

APOLOGETIC MOVES AND IMAGE REPAIR STRATEGIES

MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

‘I Am Deeply Sorry’: An Exploration of the
Application of Apologetic Moves and Image Repair Strategies in the Celebrity Apology

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Abstract

The apology is a component of post-crisis communication that has become a prominent subject of study (Slocum et al., 2011). Specifically, scholars agree that the proliferation of the official apology suggests that it is a genre of speech that is on the rise in the Western world (Wooten, 2009). While an extensive amount of literature on apology focuses on its use by organizations and political figures, little of it fails to address how celebrities apply the crisis response strategy to repair their reputation and/or restore relationships. For this reason, a qualitative content analysis rooted in a grounded theory approach was used to explore in what ways the celebrity apology conforms to or breaks the patterns of apology that have been established by scholars.

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Introduction

In his book *Gods Like Us: On Movies, Stardom and Modern Fame*, American film critic Ty Burr (2012) proposes that certain individuals attract distinctive attention in any human group with uneven distributions of power and wealth. Kings and queens were recognized as the cultural figureheads in traditional societies because their fame and influence derived from divine authority and were supported by Court legislation (van Krieken, 2012). Beginning with the invention of movable type and the printing press in 1450, a new aristocracy of fame emerged (Rojek, 2012). Novelists, philosophers, diarists, and playwrights used the newfound ability to widely circulate stories and images to increase their recognition and esteem (van Krieken, 2012). In contemporary society, the shift to mass media formats as the dominant modes of communication have elevated the celebrity to the highest level of idolization.

Rein, Kotler and Stoller (as cited in Rojek, 2012) identify the celebrity as a person whose name has attention-getting, interest-riveting and profit-generating value. The inflation of the celebrity stemmed from the normalization of what Richard Wohl and Donald Horton (1956) refer to as para-social relationships. They argue that in addition to the primary relationships formed with family members and the community from childhood, individuals also enter into illusory relationships whereby they get to 'know' a celebrity personally based on an image projected through impersonal mass communication channels (Rojek, 2012). Motivated by the web of intimacy generated, the audience attends to the behaviours of celebrities when defining positive and negative models of conduct (van Krieken, 2012).

As communication tools have become more accessible and portable, the ability to present a unified image of the celebrity within the para-social relationship has been complicated. Television programs report celebrity news daily, websites feature an endless stream of photos

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and information, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter track the movements of public figures through their day (Cerulo and Ruane, 2014). With the ability to ‘plug’ into celebrity culture at any time or location, the stargazing public not only have an unprecedented amount of insight into the private lives of celebrities, but as producer-consumers of online content they also control the idea of celebrity (Burr, 2012). The audience can use communication platforms to individually and communally express anger or frustration when a celebrity has committed a wrong. For this reason, being able to appropriately respond to the public has become a necessity for celebrities hoping to preserve their reputations in times of personal crisis.

Crisis communication is defined as the attempt to alleviate negative reaction when the reputation of an individual or an organization is publicly challenged (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) posits that because every crisis generates predictable levels of responsibility attributions, the reputational threat presented by a crisis can be anticipated and the transgressor can prescribe an appropriate response strategy. If an audience determines that a public figure has strong attributions of responsibility, a history of crises or a poor reputation, a crisis response strategy that reduces negative affect must be selected (Coombs and Holladay, 2008). The official apology is a strategy that can be applied that enables the offender to restore his or her reputation (Coombs and Holladay, 2008).

The apology is a component of post-crisis communication that has become a prominent subject of study (Slocum et al., 2011). Specifically, scholars agree that the proliferation of the official apology suggests that it is a genre of speech that is on the rise in the Western world (Wooten, 2009). While the apology can take many forms, the apologetic exchange is what Goffman (2010) refers to as a ritualistic play that unfolds in three acts: the commission of an act that violates a social value, a charge of wrongdoing from the offended, and the response of the

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rhetor seeking restoration. Whether issued in response to an organizational crisis, to lessen the impact of an international conflict, or to abate unfavourable attitudes toward the offensive behaviour of a public figure, the apology has become a key strategy for restoring relationships (Lazare, 2004).

While an extensive amount of literature on apology focuses on its use by organizations and political figures, much of it fails to address how celebrities apply the crisis response strategy. For this reason, I am interested in exploring in what ways the celebrity apology conforms to or breaks the patterns of apology that have been established. An exploration of literature on the subject of apology revealed three major themes: the need for crisis communication strategies in the Internet age; the elements that constitute an apology; and the strategies used in image restoration.

Literature Review

1. *Apologies, Reputation and “The Dark Side of Social Media”*

Social actors dedicate a considerable number of resources to carefully constructing images and social personalities that become the vehicles through which they are experienced in the world (Hearit, 2006). However, because in the Internet Age people are ‘wired together’ on a 24/7 basis in one global village, when a public figure commits a wrong it migrates into the online sphere almost instantaneously (Champoux et al., 2012). Any individual with access to a computer or a cell phone has the ability to go online and express his or her opinion freely. The public figure can become the object of anger, criticism or ridicule, making it necessary to take action to protect his or her reputation (Friedman & Lynch, 2012).

Reputability can be defined as the attributions that the public makes about character based on information about observable behaviour (Wooten, 2009). The apology is a tactic used to repair the reputation and/or to prevent reputational damage when a crisis situation arises (Coombs, 2007). An offender is able to re-establish his or her previous social standing by accepting responsibility for a perceived offense through an admission of guilt. In fact, apologetic offenders are evaluated more favourably, trusted more readily, and treated more kindly than their unapologetic counterparts (Coombs, 2007). Therefore, the ability to effectively apologize is a crucial skill to have in the Internet Age (Friedman & Lynch, 2012)

2. *The Effective Use of Apology to Mitigate Reputational Threat*

Nicholas Tavuchis (as cited in Govier and Verwoerd, 2002) interprets the apology as a speech act through which a speaker expresses remorse to seek forgiveness. For the celebrity the apology is especially instrumental because it helps to restore his or her image, to re-establish ties to admirers, and to ensure continued economic success (Cerulo and Ruane, 2014). Knowledge of

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what constitutes an apology is crucial for any public figure hoping to save his or her reputation in the midst of a crisis. Effectively apologizing ensures that the anger and pain associated with transgressions are diminished (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Some of the solutions that scholars have suggested are listed in the following sections.

2.1 The Four-Step Apology Process

In his book titled *On Apology*, Aaron Lazare (2004) states that an effective apology requires the offender to address the needs of the offended party. The needs of the wronged include, but are not limited to, the restoration of respect and dignity, an assurance that they and the offender have shared values, and the promise of adequate reparations. Therefore, Lazare argues that to address each of these expectations the offender must divide the apology into four parts: 1) the acknowledgement of the offense; 2) the explanation; 3) showing remorse and related attitudes; and 4) reparations.

Appropriately acknowledging an offense requires the offender to correctly identify to whom the apology is owed, to describe his or her offense, and to accept responsibility. An offender fails to acknowledge an offense when he or she offers a vague acknowledgement (“I apologize for whatever I did”), uses the passive voice, questions whether the wrong party feels damaged (“If anyone was hurt...”), or minimizes the perceived offense (Lazare, 2004).

According to Tavuchis (as cited in Lazare, 2004), resorting to excuses within an apology “distances ourselves from our actions... [and] denies the imperatives of responsibility and answerability” (p. 39). Mirroring Tavuchis’ sentiment, Lazare agrees that an acceptable apology requires that the wrongdoer admit responsibility and explain his or her behaviour. An explanation is viewed as part of the debt owed to an offended party because it helps to reveal the motivation behind inexplicable behaviour (Lazare, 2004). The failure to offer an explanation is

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often perceived as an inadequate apology or a further insult (Risen & Gilovich, 2007).

If the offender displays remorse and other attitudes, such as humility, sincerity and shame, the wronged party will be more inclined to accept an apology (Lazare, 2004). A sincere apology implies that the feelings of the offended are important (Risen & Gilovich, 2007).

Furthermore, reparations contribute to the acceptance of an apology because they show the victim and/or society that the offender takes the grievance seriously and is willing to repair the harm done (Lazare, 2004). The offer of reparations demonstrates a willingness to relieve some of the harm being suffered (O'Connor, 2011).

