JAMES MCGREEVEY, "STATE HOUSE CONFESSION" (12 AUGUST 2004)

Dave Tell
University of Kansas

Abstract: On August 12, 2004, James McGreevey shocked the nation by disclosing his homosexuality, confessing an extramarital affair, and resigning as the Governor of New Jersey. In response, the nation's media both praised and condemned the speech. This essay suggests that this response teaches us about the rhetorical traditions of the modern public confession, reflecting a hybrid of two competing traditions of confession: the Christian tradition of confession-as-apology, and the Rousseauian tradition of confession-as-self-expression.

Key Words: James McGreevy, gubernatorial politics, confessions, homosexuality, Rousseau

"I engaged in an adult consensual affair with another man . . . . It was wrong."
"And so my truth is that I am a gay American."
—James McGreevey

On August 12, 2004, James McGreevey shocked the nation by disclosing his homosexuality from the austere podium of the New Jersey State House. After confessing to an extramarital and homoerotic affair, McGreevey resigned his post as Governor of New Jersey. By all accounts, his speech was remarkable. The *New York Times* called it an "extraordinary spectacle,"[1] a speech of "uncommon grace and dignity."[2] In the days that followed, journalists from across the country clamored for prose capable of capturing the sheer pathos of the speech. It was described as "beautiful," "palpable," "wrenching," "stunningly direct," "amazing" and "moving," "touchingly dignified," "unspeakably sad, stunning and brave," "indelibly eloquent," "lyrical," "philosophical," and even "Shakespearean."[3] It seems there was no superlative too strong to describe the speech. New Jersey's leading newspaper, the Newark *Star-Ledger*, reported that McGreevey's confession was "unrivaled, as political addresses go, at least in New Jersey."[4] The *New York Times* dropped the regional qualification and predicted that the speech would soon join other "watershed televised moments in political history." Comparing McGreevey's announcement to Richard Nixon's famous "Checkers" speech, the *Times* went on to predict that McGreevey's confession would "come to be regarded as one of the most remarkable [speeches] in American political history."[5]

Dave Tell: davetell@ku.edu
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Yet reactions to the speech were mixed. In the very column that labeled McGreevey's confession a "speech of uncommon grace and dignity," the *New York Times* also criticized it as "politically expedient." The *Times* went on to describe the speech as "incomplete," misleading, and designed to "draw attention away from a lapse in professional judgment that [McGreevey] fears will be exposed."[6] In this sense, the *Times* characterized McGreevey's speech as more of a political maneuver than a heartfelt confession. Similarly, *Time* magazine declared that the speech was "lyrical" and "philosophical," but also "evasive."[7] And on the very same day that it proclaimed the speech "unrivaled" in the history of New Jersey oratory, the Pulitzer prize-winning coverage of the *Star-Ledger* also complained that the speech "smacked of politics" in the worst sense—it was a distraction designed to protect McGreevey from the consequences of his own behavior.[8]

We are thus left with these seemingly incompatible evaluations: the confession was both praised for its eloquence and decried for its duplicity; it was stunningly direct yet also deceptive; it was dignified yet also misleading. These competing evaluations suggest a fundamental confusion regarding both McGreevey's speech and, more generally, the modern public confession as a genre of public address. If the media coverage can be trusted, Americans were not even sure *if* McGreevey's State-House speech counted as a confession.[9] And even if it did, there was no consensus on how that confession should be evaluated. Given the prominence of the public confession in contemporary American politics—it has become a more ubiquitous form of political maneuvering—this confusion is a significant liability for those who seek to understand American public discourse.

In this essay, I aim to clarify what it means to talk about public confession in contemporary America. I provide a framework for thinking about public confession that will allow us to make sense of the confusion that was so conspicuous in the wake of McGreevey's resignation. The confusion over McGreevey's speech, I contend, was rooted in the fact that the modern public confession is, as a genre, informed by two competing traditions.10 These traditions carry different assumptions about what it means to confess and how confessions should be evaluated.

Two statements in McGreevey's confession, both quoted at the beginning of this essay, bear witness to the influence of these two traditions. In admitting that he did something wrong by engaging in "an adult consensual affair with another man," McGreevey recalled a tradition dating back to Augustine and the early Christian church. In this tradition, a confession is to be an apology, an admission of wrongdoing, and an honest acknowledgment of moral, political, or personal failures. McGreevey understood this tradition well; he claims that since his youth, he "understood confession to involve a complex moral appraisal of our actions."11 In his speech of August 12, 2004, this childhood conviction was on full display: "I am also here today because, shamefully, I engaged in [an] adult consensual affair with another man, which violates my bonds of matrimony. It was wrong. It was foolish. It was inexcusable" (12).12 I will refer to this tradition as confession-as-apology.

Yet in also announcing that he was a "gay American," McGreevey neither confessed to wrongdoing nor apologized. Indeed, there was a certain note of defiance

in McGreevey's proclamation: "To be clear, I am not apologizing for being a gay American."[13] This defiance suggests that McGreevey's speech was also informed by a second tradition of confession. According to this tradition, confession is to be a disclosure of the self, a revealing of the deepest truth about an individual. As McGreevey expressed this impulse: "One has to look deeply into the mirror of one's soul and decide one's unique truth in the world . . . . My truth is that I am a gay American" (8-9). This is confession-as-self-disclosure. It requires no apologies and no acknowledgement of things done wrong. McGreevey, at least, appreciated the distinction. Although he insisted that the disclosure of his sexual orientation was in no sense an apology, it remained an essential part of his confession. In his memoir, *The Confession*, he took as his primary task "self-revelation" and suggested a cinematic metaphor for this process: "I rewind the cinema of myself for one more viewing."[14] In this tradition, to confess is not to apologize, but to open or make visible one's deepest self.

In this essay, I argue that McGreevey's speech of August 12, 2004 is best understood as a hybrid of these two traditions of confession—traditions that operate from starkly different assumptions about the role of public confession in the life of a community. And to the extent that both traditions inform McGreevey's speech, it is not surprising that media reactions to the speech would be somewhat schizophrenic, commenting at once about both its dignity and its duplicity. Understanding these two traditions of confession not only helps us to account for reactions to McGreevey's speech, but also equips us to better evaluate other public confessions in American politics and culture.

