

ed for this purpose. A 1-page self-critique of the videotaped presentation is due the next class period or, for students who present the last day of the semester, within two days. At the end of each presentation day, the instructor facilitates a 5-10 minute discussion of the overall presentational strengths and challenges encountered in the day's presentations. After all of the presentations have been made, the instructor facilitates a discussion of overall aspects of presentational speaking that students noticed as most important to success.

### Appraisal

Students find this assignment rewarding and valuable, but also very challenging. In fact, many claim that it is the most difficult assignment they complete in the organizational communication curriculum, yet the most relevant and valuable in preparing them for a career in the communication field. Some students feel overwhelmed. Many have difficulty selecting and narrowing the topic. Others struggle with organizing vast amounts of information. Almost all students report intense feelings of accountability because they know that the organizational contact person, often their supervisor, is counting on them to deliver a superb product.

The activity makes a significant contribution to development of students' written and oral communication competence. Specifically, the assignment provides the opportunity for students to develop and demonstrate (1) clarity of writing and speaking; (2) professionalism and appropriateness in business writing, presentational speaking, and interpersonal communication with professionals in the workplace; (3) proficiency in researching, structuring, and supporting arguments with relevant and adequate evidence; and (4) competence in developing an effective message for a particular audience.

Many of the proposals are actually adopted within the organization. For example, a restaurant is now offering delivery service of take-out food to three surrounding hotels, a foster care organization now has a training program to prepare 17-year-old foster children for independent living, and a strip mall now has a business owner's association. Several of the proposals have led to job offers or promotions.

Some limitations that occasionally occur with this activity include organizational contact persons who do not fully cooperate, difficulty scheduling interviews, failure of the organization to provide promised information, inability to obtain sensitive information, and unexpected changes in personnel or job duties of the contact person or the student. Nonetheless, students find value in working through these real-world challenges.

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## Persuasion and Protest Music

**Objective:** To determine functions of persuasive messages through case studies of social protest music.

**Course:** Persuasion

While most Americans believe "other people" are influenced by persuasive appeals, they often reject the power of such messages to influence their own attitudes and behaviors (Alter, 1985). It is not surprising many of today's students, as children of the consumer age, consider themselves to be savvy about persuasive communication practices and, therefore, somewhat immune to the messages of advertisers, politicians, and other professional communicators. The purpose of this activity is to increase students' awareness of how they can be influenced by persuasive messages and to provide them with a framework for critically examining the persuasive process through music. Specifically, this assignment focuses on the functions of persuasive messages and the relationship between persuasive messages and the contexts in which they occur. The persuasive messages used in this assignment are not found in the ads or political speeches to which students believe they are immune, but in music, which they may not perceive as an explicitly persuasive form of communication.

Frank Zappa observed that many youth are loyal to neither "flag, country or doctrine, but only to music" (Kofsky, 1969, p. 256). His observation is confirmed by surveys of students' interests and aspirations conducted by myself at the beginning of each semester. These surveys report a significant interest in music among students despite differences in academic majors, class standings, and grade point averages. Some play instruments, some follow specific bands across the country, some download MP3 files; many engage in all three endeavors. The following activity incorporates students' interest in music to increase their understanding of the persuasive process.

### The Activity

This activity is conducted in two parts. Part I is a reading assignment and class discussion; Part II is an individual research and oral presentation. Students are given the assignment at least three weeks before the oral presentation is due to allow adequate preparation time. Instructors desiring a more extensive assignment can assign a written research paper in addition to the oral presentation and weigh the assignment more heavily.

*Part I: Reading assignment and class discussion.* The reading assignment for this activity is "Music and Social Movements" (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 2001). The chapter is 24 pages in length and is assigned as an overnight reading. This reading is sufficient for the activity, although a more extensive focus on persuasion and social movements could utilize additional material from the same book. The purpose of the reading assignment is to introduce students to the idea that songs can serve as persuasive messages, to identify persuasive functions of social protest songs, and to demonstrate how those functions are fulfilled through examples of specific songs. In addition, the chapter serves as a model for the analysis portion of students' oral presentations. Typically, the reading and discussion portion of the assignment takes one week of class time.

For the purpose of this assignment, a social protest song is defined as a song that identifies a social problem and/or calls for action in response to a social problem. Stewart et al. (2001) argue that social protest songs are important to all stages of a social movement and serve six persuasive functions. These functions are: (1) informing audiences about the past, present, and future of social problems (for example, the woman's suffrage song "Don't I Wish I Was a Single Girl Again" details the lack of rights for married women in the late nineteenth century); (2) establishing and/or defending the self-identity and self-worth of those associated with the cause, especially those who are "victims" of circumstances related to the social concern (for example, the song "Over 65" counteracts negative stereotypes of senior citizens); (3) establishing the legitimacy of a movement by associating it with authoritative religious, social, and political institutions or values (for example, the song "Casey Jones" identifies the labor movement with patriotism); (4) prescribing solutions and/or making demands regarding the social problem (for example, the anti-nuclear song "No Seabrook" calls for an end to the construction of nuclear power plants); (5) promoting cohesion and camaraderie among those involved in the movement (for example, the labor song that encourages "Solidarity Forever"); and (6) urging specific actions such as picketing or voting (for example, the slave song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" provided specific directions for escaping through the Underground Railroad).

Because the information in this chapter provides students with the foundation for the analysis portion of the oral presentation, it is important that they fully understand the material. One or two class periods are devoted to discussing the material. To facilitate class discussion and ensure student understanding of the information and concepts, the following questions can be asked: (1) Why do advocates of social change need to fulfill the various functions identified in the readings?, (2) In your opinion, are there persuasive functions other than those identified in the reading that music might fulfill?, and (3) Could the use of a song by a social movement hurt rather than help its persuasive goals? Why or why not?