2.2 The Seven Components of a Constructive Apology

The application of language to alter the audience's interpretation of an offense is central to the success of an apology (Hearit, 2006). Through his study of the literature on apology, David P. Boyd (2011) forwarded a model that outlined the elements of a persuasive apology. His model contains seven components: 1) revelation, 2) recognition, 3) responsiveness, 4) responsibility, 5) remorse, 6) restitution, and 7) reform.

The revelation component includes the category of explanation. Since the voluntary admission of a lapse is a prerequisite for reclaiming trust, apologizers should publicly disclose their transgression and then provide an explanation for it (Coombs et al., 2010).

Recognition includes the categories of empathy and estrangement. Boyd (2011) claims that transgressors must first express empathy for their victims to receive sympathy and forgiveness. If the offender fails to address how the victims feel in the aftermath of an offense, he or she will be less likely to be forgiven and reputational damage will remain (Boyd, 2011).

Responsiveness includes the categories of timeliness and tardiness. The timeliness of an apology affects the effectiveness of an apology (Coombs et al., 2010). Issuing an apology in a

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timely manner allows the transgressor to control the information that is being circulated and to reduce unfavourable behavioural attributions that may begin to form.

The level of responsibility can be dichotomized between internal attribution and external attribution. An offender that displays internal attribution is viewed more sympathetically because he or she accepts full responsibility for an offense. The offender that demonstrates external attribution assigns responsibility to elements beyond the self. He or she displaces blame through dispersion, whereby it is insinuated that multiple forces had a hand in the outcome, or through displacement, where the offender distracts from his or her original offense by apologizing for a failure of a lesser magnitude (Boyd, 2011).

Remorse includes the categories of guilt and guile. Victims want to know that transgressors are suffering for their actions (Lazare, 2004). A lack of remorse renders the offender unrepentant and the apology fails because it is perceived as deceptive (Boyd, 2011).

Restitution involves the inclusion of compensation for the negative action committed in the past. The apologizer must include some element of penance that is costly to appear more favourable (Boyd, 2011).

In the study conducted by Slocum et al. (2001), participants agreed that while providing monetary compensation is an adequate form of apology, making amends required an additional step. Reform includes the categories of change or complacency and it involves the transgressor expressly stating how he or she will behave in the future. The apologist must provide assurance that he or she will not act in the same way again or violate another cherished social norm (Boyd, 2011).

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2.3 *'The Five R's'*

Friedman and Lynch (2012) suggest that a good apology has to include the following elements to be effective: recognition, remorse, repentance, restitution and reform. The transgressor must first recognize that a wrong was committed. Following this, the offender demonstrates remorse by claiming to be sincerely ashamed of his or her transgression. Repentance is the communication made to the offended parties, and it must include an explanation of why the offence was committed. Restitution offers reparation for damage, and reform provides a promise that the act will never occur again (Friedman & Lynch, 2012).

3. *Image Repair Strategies*

According to Goffman (2005), we develop our face or image when we inevitably engage in face-to-face or mediated contact with other participants in the world. Goffman (2005) concludes that our face or image becomes such an integral part of our identity that when either is threatened "face-work must be done" (p.27). For this reason, when allegations of wrongdoing or criticisms are leveled against a celebrity a combination of image repair strategies are used to preserve his or her face (Hearit, 2006). The following sections outline models for image repair.

3.1 *Ware and Linkugel's Strategies*

Based on the theory of belief-dilemma developed by Robert Abelson, Ware and Linkugel (1973) developed four modes used by apologists to safeguard their reputations in the event of a crisis. The modes include 1) denial, 2) bolstering, 3) differentiation and 4) transcendence.

The first two factors, denial and bolstering, are identified by Ware and Linkugel (1973) as reformatory because the speaker does not attempt to change the meaning of the offensive act for the audience. Denial occurs when an offender rejects any participation in charges of wrongdoing. Bolstering occurs when the apologist attempts to identify himself or herself with

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something or someone viewed favourably by the audience (Ware & Linkugel, 1973).

Ware and Linkugel (1973) identify the second two factors, differentiation and transcendence, as transformative because both involve an attempt to redefine the audience's view of an offense. Differentiation is present when the apologist tries to change how the negative action is perceived by distinguishing it from another issue (Hearit, 2006). Alternately, transcendence involves positioning the crisis within a broader context to make it seem less offensive (Utsler & Epp, 2013).

Ware and Linkugel (1973) also combined one transformative factor with one reformative factor to construct four postures that can be used by a transgressor when making an apology: absolution, which consists of denial and differentiation; vindication, which includes denial and transcendence; explanation, which is made up of bolstering and differentiation; and justification, which is composed of bolstering and transcendence.

3.2 William Benoit's Five Image Repair Categories

Although based on the pioneering work of Ware & Linkugel, William Benoit's (1995) Image Repair Theory represents the dominant model to consult when remedying damaged reputations because it provides more options (Boyd, 2011). Benoit separates his strategies into five categories: 1) denial, 2) evasion of responsibility, 3) reduction of offensiveness, 4) corrective action, and 5) mortification.

Denial can include simple denial, where individuals deny having committed any act of wrongdoing, or the act of shifting blame, whereby the offender scapegoats another party (Benoit, 1995).

When a transgressor applies strategies that evade responsibility, he or she accepts partial blame for an offence and provides explanations that may not have been available to the public at

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first (Holdener & Kauffman, 2014). Evading responsibility can be achieved by claiming to be provoked, arguing that events were outside of one's control, defining behaviour as an accident or asserting that the intentions behind actions were good but the act itself had unforeseen consequences (Benoit, 1995).

The next course of action taken to alleviate negative behavioural attributions is attempting to reduce offensiveness (Boyd, 2011). This can be achieved through the use of five strategies. Bolstering involves reminding the offended of a previously positive relationship; minimization argues that an act is not as serious as originally believed; differentiation works to distinguish one act from similar acts; transcendence aims to change the moral context of the act; compensation seeks to make amends through financial or other means; and the final strategy involves the offender attacking their accusers (Benoit, 1995).

Corrective action involves a transgressor making a promise to the offended that he or she will rectify the problems that led to the wrongdoing and will take action to ensure that the behaviour will not occur in the future (Benoit, 1995). Lastly, it is at the stage of mortification that the offender decides to apologize and to ask the offended audience for forgiveness (Benoit, 1995).

Research Questions

Three research questions guide my analysis of celebrity public apologies:

R1: Scholars have identified recognition, remorse, repentance, restitution and reform as the elements that constitute an effective apology. What new or existing apologetic strategies emerge within the celebrity apology?

R2: To what extent are image restoration strategies applied within the celebrity apology?

R3: In the models of apology developed by scholars, the apology is a speech act that must be followed precisely for an offender to lessen reputational damage and/or restore relationships.

Can a new model of apology be forwarded that is unique to the celebrity apology?

Method

For this study twenty-nine celebrity apologies made via social media channels, press releases, radio statements and televised statements were examined to get a better understanding of how the apology is structured. Using convenience sampling, data was collected by conducting a basic Google search. The keywords entered into the search engine were ‘celebrity’ and ‘apology’. From here, the most controversial and well-known celebrity apologies made within the past ten years were selected. The types of celebrities that were considered for the research were Hollywood film actors/actresses, musicians, TV personalities, comedians and professional athletes.

To explore my research questions, I used qualitative content analysis methods. Using qualitative content analysis was appropriate because this study involves exploring how new or exiting apologetic moves and image repair strategies are applied within the celebrity apology. A grounded theory approach permitted me to identify patterns in the data and emergent coding organized the data in a way that allowed themes to emerge naturally. Developed in the 1960s by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (as cited in Daymon & Holloway, 2002), grounded theory suggests that the products of research are shaped from the data rather than from any preexisting theoretical frameworks. Because very limited literature focuses on the phenomenon celebrity apology, a grounded theory approach offered both new insights and a broader dimension to the study of apology.

It is important to note that because I also evaluated the extent to which apologetic strategies and image repair techniques are applied in the celebrity apology, it was also useful to apply a directed qualitative analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (as cited in Lindlof and Taylor, 2011) define a directed approach as one where analysis starts with a theory or relevant research that

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guide the creation of initial codes. Therefore, using this research method assisted with determining beforehand some of the codes and categories that could potentially emerge from the data set.