I begin my analysis of McGreevey's confession with an overview of the historical context that gave rise to his August 12 speech. I pay special attention to the ethical scandals that plagued McGreevey's administration and ultimately led to his confession and resignation. I then consider the rhetorical traditions manifested in McGreevey's speech and the assumptions about the genre of confession that informed his State House confession. Finally, I provide a reading of the speech itself, suggesting how the tensions between the two traditions of confession might help account for the schizophrenic nature of media reactions to McGreevey's confession.

Historical Context: McGreevey, Love, and Scandal

In a provocatively entitled feature in *New York* magazine, "The Making of a Gay American," James McGreevey claimed that he had "never been much for self-revelation."[15] This aversion to self-disclosure, McGreevey told us, characterized his life from high school through Wednesday, August 11, 2004—the day before he delivered his State House speech. On that day, an old friend—one Curtis Bashaw—asked McGreevey if he was gay. McGreevey, for the first time in his life, said, "Yes." As McGreevey recounted the story in *The Confession,* the moment was marked by a lot of tears, an experience of freedom, and, most importantly, a feeling of euphoria. "That's it," Curtis shouted as McGreevey was still drying his eyes. "Don't you see? The truth will set you free. This is the truth! Tell it to everybody. Hold a press conference and tell the

truth."[16] The next day McGreevey did just that, and he has never since tired of telling his story. In fact, over the next three years, McGreevey quite literally made a living disclosing his scandal-ridden life.

The story McGreevey tells, and which he claims as his own, is a story of unbridled political ambition. It was this political ambition—dreams of the White House—that drove him through seven years of higher education at some our nation's most prestigious institutions: Catholic University, Columbia College, Georgetown, Notre Dame Law School, and Harvard. In McGreevey's own words, he developed a "pretty impressive resume."17 Despite the resume, however, McGreevey initially found it difficult to find a job in politics. To be sure, job offers flooded in from the private sector, some with huge salaries, but he was consistently rebuffed in his attempts to land a job as a county prosecutor—a relatively low-salaried, unrewarding post, but one that he thought might provide a good entrance into local politics. Finally, he tapped into his well-connected father's network in order to get an interview. "Sometimes," McGreevey explains, "that's how things happen in politics."18 For McGreevey, things seemed to happen like that a lot: he was a tireless worker, but more often than not, he landed jobs by meeting the right people or by just being in the right place at the right time. It was a conversation at a 1989 social dinner, for example, that vaulted him from his humble beginnings as a county prosecutor to a position as a lawyer for the Democratic contingent of the New Jersey Assembly (the lower house of the New Jersey Legislature).19

A combination of hard work and good luck fueled McGreevey's rapid rise through New Jersey politics. After winning election as a state assemblyman, McGreevey served the state of New Jersey in a series of posts: state senator, mayor of Woodbridge, executive director of the state Parole Board, county prosecutor, and finally Governor.[20] By the time McGreevey ascended to New Jersey's highest post in 2001, he seemed unstoppable. Several national politicians attended his gubernatorial inauguration—a "hint" to McGreevey "that my future was bigger than New Jersey."[21] McGreevey even recalled a feeling of "invincibility" as he rose to the top of New Jersey state politics, and many political observers agreed. Praising McGreevey's work ethic, for example, the *New York Times* reported that New Jersey got "two governors for the price of one because his work days and schedules are densely packed."[22] The *Star-Ledger* also praised McGreevey's "dogged pace," and his tireless work won him the moniker—the "Pete Rose of politics." Yet there seemed something more behind his success than simply hard work. As the *Washington Post* put it, he also seemed to possess some sort of "golden touch."[23]

The "Pete Rose" nickname turned out to be more than a little ironic. Although McGreevey was, like Rose, a tireless worker, he also seemed equally prone to ethical lapses. From the very start, McGreevey's gubernatorial career was marked by a series of high-profile scandals. The first was a controversy involving Joseph Santiago, McGreevey's appointment as State Police Superintendent. It did not take the media long to find IRS evasions, fraudulent credentials, and ties to organized crime in Santiago's background. McGreevey recalls that his defense of Santiago was his first major battle—and his first major mistake. Shortly thereafter, two of McGreevey's

senior staff members were caught operating a multi-million-dollar side business, which exploited a loophole in New Jersey's zoning laws. The scandals continued. McGreevey's Commerce Secretary, for example, was forced to resign when it was revealed that his office had hired five family members to unspecified jobs.24

In July of 2004, this "unfortunate stream of defining missteps" reached McGreevey himself.25 David D'Aminio, one of McGreevey's top fundraisers, was indicted for taking $40,000 from a New Jersey farmer desperate to save his farm. D'Aminio took the money in exchange for a promise that McGreevey would personally intervene on behalf of the farmer. The FBI launched an investigation of McGreevey himself, going so far as to secretly record McGreevey using the word "Machiavelli," which D'Aminio had established as a codeword for the bribery scheme. McGreevey insisted that his use of the word was mere coincidence and he was never formally charged. Yet the FBI recording cast the pale of scandal over his administration.26

Only a week after D'Aminio's indictment, McGreevey's appointment to head the powerful Port Authority, Charlie Kushner, was embroiled in scandal. This one was ugly. Kushner had long been involved in a fight with his siblings over the management of a family company. In what McGreevey called an "abject surrender of his senses," Kushner paid two prostitutes $10,000 apiece to seduce his sister's husband and accountant into camera-rigged hotel rooms. His brother-in-law fell for the scheme, and Kushner sent copies of the sex tape to his sister and her children. What made this domestic feud a federal crime was the fact that Kushner's brother-in-law was a witness in an ongoing FBI investigation of Kushner himself. Kushner's sex-tape scheme thus constituted tampering with a federal witness. Kushner was forced to resign and, within a year, plead guilty to wide variety of charges, including conspiracy, tax evasion, obstruction of justice, and the "promotion of interstate prostitution."27

All of these scandals were well-known by August of 2004, and McGreevey's administration had developed a terrible reputation. *Time* magazine described the McGreevey administration as "beset by ethical lapses."[28] And the *New York Times* refused to mince words:

> In three years, ethical and criminal accusations have been filed against a number of Mr. McGreevey's fundraisers, party operatives, staff members and cabinet members; numerous elected officials have been led to jail. Nineteen of Governor McGreevey's fund-raisers stand indicted or are under investigation.29

As McGreevey himself conceded, political writers had come to view him as "the newest machine politician off the assembly line, yet another creature of patronage, . . . favoritism, obfuscation, secrecy, and machine politics who'd declared a hypocritical show war against 'business as usual.'"[30] Yet none of this had prepared the news media for the scandal that would cost McGreevey his office in Trenton: his homoerotic affair with Golan Cipel.

