

## **The Prism Look at the Rhetoric of Apologia:** Lessons from the Apologetic Speeches of Tiger Woods and Chris Brown

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### ***ABSTRACT***

This article is a rhetorical criticism of two apologetic speeches from two celebrities. Chris Brown and Tiger Woods articulated their apology to public through visual media during crisis situation. To restore their image, avoid lawsuits, and stabilize trust to their apologetic stakeholders, their speeches were codified under visual composition, structure of speeches, offense identification, and the moment of silence. I used Black's prism analysis to criticize the complexity of apologetic address of celebrity. Result, rhetoric of apologia exercised a negotiation process of identity and it indicated the authenticity of the speakers, avoidance of interruption, prevention of ambivalence, engraving the audience emotion, and sustaining their personal objectives. The article concluded by answering what kind of various constellation tactics in saying "sorry."

**Keywords:** *apology speech, celebrity crisis, image restoration strategy, rhetoric of apologia*

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## Introduction

*"Find a room in your heart to one day believe in me again" (Tiger Woods)*

*"I only can pray that you forgive me, please" (Chris Brown)*

Celebrities' scandals have created public discourse around the temptations, temperaments, and moral values of Hollywood's exclusive elites. When the rumor hit the celebrity with undoubted facts, negative testimonials, and the image of the celebrity would be in jeopardy, refurbishing the image through apologetic speech could be the ultimate option. Chris Brown, a talented twenty-two year old musician, who started his career at the age of 16, gave a public apology in regards to the physical violence to his girlfriend or his "Cinder-ella-ella-ella," namely Rihanna, who is a popular artist with a song, "Umbrella- ella-ella." On February 8, 2009, the fight between Rihanna and Brown worsened into physical violence that resulted in the facial injuries and the hospitalization of Rihanna.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Tiger Woods, one of the most successful golfers in the United States also proclaimed public apology after confessing his misconducts with mistresses. Some of these celebrities' scandals lead into ultimate actions of apology to save their public images.

Image is an essential tool, for a celebrity to gain fame because it will influence his/her ongoing career. An image also influences the relationship between a public figure and the audience.<sup>3</sup> Human perception derives the image of a public figure and sometimes a perception is more valuable than the reality.<sup>4</sup> Thus, when an issue threatens the image of a public figure, "face work"<sup>5</sup> must be done to restore it through effective strategy. Face consideration is an urgent matter for a public figure's survival in the public arena.<sup>6</sup> The public apology becomes one strategy to restore image, especially when the issue hits close to the truth. The public will demand responsibility especially when the action is offensive.<sup>7</sup> Although the "offensiveness" is subjective according to laws and norms of a culture, if a relevant and salient

audience perceives the action as "offensive" and atrocious, then a restoration strategy will be a way for the celebrity to save face.

This article examined two case studies of public figures' apologetic speeches. This study was a response to Benoit's call for research in exploring situational similarities and differences in image repair discourse.<sup>8</sup> Tiger Woods and Chris Brown faced "offensive" issues, which forced them to save face through public apology. They had similarities in entertainment or public figure discourse;<sup>9</sup> their actions "victimize" other people, they were potentially subjected to lawsuits,<sup>10</sup> and their personal lives were related to their actions. Using the similarities of their offensive cases, I analyzed the similar and different patterns in their apologetic speeches. Hopefully, this criticism could contribute to the enduring conversation of image restoration and the rhetoric of apologia.<sup>11</sup>

In this article, I used the prismatic look from Edward Black. I examined the speeches from the complexity of the addresses, looked at the speeches back and forth multiple times, and aimed to give a singular answer to the question 'how does it work'?<sup>12</sup> I looked at one facet after another in no particular order, as Black mentions, "It is a method without system."<sup>13</sup> Based on this radiant multiplicity examination, I argued that the apologetic speeches of both celebrities work to conciliate their offense actions and restore their images through the rhetoric of apologia. Rhetoric of apologia exercised a negotiation process of identity, through the use of visual setting, offense identification, languages structures, and silent. The strategy in rhetoric of apologia indicated the authenticity of the speakers, avoidance of interruption, prevention of ambivalence, engraving the audience emotion, and sustaining their personal objectives.

I first reviewed the theory of image restoration and rhetoric of apologia as the critical lens to view the cases of Woods and Brown. Second, I applied the theories by identifying and evaluating the similar and different patterns in

Woods and Brown's apologetic speech. Thirdly, I collected the engaging angle, which able to point out the celebrities' image restoration technique in apologetic speech such as their visual performance, the speech structure, the offense identification, and the moment of silent.

## Literature Review

An image restoration strategy is a crisis handling strategy to "fix" negative perceptions, complaints, and responses from the public to an organization or an individual after a crisis hits the image.<sup>14</sup> Some critics appeared to point out the imperfection of the strategy;<sup>15</sup> however, many other researchers who have employed the image restoration theory agreed that it could provide a theoretical framework to describe an organization or an individual response in an emergency, disaster, and crisis situation.<sup>16</sup> Benoit contended that image restoration theory is grounded on the contemplation of Aristotle, Burke, Ware, and Linkugel.<sup>17</sup> He also used the typological construction from the self-defense academic discourse.<sup>18</sup>

Many scholars developed the image restoration theory using various critical points of view and scientific methodologies.<sup>19</sup> Many other pertinent researches and rhetorical criticism contributed mostly to analyze a single public figure and applied the theory to a specific case study. However, comparing the rhetorical strategies of celebrities was still rare. The purpose of this comparison was to find the similar and different patterns that complicate the rhetorical strategy of making a public apology.