Data Analysis

The apologies I studied existed in various media formats. Before beginning the data analysis process I transcribed those apologies made via radio statement or televised statement. Once I had access to each of the apologies in textual format, they were archived using Microsoft Word and printed out. I then proceeded with the data analysis stage, manually coding each of the apologies using the constant-comparative method.

The constant-comparative method serves to “define each category’s properties with greater precision” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Using the basic categories I had developed through emergent coding as a guide, I repeatedly reviewed the data set to develop and reshape the categories. From here, a codebook was developed to catalogue the definitions of the categories; the codes used to identify the apologetic strategies and image repair strategies related to the category; examples of the codes taken from the text; and the number of appearances of each category and code in the data. Table 1 presents an excerpt from the codebook I developed for the category of Corrective Action, identified as part of my analysis on image repair strategies.

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Category	Code	Definition	Example	# Of Appearances
Corrective Action		The transgressor promised to rectify offensive behaviour and ensured that it would not happen again.		5
	PRP	The transgressor detailed the measures he or she would take to rectify offensive behaviour.	“I have taken the necessary steps to ensure my return to health.” – Mel Gibson	5

Upon completion of the codebook, I had developed five categories and seventeen codes related to the apologetic moves applied by the celebrity. Further, I identified four categories and sixteen codes with respect to the application of image repair strategies. The categories and codes that emerged reflected new strategies unique to the celebrity apology and strategies that were closely connected to the existing frameworks found in the literature. A number of the apologetic strategies discovered resembled those outlined in Lazare’s (2004) Four-Step Apology Process, Boyd’s (2011) Seven Components of a Constructive Apology, and Friedman & Lynch’s (2012) The Five R’s. Further, many of the image repair strategies identified were found in Benoit’s (1995) Five Image Repair Categories. Each of these theories helped to explain some of the practices associated with apologies.

Findings and Discussion

This section represents the findings of the analysis on the use of apologetic strategies and image repair tactics in the celebrity apology and considers what the implications are for its structure and meaning. I will begin by exploring the range of structural moves used in the celebrity apology and address the first research question regarding the appearance of new or existing apologetic strategies (a description of the apologies can be found in Appendix A).

Apologetic Strategies

Five primary categories emerged in the dataset that captured the scope of apologetic strategies used in the celebrity apology: Audience Rapport, Achieving Emphasis, Responsibility, Remorse and Reform and Reparation. Table 2 summarizes the categories and codes that were identified.

Table 2: Coding Framework for Apologetic Strategies Data Analysis					
	Category 1 – Audience Rapport	Category 2 – Achieving Emphasis	Category 3 – Responsibility	Category 4 – Remorse	Category 5 – Reform and Reparation
Code	Direct Address (DA)	Repetition (R)	Victim Identification (VI)	Embarrassed (E)	Ask for Forgiveness (AF)
	Personal Narrative (PN)	Use of Adverbs (UA)	Offence Identification (OI)	Regret (REG)	Promise to not Reoffend (PNR)
	Reassert Value System (RVS)		No Excuse (NE)	Shame (S)	
	Character Admission (CA)			Sorry (SO)	
				Disappointed (D)	
				Disgraced (DI)	

1. Audience Rapport

Audience Rapport includes all those strategies used by a celebrity to manufacture an intimate bond with the public. By engaging the audience directly and strategically disclosing ‘who’ they are, celebrities are able to humanize themselves to elicit sympathy. Under this category, four codes were developed: Direct Address, Personal Narrative, Reassert Value System and Character Admission. Table 3 below shows the number of occurrences of the codes as well as the other strategies found in the data.

Codes and Strategies	Number of Occurrences
Direct Address	3
Personal Narrative	8
Refer to Family Values	5
Refer to Religious Values	3
Reassert Value System	8
Character Admission	8

1.1 Direct Address

Direct Address (DA) is defined as any situation where apologists engage the audience in an apology by asking a rhetorical question. The question asked often challenges the audience to consider whether they have ever engaged in the behaviour that the celebrity is being criticized for. An example was found in Christian Bale’s (as cited in *Bale apologizes*, 2009) apology when he asked, “Have [you] ever lost [your] temper and regretted it immensely?” Speaking on Howard Stern’s radio show, Bale begged listeners to recall a time that they acted irresponsibly and regretted it. He then continued, “I’m not comfortable with this notion of being a movie star. And I don’t quite know how to handle the movie star thing” (as cited in *Bale apologizes*, 2009). In this way, he successfully drew attention to his own celebrity, insinuating that although as humans

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we are all capable of acting thoughtlessly, because he is a public figure his behaviour is judged according to different standards.

Asking a question allows the celebrity to suggest that the public is unfairly condemning him or her. The celebrity can then be reconfigured as a more favourable figure, someone 'just like us' that had a momentary lapse in judgment and is seeking forgiveness.

1.2 Personal Narrative

Personal Narrative (PN) is defined as any situation in which transgressors share a personal story with the audience to appear more sympathetic. One of the strategies identified under this code is Refer to Family Values, and it is used to describe any instance where the offender discloses information that reveals how negative behaviour is out of sync with values upheld from childhood. An example was identified In Justin Timberlake's (as cited in *Justin Timberlake: 'I'm deeply sorry', 2012*) apology when he wrote:

I grew up with a family and community that instilled ideals in me like hard work, honesty and empathy. As a matter of fact, growing up in Tennessee, I was always taught that we as people, no matter what your race, sex, or stature may be, are equal. We have a saying there that everyone puts their pants on the same way...

Timberlake created a narrative about his moral character that made it difficult for the audience to believe that he would typically have any involvement in his transgression. Revealing a personal narrative offers an explanation that helps the audience to understand inexplicable behaviour (Lazare, 2004). The audience is encouraged to view an offense as an atypical event because the negative behaviour does not appear to correspond with what the offender has been taught. This contributes to the transgressor being viewed more favourably.

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Refer to Religious Values is another strategy identified under Personal Narrative. The strategy is used to describe any situation where the transgressor reframes perceptions of culpability by demonstrating how offensive behaviour is out of sync with his or her religious values. For example, when Tiger Woods (as cited in *Tiger Woods' apology*, 2010) apologized he stated that, "... I was raised a Buddhist, and I actively practiced my faith from childhood until I drifted away from it in recent years". Woods' claim that he was a man of faith that had been led astray suggested that he did not deliberately act poorly. In this way, the celebrity is able to reframe a transgression as out of sync with his or her long-held values and to emerge as a more sympathetic figure.

1.3 Reassert Value System

Similar to Refer to Religious Values, the strategy Reassert Value System (RVS) involves transgressors demonstrating how their actions are out of sync with a set of beliefs. However, Reassert Value System applies to commonly held rules and norms for appropriate conduct. For instance, in his apology Kanye West (as cited in MacNicol, 2010) stated that, "It is distasteful to cut people off as a general rule". His use of the phrase 'general rule' suggested that West was aware of how his behaviour had ruptured a social norm. Responding to charges of wrongdoing by acknowledging how negative behaviour stems from an ethical lapse assures the audience that the transgressor is aware that he or she has violated a cherished social norm (Boyd, 2011). This strategy not only allows the celebrity to reassert his or her commitment to upholding socially accepted codes of conduct, but it also positions the celebrity as an individual who is worthy of forgiveness.

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1.4 Character Admission

The fourth strategy identified under Audience Rapport is Character Admission (CA) and it appears when celebrities make a character revelation to confirm that negative behaviour is not a reflection of ‘who’ they are. For instance, Kanye West (as cited in *‘It was rude’*, 2009) explained that, “I only wanted to help people... My entire life, I’ve only wanted to give and to do something that I felt was right”. West attempted to mitigate negative feelings by revealing that he had acted according to what he believed was ‘right’. Making a character admission allows the celebrity to establish a point of identification with the audience. If the audience can compare ‘whom’ the celebrity is with the transgression committed, they may be more sympathetic to the celebrity’s response and more accepting of an apology.

2. Achieving Emphasis

Achieving Emphasis is the second category identified in the celebrity apology and it includes strategies used by transgressors to emphasize remorse for committing an offence. Under this category, two codes were developed: Repetition and Use of Adverbs. Table 4 below shows the number of occurrences of the codes found in the data.

