy and responsible*.

With the dynamics of a new election and addition of *Folha* articles, four additional candidate news attributes surfaced from the analysis. Those include whether or not the coverage indicated the candidate (Bush or Lula) was *avored* to win; a sentiment of *fear* or *caution* of future ramifications associated with a candidate choice, especially if Lula were to be elected, as will be discussed; *folksy*, or candidate connection with the common man; and campaign practicalities, such as candidate hearings and on-goings.

Findings

Article headline evaluations generally fell neatly into one of the following classifications:

TABLE 1: ARTICLE THEME MYTHIFICATIONS OF CANDIDATES

(Listed by Percentage)

Myth	Bush	Lula
Ideal Candidate Qualities (Hard Worker, Integrity, Competence, Family/Religious Man, etc.)	16	6
Favored	13	27
Fear	9	14
Experience	8	2
Leadership	7	19
Folksy	6	1
Campaign Practicalities	41	31
Total:	100	100

N=285

It should be noted that while the “campaign practicalities” category is the largest *quantitatively*, it is the least interesting *qualitatively* to consider. Articles such as the *NYT*’s Quotation of the Day in which Bush was quoted and *Folha*’s reporting on Lula’s acceptance and/or avoidance of TV interviews (see *Folha*, 16 October 2002, and *Folha*, 17 October 2002) fall into this classification. It can be argued that much could be gained from considering what quotes a newspaper of record selected to represent Bush, for example. But what is most interesting to note from this category is the general echo that surfaced from this theme in both instances. After definite periods, the press’ underlying reporting questions shifted from ones of doubt like “Who will be the next president of the United States/Brazil?” to ones of acceptance, like “How will Bush lead?” or “What projects will Lula implement when he is sworn in?” For instance, with regard to Bush, the *NYT*’s initial transition occurred between the second and third week prior to his first election; for Lula, the moment was traceable to the end of the first of two

“turnos”, or phases, of his first election process. The additional categories provide more interesting detail regarding the mythologizing of each candidate, as will be discussed in kind.

The Mythologizing of Bush

NYT's coverage of Bush paints a picture of a common man ready, a team player able and set-to-be president of the United States, one who “can't win without” each important voter (see *NYT*, 7 November 2000). In analyzing coverage of his campaign, it became clear that he had become the print news media (at least the *NYT*)'s choice and its bias—whether consciously or not—became one of support for him. This becomes obvious through an analysis of candidate coverage, particularly through the themes that surfaced from the news stories. Bush was the more benevolent, more collective, more *ideal* candidate.

Bush and Ideal Qualities

Bush's ideal qualities of being hardworking, honest, trustworthy, “competent” and a family and/or a religious man surface from the reading of *NYT* articles. Regarding his work ethic, the *NYT* published a seemingly-obscure article on his Alaskan summer job held in between Harvard Business School semesters at Alaska International Industries, an Alaskan airline and construction business (see *NYT*, 21 October 2000).

To emphasize his honesty, the *NYT* turned a potential image nightmare into a heroic character stance. It cites his admittance to drunken driving 14 years previous as a demonstration that Bush is “someone of integrity, someone of honor and decency”, someone who has been “raised... to tell the truth” (*NYT*, 25 October 2000).

George W. Bush made a mistake. He has not denied it, as some would have the public believe. He has never ducked the assertion that he was a party boy in his youth, unlike Bill Clinton's denials of his womanizing. Both men made poor choices.

The difference is that one admitted it and the other lied about it. Both men are human, but one is more honorable.

This incident should be an illustration of George W. Bush's character. (*NYT*, 4 November 2000)

Through their coverage of certain events intermingled with their selection of quotes and sources, journalists also presented Bush as being trustworthy, trusting and responsible, especially in contrasting the “potential” new with the old administration:

With thinly veiled references to the ethical travails of the Clinton administration, Mr. Bush pledged to usher in ‘a responsibility era’ in which government would be smaller, less intrusive and guided by clear morals... (*NYT*, 27 October 2000)

Regarding the question of Bush’s competence to be president, the US newspaper of record often consciously redirected attention from meaty matters of state to the candidates’ personality traits. For instance, the *NYT* noted that to “observe the personal nature of the choice between the candidates is not to denigrate the important role of issues like taxes, Social Security, health, education and defense” (*NYT*, 8 October 2000). This appears to be a rationalization for coverage such as:

Voters will be trying to figure out whether the Republican nominee, Gov. George W. Bush, is knowledgeable enough to be president, and whether the Democratic candidate, Vice President Al Gore, is likable enough.