Near the end of his August 12, 2004 confession, McGreevey explained why he was resigning as Governor of New Jersey: "Given the circumstances surrounding the affair and its likely impact upon my family and my ability to govern, I have decided the

right course of action is to resign" (19). It is important to be clear that McGreevey was *not* resigning for being gay nor for having an affair. As he noted in *The Confession,* many politicians—including Bill Clinton—had survived extra-marital affairs.[31] Moreover, much of the national press agreed with McGreevey that one's sexual orientation or marital infidelities were not necessarily reasons to resign the office. The *Toronto Sun,* for example, claimed that being gay "doesn't make him unfit to govern, and no one has said it did."[32]

What did make him unfit to govern, in his own view, were the so-called "circumstances surrounding the affair" (19). Although he did not immediately elaborate on those circumstances, his aides were less reticent. They explained that the purported affair was with Golan Cipel, whom McGreevey had met in Israel in March of 2000. As McGreevey tells the story, "my attraction to him was immediate and intense." By that fall McGreevey arranged to have Cipel move to New Jersey, ostensibly to serve as an aide in his gubernatorial campaign. Approximately one year later—thirty-four days after he was elected governor and four days after his second daughter was born—McGreevey invited Cipel to his condo for dinner. With state troopers parked outside and his wife still in the hospital recovering from the birth of their daughter, McGreevey "took Golan by the hand and led him upstairs to my bed."33

While the affair burned on, McGreevey struggled to find a place for Cipel in his new administration. He ended up inventing a bogus position—"Special Counselor to the governor"—and paid Cipel a $110,000-a-year salary. When pushed by the *Bergen Record,* McGreevey described Cipel as his "Security Advisor." From there things spiraled out of control. The media quickly learned that Cipel's status as a foreign-national rendered him ineligible for the security clearances required for advising the governor on security matters. McGreevey then backpedaled and claimed that Cipel had never been part of his security counsel and that his remarks to the *Bergen Record* had been just a "slip of the tongue." But the damage was done; it was clear that McGreevey had chosen to follow his romantic interests and invented a position for his partner, putting his lover on the state payroll. As McGreevey tells the story, that was "unforgivable" and constituted the "circumstance" which demanded his resignation.[34]

Yet there is reason to think that this was not the real reason for McGreevey's resignation. Exposés in the *Star-Ledger* already had forced Cipel to resign in March of 2002, and by August of 2004, Cipel's lack of qualifications for his job was hardly news. The real impetus for McGreevey's resignation, then, appears to have been the fact that Cipel, who denied any affair with McGreevey, was demanding fifty-million dollars to stay quiet about McGreevey's allegedly unwanted sexual advances. The affair had long grown cold. McGreevey reports that things never returned to normal after the media exposés of early 2002. And by the time of Cipel's extortion scheme in August 2004, McGreevey had come to resent him; he was "a man almost nobody liked, a man I thought I'd loved, who in the end was nothing but disaster."[35] In the context of Cipel's extortion, McGreevey's confession was a handy way to avoid blackmail, for as a *National Review* editorial pointed out, the classic means of escaping blackmail is "to reveal yourself what the blackmailer holds over you."[36] By confessing his homoerotic affair, then, McGreevey left Cipel no leverage with which to demand money. Cipel may

have driven McGreevey to confess and resign, but the confession was also McGreevey's opportunity to put Cipel out of his life for good.

Whatever his motivations, McGreevey woke up on the morning of August 12, 2004 and, by his own account, came downstairs to find Drumthwacket (his grand executive residence in Princeton) overrun with political operatives, some of them complete strangers. The room was loud, with professional politicians arguing, even shouting over one another, about what McGreevey's next maneuver should be. McGreevey claims to have interrupted the politicking. "This is what I want to say," he began. Then, unshaven, wearing only sweats and a T-shirt, in a room full of political operatives, McGreevey motioned to a friend to take notes as he delivered an extemporaneous confession to the assembled crowd. The speech, which bears a remarkable resemblance to the one he would give a short time later at the New Jersey State House, silenced the room and left his aides crying. McGreevey then picked up the phone, called his lawyer, and instructed him to put the FBI onto Cipel. It was, after all, a federal crime to blackmail a sitting governor, and once McGreevey's secret was out, he was free to pursue Cipel with the full force of the law.[37]

McGreevey's Drumthwacket confession—composed on the spot, delivered in his pajamas, and preserved in *The Confession*—was quite conspicuously the product of both traditions of confession mentioned at the outset of this essay. Although it lacked the polish of the State House speech that he would deliver a few hours later, it began in the mode of confession-as-apology: "I admit shamefully that I engaged in an adult consensual affair with another man. . . . It was wrong." After apologizing, however, McGreevey shifted to confession-as-self-disclosure and attempted to "truthfully set forth my identity." For this identity, an apology was neither given nor needed.[38] Coming out as gay and apologizing for one's misdeeds are two very different things, and it is curious that McGreevey put them into the same speech. At the least, we can say that both were, historically speaking, forms of confession. Understanding these forms of confession and their interaction in modern public address is the task of the next section.

