

in Reinard) allows researchers to count the number of specific words or "meaning units" associated with a particular item. For example, a researcher might count the number of times in which the "Clydesdale" commercial is referred to as "insensitive," "crass," "patriotic," or "thoughtful," and then make comparisons among the number of times each word is used.

5. *What other questions could be asked by researchers?* In this case, the instructor could ask students to propose their own questions and identify the level of measurement in each question.

Appraisal

Before this activity was used, students really struggled to understand levels of measurement. After this activity is conducted, students are less likely to make errors when they are tested over levels of measurement, students tend to remember the concept more readily, and students have an easier time applying levels of measurement to concepts covered later in the semester (i.e., developing research questions and hypotheses, determining the appropriate statistical test). On mid-semester course evaluations, students consistently identify this activity as one of their favorite in-class activities.

The primary limitation of this activity is technological because not all instructors will have the classroom Internet access necessary to show the commercials. If Internet access is not available, the instructor could videotape a broadcast of ABC's "Monday Night Football" to obtain a range of commercials similar to the commercials used in this activity. Another way to overcome this limitation is to have students videotape commercials and then have them create (either individually or in small groups) a rating sheet (similar to the rating sheet in the Appendix) for these commercials.

References and Suggested Readings

Frey, L. R., & Botan, C. H. (1988). The status of instruction in introductory undergraduate communication research methods courses. *Communication Education, 37*, 249-255.

Frey, L. R., Botan, C. H., & Kreps, G. L. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Keyton, J. (2001). *Communication research: Asking questions, finding answers*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

Reinard, J. C. (2001). *Introduction to communication research* (3rd ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Williams, F., & Monge, P. (2001). *Reasoning with statistics: How to read quantitative research* (5th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt.

Appendix

1. In what state (or country) were you born?
2. Are you male or female?
3. How much television (i.e., number of hours) do you watch in an average day?
4. For the following items, circle the response which best represents your feelings.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral/Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree
 5 4 3 2 1

a. The commercial was entertaining. 5 4 3 2 1

b. The commercial will be effective in selling the product. 5 4 3 2 1

c. I am more likely to buy this product after watching the commercial. 5 4 3 2 1

5. For the following items, mark an "X" on the line at the place that best represents your reaction to the commercial. For instance, if you thought the ad was "extremely funny," place an "X" on the line close to that extreme. If you thought the ad was "slightly funny," place an "X" on the line closer to that point. The middle space should be considered neutral.

a. Not funny _____ Extremely funny

b. Extremely effective _____ Not effective

c. I will not buy this product _____
 I will buy this product _____

6. Please rank the following commercials (e.g., "Anheuser-Busch: Cedric," "Anheuser-Busch: Clydesdales," "Lipton: Puppets," "Pepsi: Britney," "Subway: Tim and Jared") according to the criteria supplied.

a. MOST FUNNY to LEAST FUNNY

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

b. MOST INTERESTING to LEAST INTERESTING

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

c. MOST EFFECTIVE to LEAST EFFECTIVE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

7. Please describe your reaction to the "Anheuser-Busch: Clydesdales" commercial.

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Image, Public Speaking, and The John Rocker Press Conference

Objective: To create a message that fulfills the requirements of a simulated real life apology.

Course: Public Relations, Public Speaking

Because so much of contemporary society in the United States is centered on concerns about image, it is important for students to recognize how the creation and dissemination of messages can be understood by examining the communication goals associated with creating, maintaining, and/or repairing an image. The purpose of this activity is to help students internalize the theoretical principles of apology and image repair research, and use this knowledge to construct a message that aids in the process of image repair. Apologia is defined as discourse that focuses on the "self defense" needed to combat external personal attacks on an individual's character (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Image restoration is based on the assumption that maintaining a positive face is a primary communication goal (Benoit, 1995) and image itself is threatened when an act is perceived as reproachful by a relevant audience.