Additional articles highlighted other aspects of each candidate’s personality, with the focus again leaning toward Bush as being the ideal. Registering both Bush and Gore as religious (*NYT*, 22 October 2000) and family¹ men, the *NYT* pushed Bush a step ahead through his “pro-life” stance (see *NYT*, 5 October 2000).

From at least this newspaper of record’s perspective, Bush was definitely favored to win.

Bush and Being Favored

The category “being favored” ranges. It includes stories that indicate Bush was not favored to win (such as poll reports saying he was either ahead or behind in one major state or in

¹ The US newspaper of record seems to stretch this reference for Gore with a quote from his wife about how Mr. Gore has attended all their son’s football games (*NYT*, 26 October 2000).

popular opinion regarding a particular issue) as well as specific reports of the various groups who backed a potential Bush administration.

One such quote reads: a “group of Arab-Americans from the Detroit area, which has one of the largest Arab-American concentrations in the country, has endorsed George W. Bush for president” (*NYT*, 17 October 2000). Other unique, yet societally powerful, groups also chose Bush:

Geeks prefer Al Gore...

But people more likely to be the geeks’ bosses seem to prefer the Bush ticket... (*NYT*, 23 October 2000)

Any majority-indication regarding the foreshadowing of Bush’s win also surfaced within this category. This would include the state-by-state reports of where Bush was winning as well as in other events.

BY A NOSE—Gov. George W. Bush goes into the third and final presidential debate with a narrow edge over Vice President Al Gore in four nationwide opinion polls taken since the candidates met last week. (*NYT*, 17 October 2000)

Bush and Fear

Another main theme from the US newspaper of record’s propagation of the ideal candidate had a darker feeling; it was one of fear, kind of a cautionary “voter beware” sentiment. Two main reasons account for this. One corresponds with the US’s bi-party political system. The other connects with normal political bantering against a candidate.

The main contenders for the position of US president were Gore and Bush. However, as the number of US citizens who believe the two main political parties are becoming more and more interchangeable grows, voters actively seek alternative choices for leaders. Not sufficient to secure a lead large enough to claim the presidency, support for Nader did threaten the main political parties, particularly the Democratic Party, and its ability to maintain a poll lead. In effect, “a vote for Mr. Nader would only help Mr. Bush” (*NYT*, 15 October 2000, emphasis added).

As a scare tactic against Bush winning, one editorial warned that if “Mr. Nader's efforts give us George W. Bush as president, we will suffer profoundly in ways every Democrat is aware of” (*NYT*, 27 October 2000). Further:

As the campaign entered its final week, with most polls showing that Mr. Bush holds a slight lead nationwide, the friendly counsel of these Democrats took on a *sense of anxiety*. While several Democrats said they were still optimistic that Mr. Gore would prevail, they *expressed fear* that Mr. Gore, who was moving ahead in the polls only a month ago, had been outsmarted by Mr. Bush and had let his advantage slip away. (*NYT*, 30 October 2000, emphasis added)

In each of these situations, beneath the fear that Democratic Party would lose was the slight assurance that Bush would win. Yet again, the *NYT*, in particular, was whispering and mythologizing that Bush would be the next president of the United States.

Bush and Experience

A common attack the Gore group hit Bush with was their interpretation “...that he lacks the experience and judgment to lead this nation” (*NYT*, 27 October 2000). Entering the last leg of the race, Gore, who had served two terms as vice president under Clinton, clearly lead the polls regarding the public’s opinion of his preparation for the presidential office. Although the *NYT* reflected this, it balanced the story and supported the myth that the public knew Bush had enough experience, enough presidential capacity, to lead the free world.