Rhetoric can be used to illuminate questions toward phenomenon. Farrel argued that it is important to use model to generate some sort of paradigm, as the foundation of comparison.<sup>20</sup> He also argued that model can be hybrid according to the context, text, and structures. Thus, I used Black's criticism on Gettysburg Address as the model to examine the rhetorical performance and applied the existing body of rhetorical theory. To understand the

prism look model from Black, I examined the overall look of Black's diamond.<sup>21</sup> Then, I used the technique of Black to carefully examine two speeches from the celebrity. The prism look showed the function of celebrities' public apology rhetorically. The look at speech through the "diamond" is in the details.

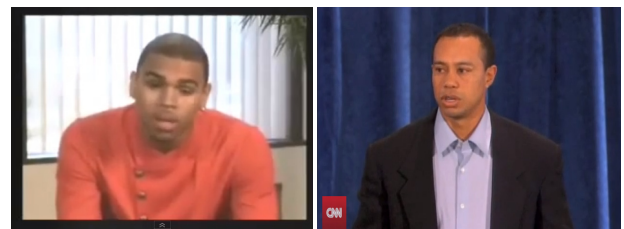
## Visual

The visual elements in public apology were important factors because these speeches were posted in the audiovisual media. These media could provide audio and visual rhetorical experiences and create a subject position that shapes audience perceptions.<sup>22</sup>

Figure 1<sup>23</sup>



Figure 2<sup>24</sup>



The public apology is a strategy to restore the images and exhibition of celebrities' moral actions. Therefore, the apologetic speeches needed to be conducted in good arrangements and plans. The apologetic speeches needed to show celebrities' complex purposes, such as in Brown's case, he was still in the plead guilty positions since June 2009. He would be charged five years probation, and 1,400 hours of "labor-oriented service."<sup>25</sup> The decision would be announced on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, while Brown launched his apologetic speech video on July 20, 2009. Using this timeline, the media would wait for the announcement, and in August his sentence's news would be the "hot topic" for the media. If he apologized before the announcement, the media could cover his sentences with his apologetic speech as a complete frame of his assault chronicles.<sup>26</sup> Tiger Woods's apologetic speech appeared in the Internet since February 19, 2009. This was the time when he has finished his 45 days of therapy until early February, and by that time, he was ready to apologize and restore his image for his family, his foundation, and his business empire.

Therefore, the apologetic rhetorical strategies needed to cover all elements throughout the texts as written, visual, and audio artifacts in order to strategically address the issue in the right time and restore their images.

I accessed Woods and Brown's public apology in YouTube. From these videos, it was obvious that both apologetic speeches were set up in different visual layout. Woods called up the press, family, and audience in a press conference. He stood up behind the podium facing the audience directly while he spoke, and he read his script in the podium. Woods stood up higher than the audience, with blue curtain behind him as his speech background. One microphone on the podium helped his volume to be heard by the audience and to "fight" the noise of press cameras that keep repeating the "click" sounds during his apologetic speech. The audience who saw him directly could see all his body language, from his hands, head, and his feet. However, the audience who watched him from the video could only see his hands, and head gesture at least until 8.59 minutes, before the camera moved the shoot to another angle and enabled the audience to see one third of his body posture. His image disappeared for two seconds at the 9 minutes speech, and appeared at 9.02 minutes with different angle camera. At this point until the end of his speech, the camera showed him from this left side; stood on the podium with the audiences in front of him. He finished his speech in 13.32 minutes, and then he walked down to the audience to hug his mother. This hugging moment finished until 13.56 and the video ends.

Brown provided a different visual style in apologizing. He sat on a room "alone" (at least in the visual available information), with white glass window, crème wall, and a little bit green palm leaves in the right corner of the video as the background. Brown sat on a chair in front of a standing and unmoving camera. This camera only covered his head to his arm, thus the audience could not see whether he moves his hands while explaining or not. The only visual information during his speech mostly

came from Brown's expression, and his eyes. Interestingly, Brown did not "use" visible text to read, however, it was obvious that Brown's eyes look at the left corner of the camera and his eyes sometimes moved down under the camera, seemed like he looked at something to help him articulate his speech, probably a teleprompter. He wore orange, long sleeve shirt, with two buttons consistently appear in the camera. This visual information indicated his unmoving posture and unmoving camera. His cloth put him in the center of attention, as the bright orange color dominated the one-third images in the video.

The visual technique from Woods, at least showed to the audience that Woods wanted to "face" the audience, and attempted to "face" the speech mistakes directly to the audience. While Brown showed more isolated strategy, and closed the visual relationship with direct audience. Thus, in the visual examination, Woods performance was more authentic than Brown. The resonance of the message and visual information showed that Woods had more "brave" to accept impromptu moment and spontaneity in his speech. Woods could also show more spontaneous apologetic speech through his voices' tones or his gesture that reflected his emotion while he read his speech. Brown seemed more 'set up' by his "PR" people and lawyers to control and manage the situation, so that he did not say something that will jeopardize him in his lawsuit process, but still provided apologetic information. The video of Brown could possibly be taken several times, before it was released. Just like a movie production, it could be repeated, edited, and deleted when Brown's fail to show the "planned" speech and image. While for Woods, he had no chance to repeat his speech, due to the direct situation setting.

However, both closed any interaction with the audience. Woods did not give press any chance to ask question during or after his speech, only by interacting to his mother he showed that he wants to embrace his closest figure, but also avoided the media interaction at

that time. Brown also avoided the interactivity by showing him self-alone in front of the camera, without direct audience.