The Activity

This activity focuses on student participation in a mock press conference about John Rocker and proceeds in three steps. In 1999, Rocker, a pitcher for the Atlanta Braves, placed himself in a situation in which he was obligated to provide a public accounting of his behavior. During the National League playoffs, he landed in the national sports spotlight after spitting at the opposing team's fans and making an obscene gesture using his middle finger. Later that year, Rocker conducted an interview with *Sports Illustrated* in which he made a number of derogatory statements targeting African-Americans and gay men. After noticeable public outcry from his teammates and the public, Rocker was forced to attend sensitivity training and was suspended from the game of baseball for several months.

The first step occurs two weeks prior to conducting this activity. At this point, the instructor should assign students two readings: a 16 page article written by Benoit (1997) and a 10 page article written by Ware and Linkugel (1973). For additional information, instructors may want to consult Benoit (1995). During the class meeting immediately preceding this activity, the instructor should lead a brief discussion of the Benoit and Ware and Linkugel articles.

The second step occurs on the day of the activity. On this day, students should be provided with a copy of Rocker's December 27, 1999 *Sports Illustrated* interview. The instructor should then provide a summary handout of apology strategies (e.g., denial, bolstering, transcendence) and image repair strategies (e.g., evading responsibility, corrective action, mortification) to increase students' ability to grasp the material. Once students have read the interview and have reacquainted themselves with the strategies, the instructor should place students in groups of 4-5 members.

The third step requires each group to function as a think tank/public relations firm. Each group is to choose one apology strategy or one image repair strategy which would be most effective for Rocker to use to respond to the public in a press conference setting. Groups are directed they need to write a 3-4 minute statement Rocker could

read at the press conference and are given 20-30 minutes to write their statement. Once all groups have written their statements, a member of each group then (1) reads the statement to the rest of the class and (2) discusses why the chosen strategy is the best strategy for this situation.

Debriefing

After all the statements have been read, the instructor should end the press conference by leading a general discussion of the issues surrounding the Rocker situation. Some specific questions instructors can ask include:

1. Is Rocker protected by the First Amendment? Should he have the right to say whatever he wants?
2. Which apology or image repair strategy did your group choose for its response? Why did your group choose this particular strategy?
3. What ethical considerations are associated with the response created by your group?
4. After hearing each group's statement, which strategy was the most effective? Why?
5. How did your group conceptualize the audience for this statement? What aspects of an audience are important to consider when using these strategies?

Appraisal

When conducting this activity, instructors should consider the following caveats. First, instructors need to be familiar with the basic details of the Rocker situation as well as the events that occurred prior to, and after, his interview with *Sports Illustrated*. [The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (www.ajc.com) has an archive of stories that can provide instructors with these details.] Second, to create an atmosphere of a press conference, the instructor should have a table or lectern from which the speeches can be delivered. Sports paraphernalia can also help simulate the situation (e.g., watch Sportscenter on ESPN for visual ideas, as there is generally a press conference following all major league sports).

Generally, this activity has been well received from students in a variety of performance-based courses (e.g., public relations, public speaking). What is exciting about this activity is that students appreciate the opportunity to reinforce and apply the material in an environment which reflects the appropriateness of the selected strategies. In many instances, students have demonstrated a stronger appreciation for a variety of conflict situations (especially at an institutional and organizational level). What many students begin to identify is that although Rocker's statements negatively impact his public image, the statements are also tied heavily to the public's conceptualization of both his current team and Major League Baseball. During the debriefing, students better understand how statements and strategies are influential in changing public opinion about the Rocker situation.

One limitation to this activity is that although it simulates "real life" and provides an interesting opportunity to link theory to a concrete situation, the activity does not

deal directly with the consequences of communication choices. In short, because students do not have a legitimate influence on Rucker's future, they may not take the activity as seriously as they could. Although lack of student involvement is not a typical problem, assigning a grade to the activity generally eliminates this problem. Another challenge that often surfaces is because students only have limited exposure to (and consequently a partial understanding of) the apologia and image repair literature, their responses are limited in terms of their complexity. Thus, the initial discussion led by the instructor, as well as instructor coverage of the assigned readings, is crucial for overcoming this potential limitation.

References and Suggested Readings

Benoit, W. L. (1995). *Accounts, excuses and apologies: A theory of image restoration strategies*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Benoit, W. L. (1997). Hugh Grant's image restoration discourse: An actor apologizes. *Communication Quarterly*, 45, 251-267.

Braves' pitcher John Rucker suspended until May for making racial and ethnic remarks. (2000, February 21). Available: www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m1355/11_97/59607836/print.jhtml

Pearlman, J. (1999, December 27). At full blast. *Sports Illustrated*, 91, 60-64.

Ware, B. L., & Linkugel, W. A. (1973). They spoke in defense of themselves: On the generic criticism of apologia. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 50, 273-283.

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Understanding Dialectical Tensions through Radio Call-in Programs

Objective: To develop an increased awareness of dialectical tensions as tensions emerge through everyday interpersonal communication.

Course: Interpersonal, Conflict Management

Interpersonal conflict is a common outcome of basic communicative processes. Consequently, understanding the nature of conflict situations can only improve the way in which individuals act and react within these situations (Cupach & Canary, 1997). One way to understand conflict situations is by examining the tensions, or contradictions, that emerge within the situation. According to Baxter (1993b), three tensions are experienced by individuals in relationships. These tensions are (1) connection versus autonomy, (2) predictability versus novelty, and (3) openness versus closedness. These tensions are situated within the communicative actions (e.g., self-reflection, message production, message reception) of the two individuals and are experienced interpersonally as well as intrapersonally. From this perspective, conflict is not viewed as a static

incident, but rather as an event embedded within continuous relational transformation. Couples will frequently engage in a number of response strategies to conflict messages such as selection, separation, neutralization, and reframing (Baxter, 1993a).

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with real-world practice in identifying and characterizing dialectical situations and response strategies. As a specific tool, radio call-in programs are used as a basis for analysis. In recent years, regionally and nationally syndicated radio call-in programs have grown in popularity. Most typically, these shows involve a therapist or psychologist addressing calls from listeners who seek personal advice on a variety of interpersonal issues. Usually, callers cite some type of relational conflict as the source of excessive tension and strain for someone close to them (e.g., self, family, spouse, teenagers). Frequently, psychologists ask callers to (1) explain the circumstances of the conflict, (2) explore the possible ramifications of specific choices, and (3) ponder the extent to which a decision may affect others. Psychologists usually conclude the calls with helpful advice or directions. Such shows provide a "real-life" venue for examining a host of interpersonal issues, hardships, and challenges.

The Activity

Prior to engaging in this activity, it is necessary to spend two class periods discussing dialectical theory (Baxter, 1988) as well as conflict types, conflict styles, and face-saving strategies. Other topics include listening skills (i.e., aspects of good and poor listening), perception, language (e.g., communicating emotions, self-disclosure), and relational dynamics. Most introductory communication textbooks provide a thorough overview of these topics and cite a variety of conflict types and/or levels (e.g., Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor, 2001).

After reviewing these concepts, students are required to listen to a radio call-in program for a two-hour period (e.g., Dr. Toni Grant, Dr. Laura Schlessinger). As students listen to the show, they compile a log of the program by recording data such as the caller's sex, the nature of the relationship, and the issues being addressed. The following list of questions is provided to guide students' observations (i.e., field notes): (1) What is the caller's name?, (2) Is the caller male or female?, (3) What type of relationship is being discussed (e.g., acquaintance, friend, parent/child, spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend/partner, self)?, (4) What is the specific nature of the problem?, (5) Based on what you know about dialectical tensions, which tension seems to be prevalent?, and (6) What solutions were discussed regarding the conflict?

Following their listening to the program, students synthesize their observations in a 3-5 page paper that focuses on two or three specific calls. (Students should provide a copy of their field notes with their paper.) Students are given approximately three weeks to complete the activity.

This activity is worth 15% of students' course grade. In their paper, students are told to address the following items:

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