A New York Times/CBS News Poll shows that most Americans regard Gov. George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore as strong leaders, but they consider Mr. Gore far more prepared for the White House and better qualified to deal with world leaders and members of both parties in Congress. *But when voters are asked to assess each man on the broader question of his potential to be "an effective president," both candidates receive high marks.* (*NYT*, 3 October 2000, emphasis added)

In addition, the news stories revealed an underlying current supporting Bush through its choice of quotes. Note the twist the reporters give Gore’s talent through their choice of quote and interpretation:

In an appearance this morning on the NBC-TV program "Today," Mr. Evans even seemed to cast Mr. Gore's forensic prowess *as a negative attribute—proof that he had been a political insider too long.* (*NYT*, 3 October 2000, emphasis added)

By being anti-Gore, the US's newspaper of record was being pro-Bush, slickly serving the public reason to accept the Bush myth as fresh to the Washington scene and experienced enough to be chosen for US president. Again, the US' newspaper of record mythologized Bush as the better, more ideal choice.

Bush and Leadership

A necessary attribute of any presidential candidate is leadership. Perhaps more important is the media's ability to mythologize how effective a potential leader will be. Through the *NYT*'s focus on Bush's practical decision-making skills, his advocacy of parental responsibility and its Gore-bashing, among other topics, it conjured an image of a "kind of principled, steady leader that [Bush] said Americans have been denied for the last eight years" throughout the Clinton administration period (*NYT*, 5 November 2000).

Debate coverage seemed to unearth a focus on Bush's decision-making emphasis:

The Texas governor countered not by answering in kind, but by presenting himself as a practical and reform-minded Washington outsider who could solve problems instead of exploiting them. (*NYT*, 4 October 2000)

Bush's unique stance on parental involvement in helping with adolescent drug issues also served as an opportunity for this print news medium to indirectly position him as a powerful potential leader. Note the quote selection from Mr. Bush's speech on this topic and its underlying reference to/jab at the at-that-time current administration and its polluted reputation:

Mr. Bush tailored his campaign to focus on ways to help parents protect their children from influences outside the home. This time his focus was... illicit drugs.

"The job of protecting our children falls to us—as parents," Mr. Bush said this morning in an address to several hundred supporters in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. "Yet we want to know

that our government is on our side. We want to live in a society that supports our values and upholds our authority... A decent public culture. And *leaders who set a good example.*" (*NYT*, 7 October 2000, emphasis added)

A powerful media comparison tool to mythologize is calling to readers' attention to other popularly-considered great leaders:

These possibilities may sound fanciful, but they reflect the assorted Gores and Bushes who held forth on the campaign trail this year: the populist, protect-the-little-people Gore and the centrist foe of big government; the Bush who railed against abortion to religious conservatives and the compassionate conservative who is as apt to invoke Franklin Roosevelt as Ronald Reagan. (*NYT*, 5 November 2000)

As this example indicates, the *NYT* calls for new and moral leadership through its quote selection. This turned out to be crucial during the 2000 US election, especially since Gore seemed to fail to distinguish himself from the Clinton administration, even when not having Clinton campaign at all with him. (This at least seemed odd, since Clinton was popular at the time.) As the newspaper of record noted, Gore "was ambivalent over just how to separate himself from Mr. Clinton and, in the end, was so determined to be his own man that he might have damaged his own cause by failing to take credit for his role in the administration's accomplishments" (*NYT*, 5 November 2000).

Perhaps the strongest media endorsement of or mythologizing characteristic toward Bush's leadership skills was journalists' bashing of Gore's inability to provide a unified front, particularly during presidential debates:

As Representative Jose E. Serrano, a Bronx Democrat, put it: "Gore was told by the world not to be aggressive. But now, if he's not aggressive, that's the criticism. The other guy can do whatever he pleases." (*NYT*, 13 October 2000)

In other words, Gore's apparent lack of bravado creates an image of someone who is not capable of being a strong leader, thereby reinforcing the idea that Bush should be the better choice for US president.

Bush and Common Man/Folksy

The "ideal candidate" is not only one who can step forward and take charge, but also someone who can blend right in with the average Joe. Elitist but also ordinary, the *NYT*'s suggestion/endorsement for at least the 2000 presidential election had a nickname, demonstrated his sense of humor and was in touch with the people.