Codes	Number of Occurrences
Repetition	5
Use of Adverbs	20

2.1 Repetition

Repetition (R) is a strategy identified when a transgressor uses terms or phrases repeatedly to reiterate that he or she is remorseful for committing an offence. Using repetition to achieve emphasis involves repeating an adverb prior to an expression of remorse to evoke strong emotions. For instance, Chris Brown (as cited in Tommy, 2009) stated in his apology, “I am

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truly, truly sorry.” Michael Richards (as cited in *Debate: The Kramer controversy*, 2006) also asserted that, “I am deeply, deeply sorry...” Using the repetition of the terms ‘truly’ and ‘deeply’, both celebrities suggested that they were doubly apologetic for their behaviour. In this way, the audience is encouraged to believe that the celebrity is genuinely remorseful.

Another tactic involved the repetition of phrases or ideas. When Mel Gibson (as cited in *Mel Gibson’s apology*, 2006) apologized, he referred to ‘the Jewish community’ at various points in his apology. The audience, aware that Gibson had publicly addressed the primary victims of his transgression and explicitly asked for their forgiveness, could then accept that the actor was remorseful for his behaviour. Thus, the use of repetition demonstrates how the celebrity emphasizes feelings of remorse to increase the credibility of an apology.

2.2 Use of Adverbs

Adverbs are used to intensify the emotion attached to the celebrity apology. Jude Law (Silverman, 2005) expressed in his apology that he was “deeply ashamed” of his behaviour. Chris Brown (as cited in Tommy, 2009) disclosed that he was “very saddened and very ashamed” by his actions. Further, Kristen Stewart (as cited in Schwartz & Jordan, 2012) confessed to being “deeply sorry” for her transgression. In each of the examples the adverb is used to add emphasis to the claim being made. The celebrities are not simply feeling sad or ashamed, but they are *deeply* ashamed or *very* saddened by the events that transpired. Emphasizing the degree of remorsefulness the celebrity is feeling encourages the audience to be more receptive to the apology being made.

3. Responsibility

Responsibility refers to the degree of accountability that celebrities assume for their role in the commission of a transgression. Codes that were identified under the category of

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responsibility included Victim Identification, Offence Identification and No Excuse. Table 5 below shows the number of occurrences of the found in the data.

Codes and Strategies	Number of Occurrences
Victim Identification	29
No Victim	9
Primary Victim	12
Primary and Secondary Victims	8
Offence Identification	44
Vague Identification	11
Name the Offense	15
Name Offense and Offer an Explanation	18
No Excuse	8

3.1 Victim Identification

Victim Identification (VI) is defined as the extent to which the celebrity acknowledges the victims of his or her offense. At the lowest level of identification the celebrity is vague and fails to name a specific victim within an apology. For instance, Reese Witherspoon (as cited in Carlston, 2013) apologized to “anyone we upset”. The audience could not pinpoint exactly whom ‘anyone’ referred to because Witherspoon failed to provide a name or to identify a specific group. This strategy is primarily found in self-focused apologies. Celebrities that denied the feelings of others in their apology had no reason to reference a victim.

Another strategy identified under Victim Identification is Primary Victim, and it is detected in any apology where the transgressor names a single victim as the recipient of an apology. For example, in her apology Kristen Stewart (as cited in Schwartz & Jordan, 2012) named then-boyfriend Robert Pattinson as a victim when she expressed that “This momentary indiscretion has jeopardized the most important thing in my life... Rob”. Chris Brown (as cited

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in Tommy, 2009) also apologized only to his then-girlfriend Rihanna, stating “I have told Rihanna countless times, and I am telling you today, that I am truly, truly sorry...” Although Brown’s use of the phrase ‘you today’ suggested that his apology was also directed toward the offended audience, it was unclear whether he was referring to his fans, his family, his friends, or to the public. In this way, it is possible for the celebrity to vaguely address the audience in a way that maintains the specificity of the apology.

Additionally, celebrities that have committed a wrong against a romantic partner primarily use Primary Victim as a strategy. This suggests that the celebrity feels less obligated to address the entire audience when responding to allegations that bear no personal significance for others. The celebrity explicitly names only the partner that has been emotionally or physically damaged by an offense.

The last strategy applied under the code Victim Identification is Primary and Secondary Victims. The strategy is identified in any apology where the transgressor acknowledges how his or her behaviour affects both a primary victim and a secondary group. For example, Kanye West apologized to Taylor Swift, her fans, her mother, and his fans (*Kanye West apologizes, 2009*). Further, Tiger Woods (*Tiger Woods’ apology, 2010*) identified his wife Elin as the primary victim and named his fans, friends, and business partners as secondary groups that had been disillusioned by his negative behaviour.

According to Lazare (2004), acknowledging an offense requires that the offender correctly identify to whom the apology is owed. Therefore, I concluded that this strategy was the most effective approach. When an offence impacts a single individual as well as a larger group, addressing the primary and secondary victims helps to mitigate negative feelings that can threaten the celebrity’s personal and professional life.

3.2 Offence Identification

The second code identified in the data is Offence Identification (OI), and it is defined as the degree to which celebrities reveal the specific details of a transgression. Whereas some celebrities fail to repeat the particulars of a transgression, others not only rename the event but also offer an explanation for their behaviour. For this reason, I established three strategies to represent the solutions available to the celebrity under the code of Offence Identification: Vague Identification, Name the Offense and Offer an Explanation.

Vague identification is detected when a transgressor fails to reiterate any of the details surrounding an offence. The celebrity dissociates from a specific act by apologizing for ‘what happened’, for the ‘event’ or ‘incident’, or even for ‘that’ (Boyd, 2011). For instance, in his apology Chris Brown (as cited in Tommy, 2009) expressed that he regretted the ‘incident’ and was sorry for ‘what happened’. Although the audience would most likely have had knowledge of the ‘incident’, using vague terms to address his offence allowed Brown to distance himself from negative behaviour. Since offering an explanation helps demonstrate the motivation behind inexplicable behaviour, I believe that the evasion of responsibility implicit within the strategy explains why Vague Identification is applied least frequently by celebrities (Risen & Gilovich, 2007).

Name the Offense is a strategy applied by celebrities that explicitly rename their offense. For example, in his apology Tiger Woods (as cited in *Tiger Woods’ apology*, 2010) bluntly stated, “I had affairs. I cheated”. David Letterman (as cited in Carter & Stelter, 2009) also apologized for “... having had sex with women who worked on the show”. Instead of using vague language to avoid generating additional negative feelings, both celebrities addressed their behaviour by naming the offense explicitly. Naming the offense allows the celebrity to both

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confirm the veracity of the charges of wrongdoing and to accept fault.

Name Offense and Offer an Explanation was the last strategy that emerged from the data and it is applied when the transgressor renames the offense and offers an explanation. For instance, Shia LaBeouf (as cited in O’Neal, 2013) named his offence as “fail[ing] to credit @danielclowes for his original graphic novella...” and explained that it happened because he “was truly moved by his piece of work & knew that it would make a poignant & relevant short”. Offering an explanation reduces negative feelings because it helps the audience to understand the impetus behind inexplicable behaviour (Risen & Gilovich, 2007).

3.3 No Excuse

The third code identified under the category of Responsibility was No Excuse (NE). Transgressors that offer no excuse accept responsibility for an offence by asserting that they cannot justify their negative behaviour with an explanation. The application of No Excuse is interesting because the offender is able to maintain the illusion of accepting responsibility even if he or she does not identify a victim or reveal the details of an offence. For instance, while Justin Bieber (as cited in Melas, 2013) vaguely apologized to “anyone we upset”, he also asserted that there was “no excuse” for being late. Further, although Chris Brown (as cited in Tommy, 2009) never renamed his transgression, he assured the audience that he was “not going to sit here and make any excuses”. Claiming to provide no excuses appears to be used by the celebrity in lieu of explicitly identifying a victim or an offence.

The celebrity also applies No Excuse to increase the credibility of apologetic speech. For example, in addition to applying the strategies of Primary and Secondary Victim Identification and Offer an Explanation within his apology, Kanye West (as cited in *‘It was rude’*, 2009) also reminded his audience that he did not “try to justify [his behaviour] because I was in the wrong”.