*Part II: Research and oral presentation.* This portion of

the assignment requires an 8-10 minute individual oral presentation of a social protest song as a case study of the persuasive functions of music in social movements. The oral presentations involve a second week, depending on the number of students enrolled in the class and the length of class periods. To provide adequate time for oral presentations, this assignment works best with classes of 20 students or less. However, the activity can be adapted to larger classes. For example, the oral presentation can be changed from an individual assignment to a group (2-3 students) assignment. The oral presentation consists of three types of information: (1) a provision of background or contextual material, (2) a recording of the song and transcript of the lyrics, and (3) an analysis of the persuasive functions of the song. Students report on a social protest song that they have chosen. The reading assignment provides several examples of protest songs or students may identify a song not included in the readings. To eliminate the possibility of two students reporting on the same song, they are asked to identify more than one song and indicate their choices on a sign-up sheet a few days after the assignment is distributed. The sign-up sheet is then checked for duplicates.

In the first part of the presentation, students present background or contextual information in order to prepare the audience to listen to the persuasive message of the song within the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts for which it was intended. Contextual information should include the time frame during which the song was used, movement(s) with which it was associated, persuasive goals of the movement(s), audience(s) for the persuasive messages, movement leader(s), opposition to the movement, current status of the movement(s), and any other information that may be pertinent to understanding the persuasive functions of the song.

After presenting the contextual information, students play a recording of the song (e.g., tape, CD, video) for the class and provide a transcript of the lyrics (e.g., handouts, overhead transparency, PowerPoint) including a complete source citation. In addition, they must present a brief biographical sketch of the songwriter(s) and his/her relationship, if any, with the social movement. Many university and public library holdings include recordings of social protest songs because so many of these songs have become part of the popular culture. Some recent collections include *The Best of Broadside, 1962-1988* and *Songs of Complaint and Protest*. With advance notice of this activity, librarians may be able to serve as resource persons for locating recordings. In addition, the Internet has several sources of recordings and/or lyrics, one of which is <http://folkmusic.about.com>.

The third part of the presentation is an analysis of the persuasive functions of the song. This portion of the assignment includes (1) an identification of the specific persuasive functions fulfilled by the song (as identified by Stewart et al. in the reading assignment) and (2) an explanation of how the song fulfilled the functions in terms of the

persuasive goals of the social movement. If the song has been associated with more than one social movement, students are instructed to include that information in the context portion of the oral report, but focus on the song's association with only one movement for the analysis section of the presentation. At the conclusion of each presentation, class members are given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments based on their own knowledge or experience that might add to the class's understanding of the persuasive functions of the song. At this point, students receive a grade for the oral presentation based on their mastery of content material and oral presentation skills (e.g., clarity, organization, delivery, appropriateness for audience). This assignment is worth 10% of the total course grade.

### Debriefing

In the class period following completion of the oral presentations, class discussion should focus on accurately defining and identifying the persuasive functions of music as well as the relationships among these functions and the contexts in which they are used. This debriefing usually takes one class period. Students are first asked to identify specific songs (presented in the oral presentations) they thought were particularly useful case studies in terms of understanding the persuasive functions and to explain why they thought the songs were useful. Students are then asked to compare how various songs fulfill persuasive functions. For example, identifying and examining songs that fulfilled different functions, yet were used within similar contexts (such as a 1970s civil rights song and a 1970s women's rights song), further reinforces students' understanding of how songs function persuasively. Other useful categories of comparison are songs that fulfill similar functions, but were used within different contexts and songs that have been used in more than one context by more than one movement. This discussion provides the instructor with an opportunity to review, clarify, and integrate the material presented in the student case studies.

### Appraisal

The first time this activity was used, the expectation was that the songs presented would be historical in nature—labor songs (e.g., "Casey Jones"), civil rights songs (e.g., "We Shall Overcome"), and 1970s folk music (e.g., "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?") because these songs are identified in the assigned reading. However, it was a pleasant surprise when the majority of students presented contemporary music about the environment (e.g., "Mercy, Mercy Me"), violence against women (e.g., "Silent All these Years"), abortion (e.g., "Abortion"), and gun control (e.g., "Me and A Gun"). These selections indicated that students had successfully applied information from the readings to the persuasive messages they were likely to encounter in their everyday lives.

The diverse array of songs presented was positively received by the students themselves. Many were surprised to find that songs they frequently listened to carried a

social or political message that they had overlooked. They expressed respect for particular songs and artists as well as an awareness of the persuasive dimension of a type of communication they had considered "just" entertainment. Students reported that they were excited about the assignment and several commented that they expanded their research beyond the one song required by the assignment. The presentations reinforced student learning by requiring that they synthesize, organize, and teach the information to the rest of the class. In addition, throughout the semester, examples of musical persuasion found their way into other assignments even though this was not a specific requirement.

An optional guest speaker segment can be added to this activity, providing there are resources available. If a faculty member, student, or community songwriter can be identified, a guest lecture addressing sources of inspiration and the song writing process can provide students with a valuable insider's perspective on the topic of music and persuasion. Resources for identifying local songwriters include institutions offering musical instruction, local radio stations, and community groups such as folk music enthusiasts.

This activity has been successful in increasing students' awareness of how they can be influenced by persuasive messages. Ideally, this awareness will make them critically examine future persuasive messages. Indications of the success of this assignment were students' high performances on the oral reports and enthusiastic class discussions as well as their eager engagement of the critical process and the quality of analyses of persuasive messages throughout the rest of the semester.

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## Corporate Competition in the Classroom

**Objective:** To introduce intergroup competition into presentational speaking.

**Course:** Business and Professional Speaking, Small Group

Group assignments often bring out the best and/or worst in students. Some students rise to the occasion by

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