Bush, early on in the election, became known as "Dubya," the term of endearment given to him probably to distinguish him from his father, who had served as US president before the Clinton era. The term was used in the newspaper of record and "known among his followers and his critics" alike (*NYT*, 29 October 2000).

Bush used his nickname and accompanying positive sentiment to his advantage. Playing off Gore's claim to intelligence, and reinforcing his common man image, the *NYT* quoted Bush as saying,

"[Gore]'s so confident of his abilities, he claimed he invented the Internet," said Mr. Bush... "But if he's so smart" Mr. Bush said, "how come all the Internet addresses start with w? Not only one w, but three w's." (*NYT*, 29 October 2000)

In addition, Bush made it a focus of his campaign to emphasize that he was one of the people. He did this in a variety of ways, including "injecting a dose of populism into his speeches" (*NYT*, 29 October 2000) and being so bold as to campaign in Gore's home state:

Gov. George W. Bush landed on his opponent's doorstep today, at least politically speaking, to portray Vice President Al Gore as someone who had spent so much time in Washington that *he had lost touch with voters even in his home state.*

"He used to call this state home," Mr. Bush said. "But it seems like it was so long in the distant past, he forgot to trust the people of Tennessee. *He forgot what it's like to be out here with the hard-working people.*" (*NYT*, 11 October 2000, emphasis added)

Gore recognized and sidestepped the mythologizing of Bush as folksy. “Noting the governor's claims to be compassionate, the vice president sharply declared that he was not challenging Mr. Bush's ‘heart’ so much as his priorities” (*NYT*, 20 October 2000).

The fact that Gore acknowledged the sentiment surrounding “Dubya’s” image campaign verifies the *NYT*’s success in presenting a common man as the ideal candidate for the 2000 US presidential election. This is not to suggest that the paper was 100 percent successful in getting its message across. The key here, however, is that even with the public’s, and even the media’s, concerns with, for instance, Bush’s intelligence level, he was mythologized as the ideal candidate for president and elected; the media’s myths of “credibility and likability” (*NYT*, 30 October 2000) overcame the “image of a public servant who sometimes embellishes the truth and cannot resist telling tall tales” (*NYT*, 5 November 2000).

The Media’s Mythologizing of Lula

O Folha de São Paulo’s coverage of Lula falls generally within the same categories as that of the *NYT*’s coverage of Bush. Whereas the *NYT* gave Bush greater coverage within the “ideal qualities” and “favored” categories, *Folha* focused on “favored”, “leadership” and the “fear/counsel/cautionary” myths. Some of the coverage differences stem from basic dissimilarities between each press system’s degree of freedom, as noted earlier.

One other key factor underlies the differences: unlike Bush, and the attempts to create the image of him being the common man, Lula *was* the common man. As *Folha* reported, “for the first time, a Brazilian born in misery who went hungry as a child won” (*Folha*, 28 October 2002). The media’s role in mythologizing Lula, then, took on a new challenge: to convince the Brazilians and the world, primarily the external market forces, that Lula, with his humble beginnings as someone who hadn’t even completed a high school education and was a metal worker (*Folha*, 2 October 2002), was the best person for the job of president of Brazil. Analysis of the newspaper campaign articles within the media myths traces *Folha*’s success in endorsing Lula as the “ideal candidate” in 2002.

Lula and Ideal Qualities

Brazilian newspaper of record coverage of Lula and his “ideal qualities” for president differs substantially from that of Bush. Specifically, whereas the United States paper focused on issues such as honesty, integrity, morality, etc. within this categorization, the main traits that surfaced within this sample of Brazilian press coverage were that of Lula’s compassion and his competence.

Two key incidents indicate Lula’s reported compassion. One report cited how Lula telephoned Roseana Sarney, 49, from the PFL party, the ex-governor and senator elect of the state Maranhão, to learn of her health after she had undergone a three-hour long operation (*Folha*, 10 October 2002). Sarney had no direct political tie to Lula.