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The use of No Excuse can also suggest that the offender displays internal attribution and accepts responsibility for negative behaviour (Boyd, 2011).

4. Remorse

The category of Remorse includes all of the language used by celebrities to assure the offended audience that they are repentant and are suffering as a result of committing a transgression. Codes that were identified under the category of Remorse included Embarrassment, Regret, Shame, Sorry, Disappointment and Disgrace. Table 6 below shows the number of occurrences of the codes found in the data.

Codes	Number of Occurrences
Embarrassment	9
Regret	8
Shame	6
Sorry	33
Disappointment	2
Disgrace	1

The three codes that appeared least frequently in the data set are Disappointment (D), Disgrace (DI) and Shame (S). The variations of these terms are used primarily to represent the inner state of the transgressor. For example, Chris Brown (as cited in Tommy, 2009) described his transgression as a “personal disappointment” and stated that, “I feel just ashamed of my behaviour”. Further, Mel Gibson (as cited in Faber, 2006) felt remorseful because he “disgraced [himself]... with [his] behaviour”. In both scenarios the celebrities used a personal pronoun to describe how they were feeling. Disappointment, Disgrace and Shame represent “I” focused remorseful language that fails to address the emotions of others.

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The codes Embarrassment (E) and Regret (REG) were used more frequently because they convey a sense of a shared experience. For instance, in his apology Christian Bale (as cited in *Bale apologizes*, 2009) begged the audience to not let his “embarrassing meltdown” affect his professional life. ‘Embarrassing’ described both how Bale felt about his transgression and how the audience could have interpreted his private outburst. The codes Embarrassment and Regret capture the feelings of the transgressor and acknowledge the feelings of others.

The code Sorry (SO) was applied in each of the apologies analyzed, suggesting that saying sorry is the most illustrative way for the celebrity to express contrition. Saying sorry demonstrates that the offender affirms the truth behind charges of wrongdoing and that he or she accepts full responsibility for negative behaviour.

5. Reform and Reparation

The category of Reform and Reparation includes measures that celebrities take to redress the ill will generated by their negative behaviour. Four codes were identified under this category: Redemption Narrative, Ask for Forgiveness and Promise to not Reoffend. Table 7 below shows the number of occurrences of the codes found in the data.

Codes and	Number of Occurrences
Ask for Forgiveness	4
Promise to not Reoffend	4

5.1 Ask for Forgiveness

Ask for Forgiveness (AF) is identified when the transgressor begs the offended audience to forgive him or her for acting irresponsibly. While asking for forgiveness does not include a plan for reform, it is applied frequently because the act demonstrates the offender’s desire to repair relationships with the observing public.

5.2 Promise to not Reoffend

The last code identified under Reform and Reparation was Promise to not Reoffend (PNR), and it is present in all apologies where transgressors promise to not engage in the same offensive behaviour again. For instance, John Mayer (as cited in *John Mayer apologizes*, 2010) assured his audience that, “I should have never said the word and I will never say it again”. Chris Brown (as cited in Tommy, 2009) also applied the strategy when he revealed, “I am continuing to seek help to ensure that what occurred... can never happen again”.

In each of the four appearances of PNR the transgressor uses the term ‘never’ to make a powerful statement of intent; he or she will on no occasion, not *ever*, commit the negative behaviour again. Therefore, the promise to not reoffend is an effective strategy because it lessens the fear that the celebrity will reoffend. A transgression is viewed as a one-time occurrence as opposed to a chronic problem, and the celebrity mitigates the perceived severity of an offence.

Image Repair Strategies

This section will attend to the range of image repair strategies used in the celebrity apology and address the second research question surrounding the extent to which they are applied. Four primary categories emerged in the dataset that captured the scope of image repair strategies used in the celebrity apology: Evasion of Responsibility, Reduction of Offensiveness, Corrective Action, and Mortification. Table 8 summarizes the categories and codes that were identified.

Table 8: Coding Framework for Data Analysis for Image Repair Strategies				
	Category 1- Evasion of Responsibility	Category 2 – Reduction of Offensiveness	Category 3 – Corrective Action	Category 4 - Mortification
Code	Provoked (PRO)	Bolstering (BO)	Promise to Rectify Problem (PRP)	Apologize (A)
	Good Intentions (GI)	Differentiation (DI)		
	Outside of One’s Control (OC)	Transcendence (TR)		
	Passive Voice (PV)	Humor (H)		
	Introduce Uncertainty (IU)	Denial of the Spectacle (DS)		
	Media Attack (MA)	Self-Scorn (SS)		
		Comfort with Fame (CF)		
		Role Model Status (RMS)		

1. Evasion of Responsibility

Evasion of Responsibility is identified in apologies where transgressors accept responsibility for negative behaviour through an expression of remorse while simultaneously disassociating from the perceived offence. Six codes were used to represent the strategies adopted under the category Evasion of Responsibility: Provoked, Good Intentions, Outside of One’s Control, Passive Voice, Introduce Uncertainty and Media Attack. Table 9 below shows the number of occurrences of the codes and strategies found in the data.

Codes and Strategies	Number of Occurrences
Provoked	7
Good Intentions	8
Outside of One’s Control	8
Passive Voice	13
Vague	6
Euphemism	7
Introduce Uncertainty	7
Doubt	4
‘But’ Clause	3
Media Attack	11

1.1 Provoked

A transgressor that claims to be provoked alleges that he or she has acted poorly in response to another person or group’s negative behaviour. The strategy appears seven times within the data set, and it is most often accompanied by the admission that being provoked is not an excuse for negative behaviour but an opportunity to provide additional context. For example, while Jonah Hill (as cited in *Jonah Hill apologizes*, 2014) said he behaved poorly because he had been provoked by the paparazzi, he also assured the audience that he was “in no way making

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excuses for my behaviour”. The transgressor is able to provide insight into the motivation behind negative behaviour without appearing overly antagonistic.

1.2 Good Intentions

Good Intentions (GI) is identified in apologies where the transgressor proclaims that his or her behaviour had unintended negative consequences. The strategy is applied in eight of the apologies analyzed, and I concluded it is frequently used because claiming to have good intentions helps to reframe both the celebrity and a transgression.

Within his apology Shia LaBeouf (as cited in O’Neal, 2013) explained, “In my excitement and naiveté as an amateur filmmaker, I got lost in the creative process and neglected to follow proper accreditation”. Similar to the strategy of transcendence, describing himself as an amateur allowed LaBeouf to reframe his negative behaviour within a more favorable context. His offence, initially perceived as a deliberate act of plagiarism, was instead understood as a well-intentioned error made by an “excited” and “naïve” beginner eager to tell a good story. Kanye West (as cited in MacNicol, 2010) also applied the strategy Good Intentions when he asserted, “I only want to do good... I wish they all knew how much I really cared about music and pop culture”. By claiming to ‘want to do good’, West reframed himself as an artist that had only wanted to make an honest statement about a subject he was passionate about. An explanation of good intentions positively reframes the celebrity and the offense.

1.3 Outside of One’s Control

Outside of One’s Control (OC) is identified in apologies where the transgressor claims that the circumstances that led an offensive act are outside of his or her direct control. For example, in his apology Justin Bieber (as cited in Melas, 2013) claimed that he was delayed

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“... because of some technical issues”. It is understood that because technical issues are beyond Beiber’s direct control his behaviour becomes less offensive. Suggesting that a transgression is outside of one’s control is aligned with the concept of external attribution because it is a strategy that captures the shared sentiment that humans cannot exercise complete control over their surroundings.

1.4 Passive Voice

Transgressors that apply Passive Voice (PV) choose to avoid responsibility for negative behaviour by failing to rename their offence. Two strategies that were identified under Passive Voice were Vague and Euphemism. Vague is located in apologies where the transgressor ambiguously refers to his or her behaviour by using terms such as “that”, “it”, “this”, “what happened”, or “the event”. Omitting the specifics of an offense lessens the probability of negative feelings being reignited in the audience.

Euphemism involves the transgressor using a mild or indirect term in place of one that reveals the unpleasantness of negative behaviour. The celebrity describes negative behaviour as a “mistake”, a “momentary indiscretion” or as a “lapse in judgment” to reframe an offence as an atypical event. Thus, using a euphemism helps to downplay the severity of a perceived offense as well as the celebrity’s role in the commission of a transgression.