Rhetorical Contexts: Competing Confessions

The genre of public confession has come to include a wide variety of specific speeches and statements. More recently, the news media have stretched the term "confession" to cover Paul Wolfowitz's speech to the board of the World Bank, Don Imus' apology to the Rutger's women's basketball team, Michael Vick's admission that he was involved in organized dog fighting, and former Harvard professor Michael Ignatieff's admission that he was wrong to endorse George W. Bush's war plan. Bryan Williams, anchor of NBC's *Nightly News*, even referred to the Virgina Tech shooter Cho Seung-Hui's videotaped rant as a "confession." The public confession has become such a ubiquitous part of our public discourse that scarcely a day goes by without some highly publicized speech being labeled a confession. We have become, some cultural critics contend, a "confessional culture"—a culture so inclined towards self-disclosure that, as Luc Sante comically puts it, all of our secrets will be revealed by 2008.[39]

The fact that the speeches of Seung-Hui, Wolfowitz, and Imus can be grouped together in a single category suggests that there is very little consensus about what kind of speech constitutes a confession. Peter Brooks suggests that this uncertainty can be attributed to the fact that contemporary practices of confession are an amalgamation of competing traditions of confession. For example, Brooks argues that Bill Clinton's "Map Room Speech," in which he confessed to an improper relationship with Monica Lewinsky, was the product of both the Roman Catholic tradition of auricular confession and a distinctively American tradition of confession rooted in debates over the Miranda rights. Although there can be no doubt that legal practices of confession differ greatly from Roman Catholic practices, Brooks argues that they "coexist with a certain accepted cultural blurring of the distinctions between them."40 In other words, the formal, generic, and contextual boundaries that might separate religious and legal understandings of confession are consistently disregarded in public discourse, and this disregard is definitive for the modern confession. Brooks goes even further; he argues that these distinct traditions of confession can shape our practices quite apart from the conscious intentions of an author or speech writer: "The religious tradition of confession [is] crucial to our conception of confession in law, literature, and everyday life even if we have not been raised in a church that practices it."[41]

The auricular tradition of Roman Catholicism and the American legal tradition, however, are not the only two traditions informing modern public confessions. Brooks argues that contemporary understandings of confession can also be traced to the diverse and often competing influences of Augustine, Rousseau, psychoanalysis, autobiography, and literary representations of confession.[42] Critics of our "confessional culture" add to this list of contemporary phenomena—grocery store tabloids, daytime talk shows, reality TV, and blogging.[43] With so vast an array of influences, it is no wonder that the label "confession" can be applied with such promiscuity. Brooks concludes that if we are to understand the American "confessional imagination"—what Americans think about when they think of confession—we must "cross-cut" between various traditions of confession, considering the influence of diverse ancestral genres on contemporary practices.[44]

Before turning directly to McGreevey's speech, then, it will be helpful to first clarify the two distinct traditions of confession that bear on McGreevey's text and help to explain its paradoxical reception: the Christian tradition of confession-as-apology, and the Rousseauian tradition of confession-as-self-disclosure.

In the Christian tradition, confession is to be an apology, a coming clean, an admission of things done wrong, an honest recounting of past failures. This tradition can be traced back to *The Confessions* of Saint Augustine. To appreciate the significance of this tradition of confession, it is helpful to understand just a little bit of Augustinian theology. It may not be surprising that in a book entitled *The Confessions,* Augustine was preoccupied with the destructive effects of his own sin. It may be more surprising, however, to learn that for Augustine, the category of "sin" had consequences well beyond the standard theological anxieties regarding personal salvation or moral rectitude. For Augustine, sin was a political category as well as a theological category. And as such, sin was politically "destructive" too: it threatened the very fabric of our

social life by making people more concerned with their own well being than with the communal good. In short, sin was a privatizing force that manifested itself in an apathetic disregard for public life.[45] It is in this context, and against the privatizing tendencies of sin, that Augustine deployed confession. On this model, the confessant talks about her or his misdeeds precisely because talking about them becomes a means of dealing with them communally and turning back towards the common good. Confession, Augustine taught, is a means of subjecting one's misdeeds—as well as one's self—to the judgment of the wider community.[46]

Living in the twenty-first century, we are a long way from Augustine and the theology that motivated him. And yet, even without the theological trappings, the notion of confession-as-apology is still prevalent, and for some of the same reasons. As evidence, we need go no further than McGreevey himself. In his "Farewell Address," given some three months after his State House confession, McGreevey began with the admission that his misdeeds required "an apology": "I have to begin today with humility, by simply saying I'm sorry."[47] He then proceeded to enumerate specific failures: mistakes in judgment, insufficient courage, lapses of character. In the State House confession of August 12, the logic of confession-as-apology was even more readily apparent. After apologizing for violating his "bonds of matrimony," McGreevey explained that he did so because the "fact of the affair" threatened the broader community (12, 15). Not just the communion with his wife, but the entire jurisdiction of the governor was at stake. He argued: "So I am removing these threats by telling you directly about my sexuality" (16). As it has since Augustine, confession-as-apology represents a fundamental commitment to public life. It is a means of repairing the body politic via the open admission of misdeeds.

Although Rousseau was reading Augustine's *Confessions* immediately prior to the composition of his own two-volume *Confessions*, he fundamentally changed the meaning of the form. Whereas for Augustine, confession was a speaking-of-things-done-wrong, for Rousseau, confession was entirely about the disclosure of the self. Rousseau's redefinition of confession is rooted in his deep disagreement with Augustine's understanding of the human self. Augustine believed that the human self was, first and foremost, sinful—"fallen" as theologians like to say.[48] Because the human self was sinful, and because sin is privatizing, a thriving community required a mode of speech that could overcome humanity's inherent tendencies towards selfishness. For Augustine, as we have seen, confession filled this role. In the starkest of contrasts, Rousseau believed that the human self was fundamentally good. Any evil dispositions that might be evident in humanity, Rousseau believed, could be finally attributed not to a fundamentally fallen human nature, but to the corrupting effects of society. Rousseau's famous first sentence of *The Social Contract,* "Man is born free, and everywhere is in chains," springs from his conviction that humanity is fundamentally good while society is pervasively corrupt.[49]

With this background, it becomes clear why Rousseau rejected the Christian tradition of confession. While Augustine understood confession as a means of subjecting oneself to the wider judgment of the political community, Rousseau believed that the judgment of the wider community was precisely what needed to be

avoided. Indeed, the value of the confession, on the romantic model, is that it purported to give voice to the naturally good human self. In Rousseau's hands, the public confession became a justification for ignoring communal norms. For Rousseau, communal norms needed to be subjected to the deeper, more authentic truths of the human self. In short, the Christian tradition posited confession as a rhetorical form in which the individual adapts to the community; in the Rousseauian tradition, the confession-as-self-disclosure made sense because the community was devalued in relation to the individual.