In a second report, *Folha* pointed out how Lula, at the end of a televised meeting in São Bernardo do Campo toward the end of the first “turno”, cried: “At the moment of greatest emotion, Lula interrupted the discussion and cried in the microphone, when he commented on the possibility of winning the election” this early into the campaign (*Folha*, 2 October 2002).

Regarding Lula’s competence, *Folha* covered Lula’s request to have a presidential campaign that was more professional and free of personal attacks. In other words, Lula called for a more “gentlemanly” competition (*Folha*, 14 October 2002). This request complemented such plans as “Project Zero Hunger” and Lula’s emphasis on “the importance of Brazilian businesses accumulating value with their products” and “creating a culture of innovation” (*Folha*, 30 October 2002).

Further, key leaders of middle-class workers publicly stated that Lula was ready to lead Brazil. The owner of the second largest bus company in São Paulo said, “We should feel a large pride. It’s a hope. Lula already demonstrated his competence; he will be a guy that will overcome a lot. It’s the hour to change” (*Folha*, 29 October 2002).

Folha stated Lula was “a rain of good ideas” (*Folha*, 1 November 2002). It set Lula apart as a compassionate, polite and competent “ideal” candidate.

Lula and Being Favored

Folha's mythologization of Lula included citing various national and international sources who did and did not favor the "petista" (PT political party representative) both before and after his election.

Although a number of powerful Brazilians—mostly public figures of the opposing party and/or actors and actresses (*Folha*, 27 October 2002)—were verbally against Lula's election, a greater number were for his selection. For example, the São Paulo state government (*Folha*, 22 October 2002), women (*Folha*, 21 October 2002) and diverse people representing various social classes all over the nation (*Folha*, 13 October 2002), as well as prominent Brazilian authorities², sided with Lula, helping him to secure a 26- point poll lead over his opponent, José Serra, at the beginning of the second "turno". Even Brazilian First Lady Ruth Cardoso provided a leading backward endorsement of the presidential candidate: "an eventual government of... Lula... 'would not be a great disaster'" (*Folha*, 1 October 2002). According to this sample of print news media coverage, Lula seemed to have even reached celebrity status within Brazil:

It looked like a game of American football in which the PT presidential candidate, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, was the ball. It was 9:50 a.m. when Lula arrived at the João Firmino Correia de Araújo school...

As soon as the car appeared on the street, the militant began to wave their flags and scream, "It's Lula, it's Lula!" Everyone wanted to hug him, get his autograph or touch him. It took at least four minutes for him to get from his car to the school's entrance. Protected by special security, including the military police and the federal police, he tried to be nice, even though he wouldn't speak.

"Lula, you will be our next president," screamed a woman. "Look at Lula there, son," said a father to a little boy on his shoulders. (*Folha*, 7 October 2002)

Early reports of international recognition that Lula would be the next president reinforced the myth of his being favored externally as well as internally:

² Such authorities include ACM, or Antonio Carlos Magalhães (PFL-BA) (see *Folha*, 7 October 2002).

Outside of Brazil, the president elect from Brazil already is Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. It's impressive how the large European... and North American media work with certainty that the PT candidate will be elected—and already in the first 'turno'.

Even the British magazine 'The Economist', which is normally more cautious, plants a photo of Lula on the cover of the forthcoming Thursday edition with the title, 'The Significance of Lula'...

Also, as could be predicted, the French media went to various Lula meetings in working class cities... to recover a certain air of romanticism in the victory of the "worker transformed into president"...

It's been many years since there have been such international press movements in relation to Brazil...

It's clear that, in large part, the attraction is the exotic side: It's not every day that a working class man becomes president of the Republic (if it is what will happen) in just any part of the world. (*Folha*, 4 October 2002)

After Lula's election, Lula-mania within and without Brazil only increased. Various national intellectuals visited Lula to praise him (*Folha*, 1 November 2002). Numerous international government leaders—including Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (*Folha*, 31 October 2002) plus French and German (*Folha*, 28 October 2002) dignitaries— sent congratulatory notes. Although Wall Street was slightly hesitant to rejoice in Lula's victory (*Folha*, 29 October 2002), Lula was, according to *Folha*, the only candidate to be Brazil's president.