1.5 Introduce Uncertainty

Introduce Uncertainty (IU) is used in apologies where the transgressor uses language that reveals a reluctance to accept full responsibility for committing an offence. The first strategy identified under Introduce Uncertainty was Doubt. It is applied in apologies where the transgressor uses an if-statement to question whether the offended audience feels damaged. For example, Janet Jackson (as cited in Shaheem, 2004) expressed that she was “really sorry if I

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offended anyone”. Justin Timberlake (as cited in Shaheem, 2004) also questioned the offensiveness of his transgression when he stated, “I am sorry if anyone was offended”. The celebrity fails to acknowledge full responsibility for an offense by questioning whether the wronged party feels damaged (Lazare, 2004).

The second strategy identified under Introduce Uncertainty was the ‘But’ Clause. Although used less frequently than other strategies, the ‘but’ clause is significant because it allows the celebrity to subtly introduce uncertainty. For instance, in his apology David Letterman (as cited in Carter & Stelter, 2009) stated, “let me tell you folks, I got my work cut out for me... But through all of this you have to ask yourself, well, what really happened?” Letterman began his apology by accepting responsibility for his actions. However, he used the ‘but’ clause to remind the audience that being blackmailed was the larger issue that needed to be addressed. The ‘but’ clause positions the offender as the transgressor and the victim simultaneously, challenging the audience to reassess their established perceptions.

1.6 Media Attack

The last code identified was Media Attack (MA), and it is detected when a celebrity alleges that the media has misrepresented his or her behaviour. For instance, in his apology Kanye West (as cited in MacNicol, 2010) claimed that, “... taking a 15 second blip the media [had] successfully painted the image of the ‘ANGRY BLACK MAN’”. Although West assumed responsibility for the transgression, he also held the media accountable for using video footage to vilify him. Celebrities that attack the media’s coverage of a transgression within their apology exhibit external attribution through dispersion. Instead of assuming full responsibility, the celebrity demonstrates how multiple forces shape negative public perceptions (Boyd, 2011).

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Media Attack is also present when the celebrity suggests that the media does not provide the audience with all of the information needed to form an informed opinion of a scandal. For example, in his apology Michael Richards (as cited in *Debate: The Kramer controversy*, 2006) revealed, “You don’t have the whole thing there... I did apologize to quite a few people...” Richards was frustrated because the media failed to report that he had taken measures to express remorse in the immediate aftermath of his transgression. According to the celebrity it is the media that manipulate available information to influence negative perceptions of an offence.

2. Reduction of Offensiveness

In addition to evading responsibility, transgressors may also alleviate negative behavioural attributions by applying strategies that reduce the offensiveness of a transgression. Eight codes were used to represent the strategies adopted under the category Reduction of Offensiveness: Bolstering, Differentiation, Transcendence, Humor, Denial of the Spectacle, Self-Scorn, Comfort with Fame and Role Model Status. Table 10 below shows the number of occurrences of the codes and strategies found in the data.

Codes and Strategies	Number of Occurrences
Bolstering	7
Differentiation	3
Transcendence	9
Humor	6
Denial of the Spectacle	9
‘Real’ Life	3
‘Personal’ Communication	6
Self-Scorn	4
Comfort with Fame	5
Acceptance	3
Rejection	2
Role Model Status	2

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2.1 Bolstering

Bolstering (BO) is identified in apologies where a transgressor places emphasis on previous positive behaviour to restore the audience's positive feelings. For instance, Tiger Woods (as cited in *Tiger Woods' apology*, 2010) revealed in his apology that, "Thirteen years ago, my dad and I envisioned helping young people achieve their dreams through education. This work remains unchanged and will continue to grow". The reference to his philanthropic work reminded the audience that, regardless of the charges being leveled against him, Woods had a history of using his celebrity status to do good for others. The reminder of previous behaviour strengthens the audience's perception of the celebrity and reduces negative feelings.

2.2 Differentiation

The celebrity that applies Differentiation (DI) attempts to distinguish an offensive act from other similar but more offensive acts. The distinction created establishes the transgression as less serious than originally believed. For instance, when David Letterman (as cited in Carter & Stelter, 2009) confessed to having been unfaithful to his wife he also declared that, "I was being blackmailed... and when you are blackmailed it is a crime and you are a victim". Although Letterman's infidelity was a moral transgression, its severity did not measure up to that of blackmail. Differentiation allows the celebrity to introduce information that encourages the audience to renegotiate the perceived severity of an offense.

2.3 Transcendence

Transcendence (TR) is identified in apologies where the transgressor frames negative behaviour within a more favorable context. Positioning the crisis within a broader context makes a transgression appear less offensive (Utsler & Epp, 2013). For instance, in his apology Shia LaBeouf (as cited in O'Neal, 2013) argued that, "Copying isn't particularly creative work. Being

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inspired by someone else's ideas to produce something new and different IS creative work".

LaBeouf attempted to transform his transgression by framing plagiarism, the deliberate theft of another person's original ideas, as the lesser crime of unintentional creative appropriation.

Positioning an offense within a favourable context renders a transgression as less severe and an offender more sympathetic.

2.4 Humor

A transgressor injects humor (H) into an apology to reduce the perceived severity of an offence. For instance, in her apology Reese Witherspoon (as cited in Carlston, 2013) joked, "I think I played a lawyer so many times in movies I thought I was a lawyer. But clearly I am not because I got arrested". The audience was intended to find humor in Witherspoon's lighthearted admission that past acting roles prepared her to represent herself before law enforcement.

Witherspoon highlighted the absurdity of her arrest by poking fun at her own expense. Christian Bale (as cited in *Bale apologizes*, 2009) also applied humor when he stated, "Listen, I know I have a potty mouth; everybody knows that now". Bale's observation that everyone now had knowledge of his "potty mouth" subtly poked fun at his expletive-laden offence.

According to Bergson (as cited in Attardo, 1994), laughter is a social reaction that puts down deviant elements in man's behavior. Thus, humor can be understood as a mechanism that illustrates the celebrity has moved into greater clarity and control of their transgression. Further, as is the case with the strategy of transcendence, displaying a sense of humor can help the celebrity to positively reframe negative behaviour. When the celebrity attempts to make the audience laugh at his or her own expense, the absurdity of a transgression is deliberately highlighted to demonstrate an awareness of the foolishness of negative behaviours.

2.5 Denial of the Spectacle

Denial of the Spectacle (DS) is identified in apologies where the offender assures the audience that the apology is a genuine expression of remorse and not a publicity stunt. Its application often involves the use of the strategy 'Real' Life, which establishes a differentiation between the celebrity's personal communication and strategic public relations communications.

In his apology Kanye West (as cited in MacNicol, 2010) guaranteed the audience that his apologetic speech was not motivated by dubious intentions when he stated that, "...this [isn't] a joke. This was & is my real life". Further, Mel Gibson used the concept of the 'real' world to assure the audience that his apology was not manipulative: "This is not about a film... this is about a real life" (as cited in *Mel Gibson's apology*, 2006). The celebrity appears to be conscious of how the apology has commonly been used as a tactic to promote a favourable relationship with the audience. Similar to the strategy of differentiation, the celebrity makes a reference to 'real' life to assure the audience that he or she is genuinely remorseful. This result is also achieved by the use of 'Personal' Communication as a strategy within the celebrity apology.

Transgressors that use language reminiscent of face-to-face communication to emphasize that their apology is not an impersonal, strategic expression of remorse apply the strategy 'Personal' Communication. The strategy involves the use of the terms 'personally' and 'directly' to create the impression that the apology is spontaneous and unrehearsed. For instance, Mel Gibson (as cited in *Mel Gibson's apology*, 2006) revealed, "I must assume personal responsibility for my words and apologize directly to those who have been hurt and offended". Tiger Woods (as cited in *Tiger Woods' apology*, 2010) also stated, "I want to say to each of you, simply and directly, I am deeply sorry..." 'Personal' language mitigates negative feelings because it suggests that the apology is genuine and not a ploy.