Living in the twenty-first century we are, again, a long way from Rousseau and the romanticism of the eighteenth century. And yet, even without the theoretical trappings, the notion of confession-as-self-disclosure is still prevalent, and for some of the same reasons. As evidence, we again need to go no further than McGreevey himself. In fact, his confession opened with five paragraphs of introspection. He explained, "At a point in every person's life, one has to look deeply into the mirror of one's soul and decide one's unique truth in the world, not as we may want to see it or hope to see it, but as it is" (8). This is confession-as-self-disclosure. The point is not to talk about misdeeds, or apologize for things done wrong. As McGreevey makes clear—the point is certainly not to submit his sexuality to the judgment of the community. He already had done that for too long in his closeted life. The point of the confession was simply to announce his own unique truth. Note the endurance of Rousseau's ideas. Just as confession-as-apology is still a prevalent even without Augustine's theology of sin, so too the notion that confession can disclose one's "unique truth" through self-expression is prevalent without Rousseau's romantic belief in the fundamental goodness of the human self.

As McGreevey's State House speech makes clear, these two traditions of confession have coalesced in the modern age. And as the media coverage surrounding the State House speech makes clear, the result of this coalescence is a fundamental confusion over what constitutes a public confession and the standards by which it should be evaluated. This confusion is nowhere clearer than in the schizophrenic response to McGreevey's public confession.

McGreevey's August 12, 2004 State House Confession

For all of its hype, McGreevey's State House confession of August 12, 2004 turned out to be just the first in a string of public confessions by James McGreevey. Three months later, on November 8, 2004 (the official date of his resignation), McGreevey confessed to the same "mistakes" again, this time in slightly more detail and in the context of his farewell address. After resigning from office, McGreevey went underground for two years. Then, in the summer of 2006, McGreevey erupted into public life once more, this time with a series of very public confessions: appearances on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Larry King Live*, *The Today Show*, and *Hannity & Colmes*.[50] Each of these media events took as their focal point the September 19, 2006 release of McGreevey's memoir, *The Confession*. Published by Regan Books, the now-defunct division of Harper-Collins was infamous for publishing the confessions of Jose Canseco

and "porn star" Jenna Jameson, as well as the "hypothetical" confessions of O.J. Simpson.[51] *The Confession* recounts in painful detail the psychological torture of McGreevey's closeted life, his penchant for homosexual encounters in alleys, bookstores, and highway rest-areas, and finally—at its center—the homoerotic affair which drove him from office in 2004. The various media interviews, all of which followed a similar script, were little more than broadcasted excerpts of *The Confession*—replays in which McGreevey confessed again to the life and deeds recorded in his memoir. Of his appearance on *Oprah*, CNN's Brooke Anderson could only say that "true confessions don't get any more true or blue than this."[52]

It seems, however, that Anderson was wrong. Throughout the tell-all summer of 2006—in *The Confession* and in nearly every media appearance—it was the State House confession of two years prior that was fundamental and marked the turning point in McGreevey's story. From the perspective of McGreevey and the media that hounded him, the "true blue" confession was neither his memoir nor the relentless talk-show circuit; it was the speech of August 12, 2004. In *The Confession,* McGreevey reprinted the speech in full, claiming that "it was only when I stood beside my beautiful wife and loving parents one August morning at the New Jersey State House and declared, 'My truth is that I am a gay American,' that my stomach's alarm system finally defused and my solar plexus went still for the first time in my life."[53] In slightly less grandiloquent terms, McGreevey described the 2004 confession to *The Today Show's* Matt Lauer as simply "a moment of grace."[54] The media too used the events of 2006 to refocus on the original confession of 2004. A September 2006 episode of CNN's *Showbiz Tonight,* for example, replayed video of the speech underneath this voiceover: "Two years later, it is still of the most shocking political announcements ever aired on live TV."[55] Larry King took the opportunity to recall the "bombshell resignation speech."[56] And, perhaps what is most telling, nearly every story on McGreevey—including those on Fox, CNN, NBC, and ABC—was introduced with file footage of the original confession.[57]

In the countless invocations of the 2004 confession, two moments in the speech were singled out, turned into sound bites, and replayed *ad nauseum*. On the talk-show circuit these two brief excerpts were replayed with such regularity that they became, in a sense, the public face of the confession. From the media's perspective, it is no exaggeration to say that the confession could seemingly be reduced to these two statements, as if they alone were sufficient to capture the entirety of the speech. Larry King led with these sound bites, and so did *Showbiz Tonight,* Montel Williams, *The Today Show*, and *Good Morning America*. They were, of course, the two statements with which began this essay: McGreevey's confession that he had "engaged in an adult consensual affair with another man," and his declaration that he was "a gay American."

The recurrent singling out of the same sentences is telling. It suggests that the Augustinian tradition of confession-as-apology *and* the Rousseauian tradition of confession-as-self-disclosure reside at the heart of the 2004 confession. Moreover, a close reading of the confession, and the media coverage surrounding it, suggests that it is precisely the conflation of these two traditions that can account for its paradoxical reception—at once dignified and duplicitous—among the national news media.

So long as McGreevey and the media understood confession in terms of two distinct traditions, they were dealing with two different criteria of judgment. On one hand, the media judged the confession in terms of an Augustinian understanding of confession: did McGreevey speak about his mistakes and submit them to the judgment of the wider community? Insofar as these standards were used, McGreevey's confession was found wanting, for he did not mention that he put his lover on the state government's payroll, or that he was now resigning in order to evade extortion. In this tradition, the confession deserved to be condemned as expedient, "a political lie," or just more "politics as usual." And, nearly every column in every newspaper did, in fact, reach these sorts of conclusions.

Yet nearly every newspaper also lavished praise on McGreevey's confession, suggesting the presence of a second standard. This second standard, of course, is a Rousseauian standard that would judge the confession in terms of its expressiveness: Did McGreevey bare his soul? Did he reveal his true inner self? Insofar as this standard was used, McGreevey's confession was deemed a "watershed moment" in the history of American political oratory. The praise for McGreevey's confession, then, seemed unrelated to his infidelity, the repeated mismanagement of his political and personal relationship with Cipel, or even the widespread suspicion that the confession was one more political ploy in a career beset with ethical lapses. Rather, the praise stemmed from the fact that, as McGreevey himself put it, the subject of his speech was "not one typically for the public domain" (11).