Lula and Fear

Whether or not the international market would recognize and support Lula as president of Brazil and the pressure it consequently put on Lula after his election to make wise financial adviser choices dominated the Brazilian newspaper of record's darker side of mythologizing Lula as Brazil's ideal candidate. Numerous reports left a threatening feeling in the press air, warning Brazilians that their choice of a working class man as president may not be the World Bank, the IMF and/or Wall Street's preference. Following the election, pressure to abide by international standards to gain some kind of positive international support was applied:

On the eve of the commanding petista announcing his transition team, Wall Street sent a clear message to the president elect, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva: the market is rushed and, at least in this case, prefers that the names given today be definitive. (*Folha*, 29 October 2002)

The IMF also attempted to influence Lula's immediate post-election decisions: The IMF believes that a revision of the goal in November would have two functions... It would save the president elect's team the work of reopening the budget again in the new year... and it would give a shock of credibility to investors. (*Folha*, 1 November 2002)

Despite international market concerns before the election, the Brazilian media softened international concerns against Lula and pointed out that Brazilians weren't guaranteed any international advantage were Serra to be elected instead of Lula:

'Even if Serra... were to be elected, I don't think that the interest... would fall to a level even close to 10 percent. The economy would remain unsteady, slowing bleeding...' whether Lula or Serra is the next Brazilian president. (*Folha*, 1 October 2002)

Supplementary reports before the election indicated that each step Lula took left ineradicable footprints on national and international fronts:

Everything that Lula and his close advisers do or say already is contributing decisively to the formation of expectations not only in the financial market but also in business and political paths, in social movements, in foreign governments, etc. (*Folha*, 24 October 2002)

International market coverage cast a shadow of doubt on whether or not Lula could lead Brazil economically. Even while recognizing that Serra had international backing, the Folha moved forward its underlying Lula support by reminding Brazilians not only that Serra's election would not guarantee national and international security, but also by focusing on other attributes of Lula's idealness for president.

Lula and Experience

Lula's first step into the election arena was not this presidential election; he had preliminarily run against Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the previous presidential election, and he also ran unsuccessfully in the two elections prior. In addition, Lula had run for other offices, sometimes winning and other times not. In brief, politics were not new to him. And, Lula was known for having been a founder of his political party, the Workers Party. He was not only the party's first president, but also has been its flagship representative.

For whatever reason, Lula's experience—work or political, or lack thereof—in general did not enter the *Folha's* coverage of him, at least within this sample of news articles. One of the reasons for the absence may be that Lula was not running against a presidential or vice-presidential incumbent, as Bush was. There may also be cultural reasons as to why experience, as defined by this author, would not be on the Brazilian media's agenda. Whatever the consideration, Brazil's newspaper of record was sure to focus on other aspects of Lula's character in its presentation of him as the ideal presidential candidate, such as his leadership.

Lula and Leadership

Largely in Lula's favor during this presidential campaign was the large dissatisfaction polls reported Brazilians felt towards FHC's government. Serra, Lula's main contender, was a member of Cardoso's PSDB party. Lula, in representing the PT and leftist party, appeared a welcomed changed on two fronts—politically, with what he represented through his party; and socially, with the individual qualities he exemplified, particularly through *Folha's* mythologizing of, in this instance, his leadership capabilities.

As one editorial wrote,

In the current situation of high temperature and pressure a leader who has courage and serenity to confront and move the course of the Brazilian economy is needed...

Luckily, it's in the most difficult moments that leaders capable of moving history surface.

In the middle of the depression of the 30s, the American people elected the opposition candidate Franklin Roosevelt, who swam against the tide and introduced his social reform program...

Today it's Lula who personifies a project of changes and national reconstruction, capable of recomposing a fractioned and dispersed nation...

Certainly, many talented Brazilians exist in this nation. But there lacks someone with the leadership capable of mobilizing all of his talents in favor of constructing one nation...

It is for all of these reasons that Lula is the helmsman most qualified to snatch this nation from the turbulent sea and to safely conduct it to its great destiny. (*Folha*, 5 October 2002)

While it must be noted that this editorial was written by Guido Mantega, Lula's economic advisor (PT) and professor at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, it was selected by the paper and printed, thereby indicating some *Folha* support to propagate this message.

Other *Folha* reports told early on that Lula was a strong leader. For example, one noted that Lula, not Serra, would be the one to leave the election "as the great leader" (*Folha*, 6 October 2002). Additionally, Ciro Gomes, who had been a presidential candidate from the PPS party earlier in the election, praised Lula's ability to lead Brazil out of its financial crisis. Although Gomes criticized Lula for "seeing the time pass" at the end of his election and "not discussing the nation's financial crisis", he was quoted as saying, that Lula, if elected, would have the "political capital" with which to lead the financial crisis, but that he would weaken himself if he sought orthodox solutions (*Folha*, 21 October 2002). Serra's governability of this situation, in Gomes' own words, "is impossible" (*Folha*, 21 October 2002).

Lula demonstrated his strong leadership by taking immediate action following the election. The day after, he presented five reforms to the Brazilian Congress, ranging from social to agrarian and political reforms (*Folha*, 29 October 2002).

By comparing Serra and Lula, and citing various sources openly supporting Lula and his leadership qualities—particularly his calm manner, for which he is known internationally—*Folha* mythologized Lula as the leader Brazil and Brazilians needed in the 2002 election. International rhetorical appeals to other successful leaders, particularly leaders of financial nightmares such as the United States' Franklin Roosevelt, accompanied by strong and immediate actions following his election, solidified Lula and his myth as the ideal presidential candidate to lead Brazil.

Lula and Common Man/Folksy

As already stated, Brazil's newspaper of record did not need to focus nearly as much on propagating the myth of Lula as the common man; his "rags to riches" history was immediately accepted and became well known in early campaign days among Brazilians. However, as in the case with newspaper reports of "Dubya", Lula also was endeared to the public through his nickname and plays on his name.

Almost from the get-go of *NYT* candidate coverage was the transition in citing Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's full name to and referring to him simply as "Lula". This term was used by friend and foe alike. As in the case with Vice President Al Gore, Bush's contender, José Serra, Lula's contender, remained "Serra" throughout the campaign; no "cutesy" tricks were played with either of the main contenders' names. It can be argued that the Brazilian paper broke with first-name tradition and referred to Serra by his last rather than his common, plain first name, and even that Serra's name wasn't as long as Lula's and therefore did not need the nickname. Even then, the "play on names" that accompanied both "Dubya" and "Lula's" nicknames were absent.

For example, early in the campaign, Lula and his party supporters would chant various renditions of Lula's name. In one case, *Folha* reported "the petistas are so excited that they moved the 'Lula there!' chant to 'Lula already!'" ("E os petistas estão tão otimistas que mudaram o Lulalá pra Lulajá!") (*Folha*, 3 October 2002).

The nicknames and plays on names that accompanied the common men added a level of connection between the populaces and the candidates. And the print news media served as the medium to make that connection, propagating the truth-based myths that Bush and particularly Lula were "one of the folks."

Discussion

Again, this study investigated: How has each nation's newspaper of record, perhaps using that term liberally, mythologized George W. Bush and Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva during their first successful presidential bids, enabling them to win in the first place? "Mythologize" has been understood to mean the creation and propagation of the candidates' "ideal" public identities through journalistic stories.

When voters went to the polls in the US in 2000 and in Brazil in 2002, the majorities in the right Electoral-College states elected Bush, and the majority of Brazilians elected Lula. Both men went on to serve not only one full four-year term, but a consecutive four-year term. Today,

with hindsight, the American people consider George W. Bush “the most unpopular president in modern American history” (Steinhauser, 2008). And, the Brazilians’ beloved Lula rules on through the election of his (chosen) successor Dilma Rousseff and his party’s domination of both houses in the National Congress.

In the case of this initial qualitative content analysis of 285 news articles, the US and Brazilian newspapers of record mythologized Bush and Lula as being ideal candidates on various levels. They were presented as compassionate, experienced leaders who were given unique and catchy names and, according to news reports, publicly idealized by their support groups. They were compared to previous leaders, such the US’s Franklin Roosevelt and promised the general public what they most wanted— tax cuts in the United States and food for the hungry in Brazil.