Brown and Woods strategically avoided interaction because they wanted to avoid interruption in their speech, which would demand impromptu answer or response. If they created wrong response, it would be documented, and it would jeopardize their lawsuits or their image. When both celebrities wanted to talk about their apology, they also talked about their narratives especially related to the chronological order of the offense, and understanding about what happened in between, before, and after.<sup>27</sup> Their hope in this narrative was to convince the audience about their story and apology. However, when they allowed interaction with press or audience, they had limitation to predict the authentic situation, and might not be able to response in a strategic way. The interruption as an oral strategy to fight the “dominant” narratives would put both celebrities in vulnerable condition such as wrong response, documented by the media, and gave audience negative and unpredictable perception.<sup>28</sup> By being less authentic and avoid interruption, the celebrities in the apologetic moment, could arrange and plan message to gain their objectives.

From the visual examination, Woods and Brown gave us lesson about the timeline of the video publications, authenticity of the speech, and the avoidance of interruption. The choices of celebrities to choose the timeline of the speech enabled them to consider their lawsuits, therapy, and offense time. The authenticity gave consequences of the “brave” image of the celebrities. The more authentic of the celebrities, the more brave images appeared, but also the more risks for mistakes they had to face. The avoidance of the interruption gave the speaker freedom to speak as arranged, avoided disturbance in the narration of offenses, and prevented unpredictable responses.

## Structure

A public apology always engages structural address. In the structure of celebrity apologetic speech, I divided the structure in the similarities and differences between both structures, and what we could learn from those findings.

### Opening and Self-Introduction

Brown and Woods had opening greetings and self-introduction. However, they packaged these in different ways. Brown only used the word “Hi” to open his speech, while Woods used the words “Good morning and thank you for joining me.” This was interesting; because Woods needed to thank the effort of his audience to come to his public speech, while Brown with his “younger style” did not need to thank anyone’s effort for watching him. Brown could go directly to his point. The speech setting configuration with the existence of direct audience and “alone” also reflected their self-introduction. Brown only said, “I’m Chris Brown” and after that he goes directly to his apologetic points. In the contrary, Woods confidently did not say his name.

WOODS : Many of you in this room are my friends. Many of you in this room know me. Many of you have cheered for me or you’ve worked with me or you’ve supported me.

From his self-introduction, he informed that the audiences in the room were planned and not random audiences. He contended that the audiences in the room were his friends, “know him” might be possibly the press, “cheered for me” might be his family, “Worked with me” might be his business partners, his employee, and “supported me” might be his sponsors and his commercial endorsers. The identification of the audience from their introduction also indicated the stakeholders of the rhetoric of apology.



## ***Apology to Stakeholder***

The specific discourses on the rhetoric of apologia were also about the victims and responsibility. Zohar Kampf identified the tactics for mentioning the discourses in public apology. The celebrities could undermine the existence of the victim by using unclear subject from the words “if,” “anyone,” or “someone.”<sup>29</sup> The public figures could also select specific victim, and select specific offense for responsibility, not the whole actions. Finally, the public figures could also blur the identity of the victims by not mentioning their name and substituted the “victim” by a generic name. This technique was used to prevent apologetic meeting directly with the victim.<sup>30</sup>

From their speech structure, we could learn about the degree of complexity of their problems. Woods had more stakeholders and victims to give the special “apology,” and Brown only had his fans or audience and his victim (Rihanna) to ask for apology. Brown only said the word “You” as the object of his apology, and informed the audience that he had said “sorry” to Rihanna. Thus, he separated Rihanna different from the audience.

BROWN : I have told Rihanna countless time that I am telling you today, that I am truly truly sorry.

While Woods provided many objects for his apologetic speech, he mentioned his friends, fans, business partners, his foundation, the parents whose kids admired him, and his family. Woods also informed the audience that he has apologized to his wife.

WOODS : As Elin pointed out to me, my real apology to her will not come in the form of words; it will come from my behavior over time.

The number of stakeholders provided information that Woods’ problems involved more stakeholders. It was also obvious to see the closing remarks that indicated the relationship of

the celebrity and the stakeholders. Brown said about his hope so that he was, “truly worthy of the term ‘role model.’” The words “role model” indicated a relationship of celebrities and fans, thus it symbolized that in Brown’s apologetic speech ‘what matters’ for him was his fans. Woods said about “one day believes in me again.” The word “believe” could be related to various relationships such as father, role model, investor, business partner, and donors. The word “believe” provided general information on the various relationships that require trust, risk, and role model. Thus, his closing remarks indicated that “what matters” for Woods was the trust from the stakeholders.

## **Philanthropic Action and CSR (Celebrity Social Responsibility)**

Both celebrities also spoke about their “charity” or social service, which included in the middle of the speech. Brown stated in 1.2 second, at the minute of 1.08-1.09 about his social service.

BROWN : I’ve done a lot of social service.

Interestingly, Brown did not specify what kind of social service he had done. He only indicated that he had done “a lot” without clear parameter how much was “a lot.” Seemed like this social service things only appeared as additional weak points, without any further explanation, and Brown directly moved to the next theme about his minister, mom, and his reflection time. It was interesting that his punishment would be about doing “social services,” which indicated that he just wanted to inform the audience that he had been a “good citizen” and did “a lot” of social service, even before he got the punishment.

As a contrast strategy, Woods provided detail information about his foundation.

WOODS : From the Learning Center students in Southern California to the Earl Woods scholars in Washington, D.C., millions of kids have changed their lives

This detail convinced the audience that he really had a foundation, and he had done charities. He had anxiety about his foundation, the “investment” process of his foundation, and also his image in front of his beneficiaries, which consist of young people. He recognized that his behaviors might give impact to his beneficiaries, his staffs, the board of director, and the possibility of declining donation because of his image. He used 135 words and spent 1.19 minutes to dedicate his worry and to ask apology related to his foundation, at the 2.19 minutes to 3.38 minutes of his speech. Thus, he dedicated 9% of his time and 9% of his words to say sorry and to talk about his foundation. It meant for Woods, his foundation was important in his speech.