A close reading of the confession and the journalistic coverage lends credence to this interpretation. For although only the first half of McGreevey's speech makes sense within a confession-as-self-expression paradigm, it was this portion of his speech—and this portion only—that drew unbounded praise. Consider carefully the first portion of the speech. McGreevey began by noting his consistent inability to come to terms with his identity, and the confusion and ambivalence that had always attended his attempts at self-definition. "I have often felt ambivalent about myself" (2), McGreevey stated. This ambivalence and the precarious instability of his identity structured the rest of his life. McGreevey's first response to this instability was simply to "work hard" at being "accepted as part of the traditional family of America" (3). These efforts to be accepted, he suggested, explained both heterosexual marriages. Although the marriages were contextualized as part of McGreevey's assiduous work towards normalcy, he was careful to note that they could not be reduced to instruments of social acceptance. Both marriages, he noted, had been very positive experiences, founded on love and joy—the source of both daughters (3-4). The marriages, the daughters, and the joy could not, however, overcome the instability of his identity. McGreevey could never completely banish "some feelings, a certain sense that separated me from others" (5). Despite this inability to achieve normalcy via heterosexual marriages and a "traditional family," McGreevey claimed that a misguided "resolve" nonetheless drove him towards normalcy: "I forced what I thought was an acceptable reality onto myself, a reality which is layered and layered with all the, quote, 'good things,' and all the, quote, 'right things' of typical adolescent and adult behavior" (3, 5).

Typicality was simply not to be McGreevey's life. Despite the marriages, the daughters, the joy, the resolve, and the "good" and "right" things surrounding McGreevey, he could not solidify his sense of self or alleviate the persistent ambivalence regarding his identity—an ambivalence which perpetually kept "acceptable reality" at bay (6). Thus, McGreevey told the nation, he began to question the nature and form of this reality at a "reflective" and "spiritual" level (6). Could it be that this pursuit of "acceptable reality" had been, all along, a flight from reality: "Were there realities from which I was running?" (6). Then, following some theological musings about the goodness of God, McGreevey renounced the pursuit of normalcy that had, theretofore, characterized his entire life. With unwavering poise and eloquence enough to silence the usually rowdy bars of Trenton,58 McGreevey renounced the endless pursuit of normalcy and embraced instead the depth of his own unique reality:

> At a point in every person's life, one has to look deeply into the mirror of one's soul and decide one's unique truth in the world, not as we may want to see it or hope to see it, but as it is. And so my truth is that I am a gay American. And I am blessed to live in the greatest nation with the tradition of civil liberties, the greatest tradition of civil liberties in the world, in a country which provides so much to its people. (8-9)

These lines were unquestionably the climax of the speech. They were excerpted and quoted scores of times and landed on the front page of the *New York Times*. *The Advocate* later declared that McGreevey's focus-group-tested coinage of "gay American" had become a "ubiquitous" part of the gay vernacular.[59] The *New York Times* declared that these lines constituted the "most remarkable moment in a dead-silent room filled with normally voluble journalists and political operatives."[60] The *Daily News* claimed that "gays everywhere" kept "repeating the line, 'I am a gay American,' as if it was a war cry."[61] And the *Washington Post* opined that it was McGreevey's "pained talk of his lifelong denial of his sexuality" that was "riveting," not the balance of the speech.[62]

These lines were not only the climax of the speech, they were also its turning point. It was at this point that McGreevey abandoned confession-as-self-expression in favor of confession-as-apology. There was no more spiritual self-reflection, no more looking "deeply into the mirror" of his "soul," no more painful first-person narratives of a normalcy pursued and denied. Indeed, the second half of the speech assumed a matter-of-fact tone, the shift being marked by McGreevey's rather awkward transition as he emerged from his heart-wrenching disclosures: "I am also here because, shamefully, I engaged in an adult consensual affair with another man" (12). McGreevey himself seemed to recognize that the remainder of his speech felt like an addendum compared to the centrality of his coming-out. Even the very fact of his affair—purportedly the reason for his resignation in the first place—was appended to an "I am also here," suggesting that McGreevey knew just as well as *The Advocate* that his coming-out was the real reason for the speech. After asking the forgiveness of his wife,

who, he assured us, had been "extraordinary" throughout the entire ordeal, McGreevey proceeded to announce his resignation (14). Like the news of his affair, the announcement of his resignation required no soul-searching and demanded little eloquence. McGreevey explained that the secrecy of his affair, not just his sexuality, posed a threat to the governor's office, leaving it "vulnerable to rumors, false allegations, and threats of disclosure" (15). It was those threats, McGreevey explained, that prompted him to publicly announce his sexuality in the first place.

The media almost exclusively focused its praise on the expressive portion of McGreevey's speech. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, for example, wrote: "[McGreevey] laid open his soul and his sexuality on camera. His speech was so personal and revealing, at one point I found myself wishing he would stop. It was as if he was giving us too much information, even for a society and media that crave such intimate details about our leaders and our celebrities."[63] The *New York Times* claimed that the speech offered "an extraordinary glimpse into the private torment that can accompany a public life lived in the closet."[64] And the *Star-Ledger* claimed that "even by the standards of a self-revelatory era in American political life," the insight the speech afforded into McGreevey's personal life was "stunning."[65] By all accounts, then, the power of the speech derived from the act of self-expression rather than from the apology and the resignation announcement in the second half of the speech.

Dave DeCicco, vice president of communications at the Victory Fund, put it most succinctly: "[McGreevey] made a very eloquent and well-spoken resignation speech. I wish it had ended with, 'I am a gay American.' The rest was unfortunate."[66] It is important to note, however, that the "unfortunate" part of the confession was the only part of the speech in which McGreevey confessed to his misdeeds; without this "unfortunate" addendum, the speech would have made no sense at all because there would have been no rationale for McGreevey's resignation in the first place. But DeCicco's comment is telling. His insistence that the essential part of the speech was "unfortunate"—the part where McGreevey acknowledged why he was talking in the first place—illuminates the essential problem with the modern public confession. The modern public confession is a form of discourse that can never be successfully enacted. The media at once demanded that McGreevey's confession be both an apology *and* an act of self-revelation. But, as we have noted, the two traditions exist in tension with each other, and it is difficult to imagine McGreevey satisfying both sets of demands. How could he both announce his deepest self to the community without apology *and* submit himself to the judgment of the community? It was perhaps inevitable, then, that the press should be conflicted in their judgments of the speech. Because the modern public confession exists at the intersection of two competing traditions of confession, the national media held McGreevey's performance accountable to the standards of both. And so it should not surprise us that the media could—at one and the same time—both celebrate the dignity of the speech and denounce its duplicity.

Conclusion: The Legacy of James McGreevey's Confession

We have seen that McGreevey's August 12, 2004 State-House confession is rather conspicuously a product of two traditions. Perhaps the strongest evidence that these two traditions still inform what Brooks calls the "American confessional imagination" is the endless repetitions of just two excerpts from the speech: "It was wrong," and "My truth is that I am a gay American." If the media can be trusted, these two sentences exist side by side in the American imagination, without tension, each embodying the meaning of public confession. To confess is to acknowledge misdeeds, but it is also to disclose the self.

Yet, as we have seen, there is a profound tension between those two meanings of confession. The Augustinian confession springs from the conviction that the self should be submitted to the authority of a broader community. The Rousseauian tradition springs from the conviction that the community will benefit from the disclosure of the self. That each form of confession has its proper place and important function is clear. What is perhaps not as clear, but far more important for understanding the genre of modern public confession, is that these two traditions have apparently coalesced in the American imagination. There is no recognition that McGreevey's twin sound bytes performed different functions. At least in this instance, two radically different types of statements were classified under the indiscriminate umbrella term "confession," and two years of schizophrenic media evaluations stand as a testament to the confusion this has caused.

My goal here has not been to praise one tradition and blame the other. Both traditions are valid in their own right. Still, it is important to recognize the different traditions of confession at work in a given speech, for those traditions still inform the practice of public confession in modern American culture.

Dave Tell is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at The University of Kansas.
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Notes

1 James Barron, "Personal Crisis, but an Old Theme of Patronage," *The New York Times*, August 13, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006).

2 "The Governor's Secret," *The New York Times*, August 13, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006).

3 Richard Aregood, "More Than Sexual Predilections Sank N.J. Governor," *Sacramento Bee*, August 14, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006); Josh Benson, "Shocking, but Not Surprising," *The New York Times*, August 15, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006); Tina

Brown, "The Governor Slips out under Cover of Gayness," *The Washington Post*, August 19, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006); John Cloud, "The Governor's Secret Life," *Time*, August 23, 2004, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,994916,00.html (accessed 18 January 2006); Michael Isikoff and Evan Thomas, "An Affair to Regret," *Newsweek*, August 23, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006); Adam Nagourney, "A Conflicted Pol and Public," *The New York Times*, August 15, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006); Fernanda Santos, "In the Gay Community, Gov Is an Instant Hero," *Daily News*, August 13, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006); Jeff Whelan and John Hassell, "McGreevey Quits, Admits Gay Affair," *Star-Ledger*, August 13, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 20 February 2008)

4 Jeff Whelan, Tom Hester, and John P. Martin, "After a Calm Morning, a Thunderbolt," *Star-Ledger*, August 13, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 20 February 2008).

5 Barron, "Personal Crisis"; Benson, "Shocking"; Whelan, Hester, and Martin; and "After a Calm Morning, a Thunderbolt."

6 Barron, "Personal Crisis"; "The Governor's Secret"; Shailagh Murray, "New Jersey Gov. McGreevey Plans to Step Down, Citing Gay Affair," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2004. ProQuest (accessed 18 January 2006); Newman, "To Some, an Issue of Patronage Trumps Issues of Sexuality, Infidelity and Politics."

7 Cloud, "The Governor's Secret Life."

8 Wheland and Hassell, "McGreevey Quits."

9 On the debate about whether McGreevey's disclosures count as confessions, see Michael Goodwin, "Shame on McGreevey: The New Jersey Governor Kept Lying Right to the End," *New York Daily News*, November 10, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006).

10 I label the genre *modern* public confession for two reasons. First, it is clear that practices of public confession have changed dramatically, and by the adjective "modern" I indicate my intention of describing its contemporary form. Modern is to be understood here in its chronological sense. Second, I believe contemporary public confessions are deeply informed by the tenets of philosophical modernity. Modern is to be understood in this sense as Enlightenment modernity.

11 James E. McGreevey, *The Confession* (Los Angeles: Regan Books, 2006), 30. In this memoir, McGreevey details his religious upbringing in general and his induction into the Christian tradition of confession in particular. He was quite literally trained in this tradition of confession. See McGreevey, *The Confession,* Chapter 3.

12 Here and elsewhere passages in McGreevey's "State House Confession" are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the text of the speech that accompanies this essay.

13 James McGreevey, "Farewell Address" (speech, State Museum Auditorium, Trenton, NJ, November 8, 2004). Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 10 March 10, 2008).

14 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 4, 9.

15 James McGreevey, "The Making of a Gay American," *New York Magazine,* September 25, 2006, http://nymag.com/news/politics/21340/ (accessed 10 March 2008).

16 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 319.

17 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 77. It is in fact true that McGreevey attended all of these schools, but it is also misleading. During his 2001 campaign for governor, for example, he was accused of giving the false impression that the entirety of his undergraduate education was at Columbia College. Although his degree is from Columbia, more than half of his credits were from Catholic University, Middlesex County College, and Rutgers. See Mary Jo Patterson, "A Jersey Guy Who Seemed so Real: With the Disclosure Comes a Rewrite of One Part of the Governor's Story," *Star-Ledger,* August 13, 2004 Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 20 February 2008).

18 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 88.

19 Of his job in the Majority Office, McGreevey writes, it was a "job I had earned just by being in the right place at the right time." McGreevey, *The Confession,* 88.

20 Whelan and Hassell, "McGreevey Quits."

21 McGreevey, *The Confession*, 235.

22 McGreevey, *The Confession*, 247, 260-261.

23 Whelan and Hassell, "McGreevey Quits"; McGreevey, *The Confession,* 169; Michael Powell and Michelle Garcia, "N.J. Governor Resigns Over Gay Affair; McGreevey Has Been Facing Other Political Problems," *The Washington Post,* August 13, 2004 Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006).

24 These scandals are all related in *The Confession.* For the Santiago scandal, see 237-238; for the zoning-law scandal, see 261-262; for the Commerce Secretary scandal, see 269.

25 This is McGreevey's phrase. *The Confession,* 269.

26 McGreevey retells the incident in *The Confession,* 278-282. A far clearer presentation of the matter can be found in Whelan and Hassell, "McGreevey Quits."

27 McGreevey, *The Confession*, 300-301.

28 Cloud, "The Governor's Secret Life."

29 Carl J. Mayer, "This Scandal-Ridden State," *The New York Times,* August 22, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006).

30 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 270.

31 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 263.

32 Peter Worthington, "Being Gay Not Really the Issue," *The Toronto Sun*, August 16, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006).

33 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 203, 228.

34 James McGreevey, *The Confession,* 240, 247, 323. For a less sympathetic telling of the story, see Josh Margolin and Mark Mueller, "The Man Who Toppled a Governor: A Casual Introduction in Israel 4 Years Ago Would Prove to Be McGreevey's

Undoing," *Star-Ledger*, August 13, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 20 February 2008).

35 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 349.

36 William F. Buckley, "What Did McGreevey Prove,?" *National Review*, August 13, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006).

37 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 321-323.

38 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 322.

39 Luc Sante, "What Secrets Tell," *The New York Times Magazine*, December 3, 2000, 76. On the topic of "confessional culture," see also Michael Clark, "Confessional Culture," *Oregon Humanities*, Spring/Summer 2007, http://www.oregonhum.org/confessional-culture.php (accessed 10 March 10, 2008). For an example—just one of many—of how "confessional culture" has become a widely available category of critique capable of explaining culture, see John Leo, "A royal flush in hearts," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 4, 1995, 18.

40 Peter Brooks, *Troubling Confessions: Speaking Guilt in Law & Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3.

41 Brooks, *Troubling Confessions,* 111.

42 Brooks, *Troubling Confessions*, 144.

43 Clark, "Confessional Culture."

44 Brooks, *Troubling Confessions*, 4.

45 To Augustine's mind, pride functions as a synecdoche for the category of sin. Note here the political description of pride and, by extension, sin: pride is "the attitude by which a person desires more than what is due by reason of his excellence, and a certain love of one's own interest, his private interest, to which the Latin word *privatus* was wisely given, a term which obviously expresses loss rather than gain. For every privation diminishes. Where pride, then, seeks to excel . . . [it turns] from the pursuit of the common good to one's own individual good out of a destructive self love." Augustine, *Genesis*, 11.15.19.

46 This interpretation of Augustine's confession is the product of reading *The Confessions* in terms of the political categories of *The City of God.* The complete argument can be found in Chapter One of my dissertation. Dave Tell, "The Politics of Public Confession: Expressivism and American Democracy" (The Pennsylvania State University, 2006.).

47 McGreevey, "Farewell Adress."

48 See, for example, John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion,* ed. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 85-124.

49 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,* trans. Lester G. Crocker (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), 7. On Rousseau's optimistic approach to human nature, see the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.

50 James McGreevey, interview by Oprah Winfrey, *The Oprah Winfrey Show,* HARPO Productions, September 19, 2006; James McGreevey, interview by Larry King, *Larry King Live,* CNN, September 21, 2006; James McGreevey, interview by Matt Lauer

and Meredith Vieira, *The Today Show,* NBC, September 20, 2006; and James McGreevey, interview by Sean Hannity and Alan Colmes, *Hannity & Colmes*, Fox News Network, September, 20 2006.

51 See Jose Canseco, *Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and how Baseball Got Big* (Los Angeles, CA: Regan Books, 2005); and Jenna Jameson, *How to Make Love like a Porn Star: A Cautionary Tale* (Los Angeles, CA: Regan Books, 2004). On the demise of Regan Books, and the controversy surrounding it, see Julie Bosman, "Regan Books To Shut Down After Firing Of Its Creator," *The New York Times*, January 18, 2007. On the "hypothetical confessions" of Simpson, see Mark Miller, Andrew Murr, and Weston Kosova, "Inside O.J.'s New 'Confessional,'" *Newsweek,* November 27, 2006. Simpson's *If I Did It* was never published by Regan Books, of course, but it found new life when Beaufort Books announced on August 14, 2007 that they would publish it as: *If I Did It: The Confessions of the Murderer.* See http://www.beaufortbooks.com/index.php (accessed 20 February 2008).

52 A.J. Hammer, Brooke Anderson, and Delia Gallagher, *Showbiz Tonight*, CNN, September, 19 2006.

53 McGreevey, *The Confession,* 8. The speech is reprinted on pages 326-327.

54 Lauer and Vieira, "Former New Jersey Governor."

55 Hammer, Anderson, and Gallagher, "Gay Governor."

56 King, "Interview."

57 As recently as an August 2007 episode of *The Montel Williams Show*, the media is still using the publicity of McGreevey to replay that "extraordinary spectacle" that was the August 12, 2004 confession; Montel Williams, *The Montel Williams Show*, August 14, 2007.

58 Robin Gaby Fisher and Susan Livio, "At First, Surprise and then Support: Governor and Wife Buoyed by Response," *Star-Ledger*, August 13, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 20 February 2008). For a similar description of the reaction to McGreevey's admissions, see Whelan, Hester, and Martin, "After a Calm Morning": "Before the six-minute speech ended, the news was already firing across state lines. In Times Square, passersby stopped and pointed at the revelation on the building tickers. In Athens, reporters covering the Olympics were talking about New Jersey's gay governor."

59 "Big Gay Year," *The Advocate*, January 18, 2005. Proquest (accessed 23 February 2008). In *The Confession,* McGreevey makes no mention of focus-group testing any portions of the speech. He tells the story of an extemporaneous and unplanned confession given to his aides on the morning of August 12, 2004, which his staff edited for his official speech that afternoon. See *The Confession,* 322-324.

60 Benson, "Shocking."

61 Santos, "In the Gay Community, Gov Is an Instant Hero."

62 Powell and Garcia, "N.J. Governor Resigns over Affair."

63 Dave Boyer, "A Rare Act of Political Courage," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 14, 2004. Lexis-Nexis Academic, Reed Elsevier (accessed 16 January 2006).

64 "The Governor's Secret."

65 Whelan and Hassell, "McGreevey Quits, Admits Gay Affair."
66 Nagourney, "A Conflicted Pol and Public."