In addition, the ways in which these presidential candidates were mythologized as ideal candidates builds on previous election news research. At least during the 2000 US and 2002 Brazilian presidential elections, Trent et al.’s 1993 study was expanded to include four additional groupings. Those included favored, folksy, campaign practicalities and fear. As pointed out, both Lula and Bush were shown, or mythologized, as the candidate favored-to-win at least by the *NYT* and *Folha*. This means, an assemblage of preferential attention from the newspapers of record was given to each candidate, mythologizing him to be ideal at least in this respect; or, news media bias occurred. In addition, despite polarized upbringings and educations, Lula and Dubya were mythologized as men who were folksy or common or connected to the people. This occurred even when Lula seemed unable to speak Portuguese correctly and Bush showed a keen inability to memorize basic facts in his public speaking. Further, while not elaborated on qualitatively, percentages quantitatively indicated that campaign practicalities soaked up a significant amount of *NYT* and *Folha* candidate coverage; 41 percent of *NYT* sampled articles told the whereabouts, agendas, on-goings, even hiring for Bush, while 31 percent of *Folha* news reports did so for Lula. While it might be argued that the campaign practicalities category in the American sense is more indicative of the horse race coverage so common to US election coverage, this is not the case in Brazil. This could lead to at least a cross-cultural basis for comparison in this case.

But, how could an attribute of “fear” be *positively* associated with an ideal presidential candidate? In the case of these reports, the notion of fear was also associated with caution of what an alternative choice might mean. The use of fear in news reporting is not unusual; in fact,

fear pervades popular culture and the news media and is shown to “travel” from one topic to another (Altheide & Michalowski, 1999). In this case, the weight of the *choice* of the political leader for the next four years is a responsibility that should not be taken lightly. In essence, the fear category forces a persuasive appeal to “get on the bandwagon” and vote for the ideal candidate; vote for Bush or Lula to avoid the trouble the other choice would surely bring.

Obvious disparities existed in the coverage. For example, no reference to morality, integrity nor religion with regard to Lula occurred among the 140 *Folha* articles sampled. Given that Brazil is the largest Roman Catholic nation in the world, and the historic relationship between church and state, the absence of religious reference which seems so prevalent in Brazilian media (Author) seems suspect. Instead, *Folha* supplemented its mythologizing of its ideal candidate with stories of his competency and compassion, relying on the unwritten understanding of his leadership as the flagship representative of the political party he helped found. Additional study might focus on teasing out *why* those religious references were deficient.

Further, the voting context proved very different for US and Brazilian citizens. Whereas the IMF, World Bank and Wall Street shadowed Lula’s campaign, US citizens were at the mercies of the Electoral College. While certain external powers influenced the Brazilian majority vote, constitutionally-given internal power removed the popular majority vote from the US citizen and bequeathed it at the state level. Hence, the US states with the largest number of electoral votes supplanted the people’s choice for president. This means, that aligning with the US forefathers’ vision, the elitist newspaper of record, again, using this term liberally, seemingly aided the elitist thinkers of the states with the larger electoral votes, mythologizing Bush to be the ideal candidate among elites.

Conclusion

In sum, the newspapers of record of two different democratic nations merged in their similar myth-makings of ideal presidential candidates. Again, the categorization of a candidate being ideal included reference to him being a hard worker, honest, demonstrating integrity and/or morality, or, in Lula’s case, being competent and compassionate. Journalists, then, were storytellers through their narratives and mythmakers as they propagated “ideal” and/or favored-to-win candidates for their publics to choose, uniting participating citizens in a type of imagined (elitist) community.

This study peeks into the role the two nations' lead papers play in the democratic presidential candidate creation and coverage process and nation-building through the part of the politicking phenomenon. While this study sampled two newspapers' myth-making in two different nations, much more work needs to be done to unpack the media's role in creating ideal candidate public identities. What of the common argument, made in both democracies, of a seamless political party formation, or blurring party lines, following media-image creation? How significant is the mythologizing of presidential candidates in nation building? On a cross-cultural level, how does each nation report on each other nation, and does this international interplay, if it exists, have any national ramifications?

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