The philanthropic action or social service became a part of celebrity’s business especially to build positive image and brand.<sup>31</sup> Celebrity could also act as a corporation, the name was the brands, and the art/music production or sport championship was the product. Image covered more than brand and product. Image covered non-product value that could associate the ‘brand’ with positive or negative perception. Philanthropic efforts could be the celebrity social responsibility in providing service to the community, building positive images, providing positive values as role models for the fans, and promoting good citizenship.

Philanthropic explanation could be included in the effort to reduce offensiveness of event or the bolstering strategy. The celebrities provided positive feelings from past actions to offset the negative feeling toward the wicked act.<sup>32</sup> Benoit also argued about bolstering, “Rhetors may describe positive characteristics they have or positive acts they have done in the past.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, no matter the statement of philanthropic action was clear or unclear, recalling celebrities “good effort” in the past became their indications of restoring their image. The bolstering strategy also appeared in the personal values that they delivered in their apologetic speech.

## *Individual Value*

Brown and Woods provided information about their personal values, or the message that their parents had raised them with good values, religious teachings, and words of wisdom. Brown provided his family’s value, through some of his statements.

BROWN : I’m very sad and very ashamed to what I have done. My mother and my spiritual teacher have taught me way better than that.

BROWN : God have been generously given me, he brought me fame and fortune.

From Brown’s statements about his values, he informed the audience on three points. 1) He tried to bolster his image by including the information on positive values or positive aspect that he had before the offense happened, and the he tried to fix his values. 2) He tried to separate his mother’s values with his actions. He tried to protect his family to be the object of social accusation of not “teaching the son with a good moral value.” By doing that, he also tried to “save” the face of his family especially his mother and his ministry, with information that he did not do the teaching from his spiritual teacher and mother. His action was merely his individual decision, and their family values had nothing to do with it. 3) Finally, he used his family and his “ministry” as the way back to his good moral value. Just like the metaphor of the lost sheep came back to the shepherd. When the sheep had lost, the sheep returned back to the shepherd, just like Brown tried to use his mother and ministry as a way to “go back” to fix his value.

Woods provided several techniques in delivering his speech. Woods referred the “shepherd” as Buddhism value from his mother and the therapy-learning values. However, Woods clearly mentioned that he was “lost” from the teaching. Woods stated that Buddhism

teaching was good, but he stayed away from it, and he started to get lost.

WOODS : Part of following this path for me is Buddhism, which my mother taught me at a young age... Buddhism teaches that a craving for things outside our selves causes an unhappy and pointless search for security... Obviously, I lost track of what I was taught.

Showing the “lost” side of good values also provided information on bolstering technique such as: 1) Showing the human side of the celebrity, that human sometimes lost the good track he had been taught. 2) Justifying the religious teaching and used his action as a separate procedure. The technique would avoid prosecution to his religion as the background of his attitude. 3) Showing celebrity’s awareness on what could be considered as good values and what was celebrity’s step to go back to the value.

Woods also tried to use his narrative in the therapy process. He indicated that the offenses happened frequently, repeatedly, and even Woods mentioned it as behavior.<sup>34</sup> Woods mentioned clearly that his offense was “irresponsible and selfish behavior,” and “It’s now up to me to make amends and that starts by never repeating the mistakes I’ve made.” In these sentences he indicated plural nouns such as “mistakes,” “affairs,” and “the issues.” Therefore, if an offensive action had been a repeating behavior, it was reasonable to use “therapy” as the panacea to control back the behavior and fix it. Woods informed the audience about his progress in the therapy.

WOODS : In therapy, I’ve learned the importance of looking at my spiritual life and keeping in balance with my professional life. I need to regain my balance and be centered so I can save the things that are most important

to me -- my marriage and my children

Using the therapy as the panacea of his misleading behavior, Woods gave the audience information about his progress in the therapy, and bolstered his image by showing that he was in the “right” direction to raise up again from his “deviant” behavior.

The structural examination provided pattern of typological theme that the celebrities used to address the public apology. Black mentioned that the structure of the speech was “not an instant in the course of the speech when the experience of audience was not subjected to its controlling configuration of tension and resolution.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the pattern of opening and self-introduction, apology to stakeholders, celebrity social responsibility, and personal values information were constructed to restore celebrity images. However, the similar thematic pattern from both celebrities configured with the chronicle of their personal life, the time line dimension, and their complex objectives.

The structure of the speeches configured the rhetorical strategy to form the public discourse about the celebrities. In the crisis situation, where the issues hit the celebrities, their images and careers were in threat; celebrities needed to provide rhetorical strategy to face the ambivalence information, response, and uncertain situation.<sup>36</sup> In their vulnerable positions, celebrities needed to navigate the communication process and information effectively.<sup>37</sup> Woods in his structure provided better strategy than Brown. Woods had clear identification about his audiences and stakeholders, and he navigated his apology to each stakeholders. Woods also provided certainty on his philanthropic points; thus it clarified to the public about what “good” things he had done in the past and provided prudential information. Brown did not provide certainty but he delivered ambiguous information in his speech. For example, Brown did not clarify to whom he had to apologize, and what kind



of philanthropic action he had done. In the time of celebrities' crisis, Woods gave better example of disclosing the "truth," narratives, and information to prevent more predicaments in his entertainment and sport business before it got worst.

### Offense

Brown and Woods provided different approach in identifying the "offense." Brown did not clearly mention what his "offense" was, as he was still in the trial process, and confession of the offense, would create difficult process. Brown used the words "I wish I could have to live those few moments again," to refer to the moment of Rihhana's physical violation, but he did not mention what the offense was. He also used some other words for example: "what I did is unacceptable," "very ashamed to what I have done," "to seek and ensure that what happened in February, can never happened again," "it will never happened again," and "other learn from my mistake." It was interesting to see how Brown did not mention clearly upon his offense. He employed the words "did," "done," "happened," "it," and "mistake" to indicate his "mysterious" offense. Brown tried to blur his offense, to minimize the responsibility, to avoid lawsuit based from his words, and to provide equivocal/ambiguity in his action. He preferred to use the subject "it" than to explain "the subject". Another interesting point from Brown was he (finally) used the word "domestic violence" but these words were not for referring the offense, instead he used these to explain his personal background, and makes it a justification point for his audience to understand his position.

BROWN : As many of you know, I grew up in a home with a lot of domestic violence and I saw and continuing to seek and ensure that what happened in February, can never happened again.

Using the points above, Brown provided the audience point of views such as he was a

poor kid who was raised by domestic violence issue. He used the words "as many of you know" to drag the sympathy feeling of the audience. He believed that many people know his background, thus hopefully it would reduce the responsibility of his offense. He pointed at someone else inside his family, the one whom he mentioned he grew up with, who influenced his "mistakes." Stimulatingly, in the same sentence, he mentioned, "What happened in February" to avoid him saying "the domestic violence I have done in February." Brown, obviously, tried to avoid identifying what offense he has done; he admitted, "Something happened" in February; he admitted he had mistakes, but what mistakes was not clearly stated.

In the contrary, even though several times, Woods used the words "my irresponsible and selfish behavior I engaged in," "how I could have done these things to my wife, Elin, and to my children," "the pain my behavior has caused to those of you in this room," "how I could have done the things I did," eventually, Woods clearly stated his offense.

WOODS : I was unfaithful. I had affairs. I cheated.

The information about the offense of Woods was interesting. Using all these sentences he informed his audience several points. 1) He indicated that his offense happened several times, and the offense continued to be a behavior. Woods also used the plural words such as "these things," "the things" to provide information of his plural offenses. It was different from Brown who uses the word "it" instead of "these", to indicate that Brown's action was only one offense. 2) Woods eventually confessed clearly upon his offense and what actions he had done that hurt his wife, children, and his other stakeholders. However, Woods did not use the words for example "I have sexual addiction" but he explained that his mistake was all related to marital problem. The words "unfaithful," "affairs," and "cheated" could only be used as negative connotations and negative offense, if the doer has committed partner. If the offender

did not have committed relationship, then the behavior or the offense could be perceived differently. Thus, it seemed to me that the clear “confession” of Woods’s offense only pointed at his behavior in relationship with his committed partner.

From the examination of their offense, both celebrities provided us the mortification strategy. Mortification was the admission of guilt and express regret.<sup>38</sup> Both celebrities admitted that they were guilty and took responsibility, even though both provide different techniques in identifying their offenses. Woods clearly indicated the name of his offense and Brown blurred his offense. They also expressed regrets by using the words “sorry,” “I apologize,” and by saying that their offenses were “unacceptable.” The power of “sorry” as a word and the reflection moment of the offense could be magnified through the use of silence. The moment of silence also functioned to strengthen the effort of mortification strategy through the powerful empty space in each silence, the unspoken words, and the use of expressions.

### **The Moment of Silence**

Ihab Hassan remarks in his criticism on the metaphor of silence, “At a certain limit of contemporary vision, language moves towards silence.”<sup>39</sup> Silence was an important artifact in a speech. Various important figures in linguistic and rhetoric acknowledge the silence as a sign of an iconic symbol of abstinence,<sup>40</sup> gestural space of performance,<sup>41</sup> and imposition state of muteness.<sup>42</sup> Kahlil Gibran as a famous poet reflects his understanding of silence, “And there were those who have the truth within them, but they tell it not in words. In the bosom of such as these the spirit dwells in rhythmic silence,”<sup>43</sup> it meant that sometimes words were not enough to tell the unspoken meaning of the rhetor. Another example was from Caroline Bergvall, when she used the term, “(dis) figuration, (de) narrativization, and (dis) articulation,”<sup>44</sup> to provide illustration of silence in the performance. While St. Augustine referred to the words listen to “the very Self,”<sup>45</sup> to connect

the silence with the moment of reflection. All these narrations about silence show the in-depth meaning of silence.

Both celebrities provided the moment of silent, pauses, and muteness in between the words they were trying to articulate. Chris Brown, for example, paused his speech for 1.3 second, at the minutes of 0.18. This was not a short moment. Chris Brown on average used two words in one second. Even, as I explained before, Brown could say, “I’ve done a lot of social service” in 1.2 second. Brown spoke fast, thus the moment of silence seemed more visible to emphasize his image as obedient figure. The silence were important because it showed that he “means it” and the audience could connect that with his words and speed. These were some examples of Brown’s moment of silence.

BROWN : I thought it’s the best time that  
you heard it from me, that I’m  
sorry. (silent)

He also paused several times to take a breath or to give space to the next point. Another interesting point was when he said,

BROWN : I have been a lot of time trying to  
understand, what happened and  
why? (silent)

At this point, he spent 1.3 second to pause his speech. He also paused for 1.2 second in the moment he said,

BROWN : I realize that no one is more  
disappointed me, than I am.  
(silent)

Silence was included in the constellation of symbolic strategy in the speech. Brown showed pattern in his silences, which indicated a tactical consideration.<sup>46</sup> Brown remained silence when he said “sorry” or when he reflected his action. The strategy of silence empowered the audience to create meaning and fulfilled the space produced by the silent with their interpretation.<sup>47</sup> Silence, in the talkative

western culture facilitated obedient image of the speakers.<sup>48</sup> Thus, it was a suitable strategy for Brown to commemorate silence in the “sorry” and reflection moment and to perform the image of obedient figure, after the public discourse was fulfilled with his disobedient behaviors, such as domestic violence.

Woods spent longer time for the silent moment and paused. The reasons were he intentionally pauses, he took breath, and he tried to find the reading in his text. He spent 3.8 second of silent, when he said,

WOODS : Now every one of you has good reason to be critical of me. I want to say to each of you, simply and directly (silent) I am deeply sorry for my irresponsible and selfish behavior I engaged in.

He also has long paused in other sentences. He spends 3.5 seconds and 5.2 seconds.

WOODS : For all that I have done (silent) I am so sorry (silent).

Another paused from Woods also about the sorry statement. He stopped for 3.5 seconds on his statement,

WOODS : Parents used to point to me as a role model for their kids. I owe all those families a special apology. I want to say to them that I am truly sorry (silent)

Silence could be as powerful as speech. Silence was not simply the absence of text or voice. As a rhetorical art, silence functions like “zero” in number. It was not absence, but it could mean empty but also could multiply the value of number.<sup>49</sup> Woods provides speech that pointed out silence, and the silence could also point out the speech. Using the moment of silent, Woods could engage his emotions with his audience, and share his pain in each space of the silent. From this silence, Woods also provided empowering moment for the audience

to interpret his words. The power of silent from Woods echoed loudly in the hallway of purposive language, and magnified the meaning of his words. The silence had more power because Woods provided deep emotional expression; he looked sad and almost cried. He took a deep breath before he stopped his silence and continued his words. This expression combined with the silent moment could arrange the speech composition and signified the symbolic strategy of his apologetic speech. Furthermore, the silent moment could portray Woods as subordinate and powerless figure, which could move the audience to have sympathy and pity on him.

Thus, the moment of silent from both celebrities was dedicated in the “sorry” statements and reflection statements. The silent moment showed symbolic rhetorical strategy before the celebrities said sorry or made his reflection statement more meaningful. They provided “mute” space for the audience to think about their words, and gave them chance to say sorry. The image of “silent” in the sorry statement also showed sincerity,<sup>50</sup> reflection,<sup>51</sup> put meaningful silence in the rhythm of the speech,<sup>52</sup> and even though the silence moment in their speech had no words, but it was a part of articulation meaning of their effort for guilt, sorry, and reflection to employ the mortification strategy.

## Conclusion

Rhetorical criticism can function as pedagogical tools of society. The rhetorical theory is the logic to set up the puzzle of message, while rhetorical criticism is the support of theory to guide a rhetorical experience.<sup>53</sup> Thus, rhetoric provides pedagogical aspect, “to teach people how to experience their rhetorical environment more richly.”<sup>54</sup> Through examining 13.33 minutes of Woods’ speech with 1.514 words and Brown’s speech for 1.59 minutes with 393 words, we could learn the strategic consideration of celebrities’ apologetic speeches. We could learn the authenticity of the speech, the *raison d’etre* of the timeline, visual arrangement, structure, offense identification,

and even the moment of silence. Delivering apologetic speech came after a consideration of pragmatic strategies, which were suitable, to conciliate the victim's face without posturing hazard threat to the public figure.<sup>55</sup>

All these pragmatic strategies conciliated the offense action and the identity of the celebrities. The celebrities tried to negotiate their offense with their famous identity, through the use of languages, visual setting, and even silence. Through the prism look model of Black, it enabled critic to create alternative perspective of apologetic address and to use the instrument for realizing the theory and praxis of the dialectic in celebrities' public apology.<sup>56</sup> This exercise also helped us to discriminate the superficiality, sincerity, authenticity, tactical, and emotional engagement of the speech.

First, in the case of Chris Brown and Tiger Woods, the public apologies were constructed to effectively negotiate their identity as celebrities, who could also be perceived as individual, associated with family, and business entities. The different visual setting of both celebrities provided us information about the rhetorical symbolism of visual elements in public apology. Visual image could deliver a visual experience and create a subject position that shapes perceptions about celebrities.<sup>57</sup> Both celebrities also provided compelling lesson about the consequences of choices in the timeline, authenticity, and avoidance of interruption. Both celebrities also provided different structure in order to address the target audience. From this structure, both celebrities provided us lesson about strategic rhetorical composition to address ambivalence and uncertainty in the time of crisis. It was important to consider the clarity of the narratives and to whom they should apologize.

Second, mentioning or not mentioning the offense and associating the offense words with human marriage construction, could have different consequences to audience. Audience may perceive celebrities in skeptical way because the audience thought that the celebrities were

coward or normalize the temptation of fame. While, the moment of silence could articulate the unspoken words, provided the audience time to digest their words, and engaged the audience in the sentimentality of their strategic message. The identification of silence would enable us to discriminate tactical silence and meaningful silence. It also suggested the connection of silence with cultural image of celebrities such as obedience, powerless, and subordinate role. Finally, deconstructing the apologetic speech would exemplify sorry as "matters."<sup>58</sup>