2.6 *Self-Scorn*

Self-Scorn (SS) is identified in apologies where the transgressors belittle themselves to prove that they are critical of their negative behaviour. Kanye West (as cited in MacNicol, 2010) established himself as an aggressor by claiming that “If you Google a**hole my face may very well pop up 2 pages into the search...” Jesse James (as cited in Leonard, 2010) demonstrated scorn for his behaviour when he stated, “... I deserve everything bad that is coming my way”. Further, Tiger Woods (as cited in *Tiger Woods’ apology*, 2010) revealed, “...and now every one of you has reason to be critical of me... I recognize I have brought this on myself”. The display of self-scorn ensures the audience that the celebrity is aware that the negative attention and criticism being received is well-deserved.

2.7 *Comfort with Fame*

Comfort with Fame (CF) refers to the degree to which the transgressor accepts or rejects fame. Depending on how comfortable the celebrity is with the expectations of fame, he or she implores the audience to reassess the perceived severity of an offence. The transgressor that demonstrates Acceptance understands that celebrity behaviour is scrutinized according to different standards. For example, in Mel Gibson’s (as cited in *Mel Gibson’s apology*, 2006) apology he stated that “I am a public person, and when I say something, either articulated and thought out, or blurted out in a moment of insanity, my words carry weight in the public arena”. Gibson’s acknowledgement that his words ‘carry more weight’ than those of the average person suggested that he had accepted his fame. Further, by admitting that anything he said, even something ‘blurted out in a moment of insanity’, could become the subject of public fodder, Gibson also commanded sympathy from an audience that could potentially understand what it

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was like to say hurtful things in the heat of the moment. The celebrity that accepts fame reveals the drawbacks associated with his or her status to reduce the offensiveness of a transgression.

The transgressor that demonstrates Rejection is one who discloses discomfort with daily public scrutiny. Similar to Acceptance, this strategy involves the attempt to generate sympathy by emphasizing the challenges of living under a microscope. However, the celebrity that is uncomfortable with fame fails to communicate the burdens of living in the spotlight in a way that is relatable for the audience. For instance, in his apology Christian Bale (as cited in *Bale apologizes*, 2009) declared that he “ [did] not quite know how to handle the movie star thing”. Additionally, Jonah Hill (as cited in *Jonah Hill apologizes*, 2014) confessed that he behaved poorly because he was “not good at being a famous person”. Since it is impossible for an ordinary person to relate to the experience of being a celebrity, the application of Rejection does little to reduce the offensiveness of an apology.

2.8 Role Model Status

Role Model Status (RMS) was identified in apologies where transgressors agreed that as role models they needed to act in a way that represented accepted manners of behaving. While this code was used least frequently, when present it effectively demonstrated that the celebrity was aware that a transgression was disagreeable and that it had disrupted the para-social relationship. For example, Tiger Woods (as cited in *Tiger Woods' apology*, 2010) apologized for “hurting... all the kids around the world who admired me”. By acknowledging that his behaviour was hurtful Woods not only confirmed that he had violated the sanctity of marriage, but that in being unfaithful he had also ruptured the image of the married family man young fans had come to ‘know’ and idolize him through. Demonstrating awareness of one’s role model status assured

the audience that the celebrity was committed to reaffirming accepted modes of thinking to set a good example for fans.

3. Corrective Action

Similar to the definition forwarded by Benoit (1995), Corrective Action involves a transgressor attempting to restore his or her image by pledging to rectify offensive behaviour.

One code was used to represent the category Corrective Action: Promise to Rectify Problem.

Table 13 below shows the number of occurrences of the code found within the data.

Table 13: Occurrences of Code for Corrective Action	
Codes	Number of Occurrences
Promise to Rectify Problem	8

3.1 Promise to Rectify Problem

Promise to Rectify Problem (PRP) is present in apologies where the transgressor details measures intended to rectify offensive behaviour. In two of the eight appearances of PRP, the promises issued are vague, with the celebrity assuring the audience that the ‘necessary steps’ or ‘appropriate path’ would be pursued to make amends. For instance, in his apology Chris Brown (as cited in Tommy, 2009) assured the audience that he had “taken the necessary steps to ensure my return to health”.

Alternately, in six of the eight appearances of PRP the celebrity discloses exactly how negative behaviour will be rectified. Tiger Woods (as cited in *Tiger Woods’ apology*, 2010) promised fans that, “Starting tomorrow, I will leave for... treatment and more therapy”. Further, in his apology Mel Gibson (as cited in *Mel Gibson’s apology*, 2006) asserted that he was going to meet with the leaders of the Jewish community to discuss a “path for healing”. This was a significant step because it demonstrated that Gibson was open to working with those he had victimized to ensure

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that he didn't behave similarly in the future. When the celebrity outlines specific steps that will be taken to improve negative behaviour, this provides assurance that he or she takes allegations of wrongdoing seriously and is willing to repair the harm done (Lazare, 2004).

4. Mortification

Mortification is identified in apologies where the offender apologizes. One code was used to represent the strategy adopted under the category Mortification: Apologize. Table 13 below shows the number of occurrences of the code found within the data.

Codes	Number of Occurrences
Apologize	29

4.1 Apologize

Apologize (A) involves the transgressor apologizing for negative behaviour. This strategy is applied in each of the apologies analyzed. It most often takes the form of the celebrity admitting to being sorry for committing a transgression. By doing so, the celebrity confirms the veracity of the charges of wrongdoing and accepts full responsibility for an offense.

Conclusion

The findings of this MRP indicate that although some of the strategies identified within the celebrity apology are closely related to existing frameworks, there are several ways in which the celebrity apology is unique in its application of structural moves and image repair strategies. Beginning with my analysis of the use of existing apologetic strategies, the categories of remorse and corrective action were found prior to my analysis in Lazare's (2004), Boyd's (2011) and Friedman & Lynch's (2012) models of effective apology. Apart from this similarity, I observed that there are a number of ways that the categories and codes that emerged from the data set are unique to the celebrity apology.

Existing models of apology are rooted in the idea that all elements, including but not limited to recognition, remorse, repentance, restitution and reform, must be included within an apology for it to be effective. I discovered that each celebrity used a varied selection of the strategies when making an apology. While each of the celebrities did express remorse, not all of them explicitly recognized the wrong that was committed or demonstrated repentance by offering an explanation of why the offence was committed (Friedman and Lynch, 2012). In this way, the celebrity exercises more freedom in determining how to best deliver his or her apology based on the unique circumstances of an offence.

The celebrity apology is also unique in that it does not include all of the elements of effective apology identified by scholars. Specifically, I did not encounter any instances where the celebrity applied restitution, the offer of reparation for damage, as an apologetic strategy (Lazare, 2004). Instead, several structural moves emerged within the celebrity apologies that were not identified in the literature review.

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While the literature consulted suggests that if the offender shows sincerity the wronged party will be more inclined to accept an apology, it does not address exactly what strategies should be applied to emphasize the depth of the transgressor's remorse. I established the category of Achieving Emphasis, consisting of the codes Repetition and Use of Adverbs, to respond to this gap in the literature.

Despite the assertion by scholars that a transgressor must name his or her offence and offer an explanation for an apology to be complete, when the celebrity applies recognition or repentance within an apology he or she often uses a variation of the strategies. It is common for the celebrity to vaguely identify his or her offence or to offer limited to no explanation of what motivated negative behaviours. I chose to address this inconsistency with the literature by establishing the category of Responsibility. Specifically, using the codes of Victim Identification and Offence Identification I established a series of strategies that better represent the myriad of moves that the celebrity applies to negotiate the degree of accountability assumed for a transgression.

Furthermore, according to Risen & Gilovich (2007), a sincere apology implies that the feelings of the offended are important. Although I did not measure perceptions of sincerity in my study, I nonetheless observed that within the celebrity apology emphasis was also placed on manipulating the emotional state of the offended audience. I created the category Audience Rapport to capture the range of moves that the celebrity used to influence the audience's negative behavioural attributions in the aftermath of a transgression.

With respect to the extent to which image repair strategies appear within the celebrity apology, I observed that many of the strategies applied by the celebrity were identified within the literature review. In fact, all four of the categories I identified and thirteen of the seventeen codes

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I created were inspired by William Benoit's (1995) image repair framework. However, there are some significant ways that my findings deviate from the existing literature.