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> She earned her Master degree in Communication from Colorado State University, Fort Collins, USA under the major of Rhetoric and Civic Engagement. She is also a lecturer of Communication Studies in the University of Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia. She can be contacted via email at [desideriacempaka@gmail.com](mailto:desideriacempaka@gmail.com).
- <sup>2</sup> The news about Chris Brown and Rihanna, can be seen in, "Sources: Brown's alleged victim was girlfriend Rihanna." CNN (February 9, 2009): <http://www.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/Music/02/09/chris.brown/index.html?iref=mpstoryview#cnnSTCText>. (Accessed March 25, 2012). See also MSNBC. "Brown arrested after alleged attack on Rihanna," MSNBC (February 9, 2009): <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/29088387#.T33R18xbwXw> (Accessed March 24, 2012).
- <sup>3</sup> Barry R. Schlenker, B. R. *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1980.
- <sup>4</sup> There are many scholars that discuss about image restoration. See William L Benoit and S Brinson, "Queen Elizabeth's Image Repair Discourse: Insensitive Royal or Compassionate Queen?" *Public Relations Review* 25 (1999): 145-156. For more discussion on image and perception see William Benoit, *Apologies, Excuses, and Accounts: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995b), and also William L Benoit and R. Hanczor, "The Tonya Harding controversy: An analysis of image repair strategies," *Communication Quarterly* 42 (1994): 416-433.
- <sup>5</sup> Erving Goffman. *Interaction Ritual*. New York: Pantheon, 1967.



- <sup>6</sup> Janna Thompson. "Apology, Justice and Respect: A Critical Defense of Political Apology". In: Gibney, M., Howard-Hassmann, R.E., Coicaud, J.M., Steiner, N. (Eds.), *The Age of Apology: Facing up the Past*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, (1998): 31-44.
- <sup>7</sup> Benoit and Brinson, *Queen Elizabeth's Image Repair Discourse*, 145-156.
- <sup>8</sup> William L Benoit, "Hugh Grant's Image Restoration Discourse: An actor Apologizes," *Communication Quarterly* (1997a): 251-267. For additional discussion on the image restoration, see William L Benoit, "Image restoration discourse and crisis communication," *Public Relations Review* 23 (1997b): 177-186.
- <sup>9</sup> Benoit, *An Actor Apologizes*, 251-267.
- <sup>10</sup> Benoit, *An Actor Apologizes*, 251-267.
- <sup>11</sup> Benoit, *An Actor Apologizes*, 186.
- <sup>12</sup> Edwin Black. "Gettysburg and Silence," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 21-36.
- <sup>13</sup> Black, *Gettysburg and Silence*, 21-36.
- <sup>14</sup> William L Benoit, "Image repair in President Bush's April 2004 News Conference". *Public Relations Review* 32 (2006): 137-143.
- <sup>15</sup> The critique to Image restoration theory came from Judith P Burns and Michael S Bruner, see Judith P Burns and Michael S Bruner "Revisiting the Theory of Image Restoration Strategies," *Communication Quarterly*, 48, 1 (2000): 27-39, who criticize about the language, mental representation, and the possibility of misinterpretation through the image restoration theory. While Benoit, see William L Benoit in "Another Visit to the Theory of Image Restoration Strategies". *Communication Quarterly* 48, 1 (2000): 40-44, also answers the criticism by agreeing with expanding the research in the image restoration or repairing strategy through various applications, methods, and developments. While Smudde and Courtright, see Peter M Smudde and J. L. Courtright, "Time to Get A Job: Helping Image Repair Theory Begin A Career In Industry". *Public Relations Journal*, 2, 1 (2008): <http://www.prsa.org/prjournal/Vol2No1/SmuddeCourtright.pdf> (Accessed March 27, 2012), agreed with Benoit by emphasizing the ability of the theory to assess organization and individual emergency management.
- <sup>16</sup> For more discussion on image restoration and crisis management, see William Forest Harlow, Brian C Brantley, and Rachel Martin Harlow, "BP Initial Image Repair Strategies After The Deepwater Horizon Spill," *Public Relations Review* 37 (2010): 80-83, see also Elizabeth Avery, Ruthann W. Lariscy, Sora Kim, and Tatjana Hocke, "A Quantitative Review of Crisis Communication Research in Public Relations: 1991-2009," *Public Relations Review* 36, 2 (2010):190-192. See also Mia Moody, "Jon and Kate Plus 8: A case study of social media and image repair tactics," *Public Relations Review*, 37 (2011): 405-414.
- <sup>17</sup> Christopher T Caldiero, Taylor Maureen, and Lie Ungureanu, "Image Repair Tactics and Information Subsidies During Fraud Crises," *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21, 2 (2009): 218-228.
- <sup>18</sup> Benoit, *An Actor Apologizes*, 251-267. Benoit emphasizes that a public figure can use one or the combination of five strategies in repairing the image in a crisis situation. (1) The individual can deny the accusation through a clear denial or shift the blame. (2) The individual can avoid the responsibility of the action through a provocation, defeasibility, an accident reason statement, and a noble intention. (3) The person can reduce the offensiveness of the action through bolstering the issue, minimization, separating the issue, transcendence, attacking the accuser, and compensation. (4) The person can correct the action and finally, (5) person can ask for an apology from the publics or what Benoit calls mortification.
- <sup>19</sup> For example, Jenifer Kennedy analyzed an image restoration in sports by engaging the case study of Kobe Bryant and Barry Bonds. In her study, Kennedy contended that if public figures committed to adultery and guilty, quick admission of action portrays a better figure than denying the "truth," while public can possibly separate his sport performance and personal life if the achievement of the athlete is outstanding. See Jenifer Kennedy, "Image reparation strategies in sports: Media analysis of Kobe Bryant and Barry Bonds," *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communication*, 1, 1 (2010): 95-103. <http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/communications/research/09KennedyEJSpring10.pdf>. (Accessed March 15, 2012).
- <sup>20</sup> Thomas Farrel, "Critical Models in the Analysis of Discourse," *The Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 44 (1980), 300-314.
- <sup>21</sup> Initially, Black analyzes the Gettysburg's speech from how the speech brings the audience to transcribe values from unspecified universal, national, local, and back to national again. Next, Black contends the movement of the address by examining significant words that transcend the audience to the perspective of life and the life of death. Black also argues about the geographical



- reference by examining the words that indicate the geographical terms and the symbolic meaning of the words. Interestingly, Black uses any form of examination, such as counting the words, sentences, and even syllables to understand the structure and configuration of the address.
- <sup>22</sup> Brian Ott, Greg Dickinson, Eric Aoki, video-is-too-scripted-to-seem-sincere/(Accessed March 28, 2012).
- <sup>27</sup> Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Performing critical interruptions: Stories, rhetorical invention, and the environmental justice movement," *Western Journal of Communication*, 65, 1 (2001): 1-25.
- <sup>28</sup> Trala Rai Peterson, "The Rhetorical Construction of Institutional Authority in a Senate Subcommittee Hearing on Wilderness Legislation," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 52, (1988): 259-276.
- <sup>29</sup> Zohar Kampf "Public (non) Apologies: The discourse of minimizing responsibility," *Journal of Pragmatics* 41 (2008): 2257-2270.
- <sup>30</sup> Zohar Kampf, *Public (non) Apologies*, 2257-2270. In his research Kampf also argued for the responsibility discourse, the public figure could deny the responsibility by contrasting the action with the intention and neglect the agent of offense through dichotomy of action and product. Instead of ask forgiveness for action, the public figure will ask forgiveness for "the product" that harm the people.
- <sup>31</sup> Kim, Sora and Scoot Rader, "That They Can Do Versus How Much They Care? Assessing Corporate Communication Strategies on Fortune 500 Web Sites," *Journal of Communication Management*, 14, 1, (2010): 59-80. In corporate system, the terms philanthropic activities always connect with the efforts to create corporate association to non-product images, and to organization's social responsibility, promoting the company's goodwill, and commitment as a reliable member of society.
- <sup>32</sup> On the discussion of strategies in image restoration, see B. L. Ware and Will A Linkugel, "They spoke in defense of themselves: On the generic criticism of apologia." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 59 (1973): 273-283. See also William L Benoit and S. Brinson, "AT & T: Apologies are not enough." *Communication Quarterly*, 42, (1994): 75-88, William L Benoit and A Czerwinski, "A critical analysis of USAir's Image Repair Discourse," *The Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*, 60 (1997): 38-57, and William L Benoit, and R. S Hanczor, "The Tonya Harding Controversy: An Analysis of Image Repair Strategies." *Communication Quarterly*, 42 (1994): 416-433.
- <sup>33</sup> Benoit, *An Actor Apologizes*, 251-267.
- <sup>34</sup> Paul Forsythe, Nobuyuki Sudo, Timothy Dinan, Valerie H Taylor, and John Bienenstock, "Mood and Gut Feelings," *Journal of Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 24, 1 (2010): 9-16. The term behavior according a psychological research refers to the habitual actions that response the stimulus, and controlled by the nervous system.
- <sup>35</sup> Edwin Black, *Gettysburg and Silence*, 8.
- <sup>36</sup> Thomas B Farrel and G Thomas Goodnight, "Accidental Rhetoric: The Root Metaphors of Three Mile Island," *Communication Monographs*, 48 (1981): 271-300.
- <sup>37</sup> Farrel and Goodnight, *Accidental Rhetoric*, 271-300
- <sup>38</sup> Benoit, *An Actor Apologizes*, 251-262.
- <sup>39</sup> Ihab Hassan, "Metaphors of Silence," *Frontiers of Literary Criticism*, ed. David H. Malone, Los Angeles: Hennesey and Ingalls (1974): 35-52.
- <sup>40</sup> Justus Buchler, "Philosophical Writings of Peirce," (New York: Dover, 1955): 102.
- <sup>41</sup> For an example of this use of silence, see the poem "About Face" in Bergvall's most recent collection, *Fig* (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2005).
- <sup>42</sup> Chris Muller. 2007. <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/silence.htm> (Accessed March, 13, 2012).
- <sup>43</sup> Kahlil Gibran, "Talking" in *The Prophets* (1923). <http://www.bohra.net/archive/gibran/gibran20.html> (Accessed March 13, 2012).
- <sup>44</sup> Caroline Bergval. 2005. In Chris Muller. 2007. <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/silence.htm> (Accessed March 17, 2012).
- <sup>45</sup> St. Augustine, "Rhetoric of Silence" in Joseph Anthony Mazzeo. "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence", *Journal of History of Ideas* (1962): 175-196 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2708154> (Accessed March 29, 2012).
- <sup>46</sup> Cheryl Glen, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004.
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- <sup>48</sup> Glen, *Unspoken*
- <sup>49</sup> Glen, *Unspoken*
- <sup>50</sup> Jack Keroauc and Dharma Bums, *The Extinction of Dissaperance of the Individual within The Universal Harmony of The Soul*, New York: Penguin, 2000.
- <sup>51</sup> St. Agustine, *Rhetoric of Silence*, 175-196
- <sup>52</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *Talking*, 1923
- <sup>53</sup> Barry Brummet, "Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral: A Pedagogical Justification," *Communication Education*, 33 (1984): 97-107.
- <sup>54</sup> Brummet, *Rhetorical Theory as Heuristic and Moral*, 103

- <sup>55</sup> Rong Chen, "Self Politeness: A Proposal," *Journal of Pragmatics* 33, 1, (2001): 87-106
- <sup>56</sup> Raymie McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monograph* 56 (1989): 91-111
- <sup>57</sup> Ott, Dickinson, Aoki, *Space of Remembering and Forgetting*, 27-47
- <sup>58</sup> Carole Blair, "Reflection on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," *Western Journal of Communication*, 65, 3 (2001), 271-294.

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