The absence of the strategies of denial, shifting blame and attacking accusers within the celebrity apology suggest that tactics that overtly deny accountability for negative behaviours are not relevant to the celebrity apology. The celebrity primarily uses image repair strategies that permit them to assume partial responsibility for a transgression.

Similar to what I discovered regarding the application of apologetic moves within the celebrity apology, some of the image repair strategies that emerged from the data set were not identified within the literature review. Under the category of Evasion of Responsibility I created the codes Passive Voice, Introduce Uncertainty, and Media Attack. Under the category of Reduction of Offensiveness I added the codes Humor, Denial of the Spectacle, Self-Scorn, Comfort with Fame and Role Model Status. While various individuals or organizations could potentially apply the majority of the new strategies, I argue that Denial of the Spectacle, Media Attack, Comfort with Fame and Role Model Status are unique to the celebrity apology.

It is common knowledge that public relations practitioners tightly control the celebrity's image. The application of Denial of the Spectacle, a strategy that establishes the differentiation between the celebrity's personal communication and public relations communication, assures the audience that an apology is genuine and is not a ploy (Rojek, 2012).

Furthermore, because the celebrity functions daily under the microscopic gaze of the media and other interested parties, his or her behaviour is judged and scrutinized in a way that most people cannot relate to. Whether discussing their comfort with fame, their status as a role model, or media manipulation, celebrities are consciously aware of their unique circumstances and even appeal to them to mitigate negative behavioural attributions. I created the categories of

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Media Attack, Comfort with Fame and Role Model Status to address the strategies that are related to the celebrity experience.

Determining whether a new model of apology can be forwarded that is unique to the celebrity apology would require a more extensive analysis. However, based on my findings I believe that I can begin considering how my research can contribute to the development of a framework. Although the breadth of the project prevents me from commenting on the effectiveness of apologies, I discovered that it would be impractical to assume that specific strategies must be included to label an apology as being successful. As I carried out my analysis it became increasingly clear that celebrities employ a variety of different strategies when making a public apology. Similar to Boyd's (2011) model that outlined the elements of a persuasive apology, I propose that the model for the celebrity apology be made up of a series of components and categories that the transgressor can select based on the unique circumstances of his or her transgression. For instance, within the scope of apologetic strategies the component of Audience Rapport would include the categories of Direct Address, Personal Narrative, Reassert Value System, and Character Admission. Depending on what the celebrity aims to achieve, any of the listed categories can be applied within the apology to best suit his or her needs. In this way, there is not one specific structure that the celebrity must adopt when apologizing.

I recognize that there are limitations within my research that potentially compromise the legitimacy of the model for the celebrity apology that I have proposed. Firstly, for the study I opted to analyze twenty-nine apologies made by twenty celebrities. It is possible that the sample size I have selected may not accurately represent the range of apologetic strategies and image repair strategies applied by the celebrity. Further, although a selection of the apologies was made via televised statements, my explicit focus on the use of language does not account for the

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presence and application of visual elements in a celebrity apology.

As was mentioned previously, another limitation presented by the scope of my research involves the inability to measure the effectiveness of an apology. Without any way to discern perceptions surrounding the success or failure of each of the strategies, it is possible that some of the tactics I have outlined in this paper may not help the celebrity to lessen reputational damage and restore relationships. Therefore, I believe that a future direction that the study of celebrity apology can take involves the analysis of public perceptions of both visual and textual elements. Not only would this type of study provide a more comprehensive range of strategies applied by the celebrity, but it would also help the researcher to accurately measure how effective each of the strategies are.

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Appendix A

Apology Timeline and Background

Celebrity Name	Profession	Date of Apology	Apology Format	Background Information
Janet Jackson & Justin Timberlake	Musicians/ Actors	February 2004	Televised Statement	At the end of their live performance at the Super Bowl XXXVIII halftime show, Timberlake reached over and exposed Jackson's right breast. Condemnations from the public came swiftly, and both entertainers quickly issued televised apologies.
Jude Law	Actor	July 2005	Written Statement	Following reports that he had cheated on his then-fiancée Sienna Miller with his children's nanny Daisy Wright, Law was compelled to release a statement to the British Associated Press apologizing for his indiscretion.
Mel Gibson	Actor	July 2006	Written Statement	Shortly after his arrest for DUI, during which he reportedly made anti-Semitic and sexist comments to the arresting officers, Gibson issued a series of written apologies.
Michael Richards	Actor/ Comedian	November 2006	Televised Statement	To explain why he launched into an n-word-laced onstage rant during a stand-up show, Richards opted to make a statement via satellite during Jerry Seinfeld's sit-down interview with

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				David Letterman.
Alec Baldwin	Actor/ Comedian	April 2007	Online Statement	When Baldwin's angry words to his daughter, left in a voicemail message, were broadcast around the world, he too to his official website to apologize and to explain his behaviour.
Christian Bale	Actor	February 2009	Radio Broadcast	After audio was released of Bale screaming profanities at his <i>Terminator: Salvation</i> director of photography, the actor called a Los Angeles radio station to make a public apology.
Chris Brown	Singer/ Musician	February 2009	Televised Statement	To repair his tarnished image after physically assaulting his then-girlfriend Rihanna, Brown issued an apology via a televised statement.
Kanye West	Hip hop recording artist, songwriter, & producer	September 2009	Blog post, Twitter & televised statement	West used multiple mediums to issue an apology for interrupting Taylor Swift's acceptance speech at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards.
David Letterman	Comedian/ Late Night TV Host	October 2009	Televised Statement	After being the victim of an extortion attempt, Letterman admitted to having affairs with more than one female staffer over a period of several years. He later issued an

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				apology on-air.
Tiger Woods	Professional Athlete	November 2009	Press Conference	Following intense media speculation about a vehicular accident that saw Woods collide with a fire hydrant, a tree, and hedges outside of his home, he was forced to address the ‘private matter’ that precipitated the event. Woods participated in a televised press conference in which he admitted to being unfaithful to his wife and issued a public apology.
John Mayer	Musician	February 2010	Public Statement & Twitter	Following the release of an interview with <i>Playboy Magazine</i> in which Mayer used the n-word, he was publicly accused of being racist. Mayer apologized for his words via a series of tweets and also on stage at a concert.
Jesse James	TV Personality	March 2010	Written Statement	James issued a written apology via public statement to <i>People Magazine</i> after it was revealed that he had cheated on his then-wife Sandra Bullock.
Kristen Stewart	Actress	July 2012	Written Statement	Kristen Stewart issued a written apology to her then boyfriend Robert Pattinson via public statement after photographs surfaced that exposed her affair with Rupert Sanders, her married <i>Snow White and</i>

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				<i>the Huntsman</i> director.
Justin Timberlake	Musician/ Actor	October 2012	Online Statement	For his wedding day friends of Timberlake created a video of homeless people wishing him and Jessica Biel good luck. Gawker published the video and many opposed how it seemed to mock the less fortunate. Timberlake responded by apologizing on his official website.
Justin Bieber	Musician	March 2013	Twitter	When Bieber appeared almost two hours late to a concert in London, fans were outraged. He apologized for his tardiness via Twitter.
Reese Witherspoon	Actress	May 2013	Televised Statement & Written Statement	After being arrested for disorderly conduct, Witherspoon apologized for her behavior on <i>Good Morning America</i> and through a written statement.
Paula Deen	Chef & TV Personality	June 2013	Televised Statement	After admitting to using the n-word in the past, Deen's cavalier attitude toward racism sparked an immediate backlash. The response prompted her to issue a video taped apology.
Shia LaBeouf	Actor	December 2013	Twitter	Following the premiere of his directorial debut, LaBeouf was accused of plagiarizing Daniel Clowes' comic Justin M. Damiano. LaBeouf was addressed the public

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				criticism by issuing an apology via Twitter.
Justin Bieber	Musician	June 2014	Online Statement	After a video surfaced online of a 15-year-old Bieber telling a racist joke, the now 20-year-old issued a written apology to the entertainment news site TMZ.
Jonah Hill	Actor/ Comedian	June 2014	Radio Broadcast & Televised Statement	When a video was released of Hill using a homophobic slur, he apologized on the Howard Stern radio show and on the Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon.