Reflection Examples

See the Artifacts at http://department.monm.edu/portfolio/2012portfolios/jcomm/objectives.htm

Reflection example - Messages (Research Paper)

The paper I wrote for Introduction to Communication Studies is an example of an effective message in the form of a research paper that involved significant information acquisition. This paper required at least 6 recent scholarly sources be cited in order to support the overall thesis of the paper which was “Standpoint theory offers fresh insight into the situated, symbolically constructed realities of people in various contexts.” I located 10 scholarly essays through the database Communication and Mass Media Complete, all of which were published in reputable peer reviewed communication journals including—Women’s Studies in Communication, Howard Journal of Communications, Western Journal of Communication, Journal of Applied Communication Research, Journal of International & Intercultural Communication, Journal of Communication, and Rhetoric Society Quarterly. These scholarly essays applied standpoint theory to several practical contexts—turnover among female journalists, Latina women’s realities in public relations organizations, women’s community radio in Africa, sexual harassment experiences of women of color, American Muslim women’s views on the hijab, using the film “Crash” to assess student standpoint, and tattoos as a means to reveal a person’s worldview. While I located 10 different scholarly research papers, only 7 were relevant in supporting my thesis.

Using these research essays, I argue that standpoint theory is a useful lens through which to better understand the multiple realities that people construct for themselves given their positionality based on multiple systems of power and resistance. In addition, I was able to assess that standpoint theory is a strong theory according to the criteria for evaluating an interpretive theory—a new understanding of people, clarification of values, aesthetic appeal, a community of agreement among communication scholars, and could be used as a means to reform the social oppression. In my paper, I begin with an overview of the theory, articulate my thesis and then preview the organization of my paper. Essentially, I did a mini-review of each research essay to explain how standpoint theory is useful and practical in illuminating the social realities of often marginalized women. The main audience for this paper was my communication professor but the paper would be reasonably understood by communication majors and scholars.

Reflection Example – Messages (Oral Communication)

The outline of my speech, “The Red Cross Wants You,” (linked on the right) represents an example of my ability to design an effective oral message, in this case a persuasive speech developed as an assignment in my Advanced Public Speaking class. This speech was designed to be presented to college students at Monmouth a few days prior to the visit by the Red Cross Bloodmobile. The purpose of the speech was to get students to sign up and then show up to donate blood. As with any speech, gaining favorable attention by the audience at the start of the presentation is essential. As you can see on my outline, I used an emotional story (pathos) to gain student empathy with an accident victim who my audience could identify with because she was a Monmouth College student several years ago. There seemed to
be no good reason to disguise my purpose so I made the thesis standout clearly in the introduction: “Donating blood is a safe, painless way Monmouth students can save lives and you can do it by signing up for the bloodmobile THIS WEEK.”

As you can see both the content of the introduction and the content of the body fit well with my thesis, my audience and my purpose. For example, since this is a persuasive speech that calls for individual action about a topic that nearly everyone supports, I chose to use the Motivated Sequence. In the body of the speech I laid out the need step by describing the problem of blood shortages facing the Red Cross, I included material to allow the audience to visualize the consequences of that problem in a way that would build identification with my audience and get them emotionally involved with the topic. In dealing with objections, I used credible sources both from the Red Cross and from respected fellow students to reassure listeners that donations do not hurt or make you sick or interfere with school work or sports. Most importantly, in my call for action at the end, I passed around a sign-up sheet and indicated that reminders would be sent out in order to get public commitment and create dissonance for those who were reluctant to sign up or show up.

Reflection example- Messages (Mediated form)

The video documentary, “Hidden Homeless”, is an example of message in mediated form. This piece introduces a general viewing audience to the ideas of rural homelessness and the special challenges faced by these individuals. A common technique when tackling a larger social issue is to look at the issue through the story of one individual, which this piece does through Brandy. The choice to allow our subject and experts to do all of the talking was another stylistic choice in how to organize this message. This allows the audience to experience the whole message from the front lines without some authoritative voice getting in the way. In a piece like this, it is most appropriate to involve the audience first hand in the message. Structurally the message is chronological around our subject’s life. The viewer follows Brandy’s progression to a homeless individual and what help she is getting now. This is most effective for the message because you not only are emotionally involved in Brandy’s story you see how her story is not an isolated incident and can happen to almost anyone. The packaging of the emotional story along with the informative material presented in this video piece make it an effective message.
Reflection Example- Knowledge (Organizational Communication)

My exam answer discussing the case of Andrew Becker illustrates that I have substantial knowledge of the problems that organizations face when they are managed using the Traditional Bureaucratic approach. In the exam answer I discuss the specific problems of poor decision-making that occur as a result of inadequate upward vertical communication. In particular, I am able to note in the "diagnosis" section of the case study that Andrew's company has too many links in the chain of command between those who experience problems with quality control at the shop level and those who make decisions concerning how manufacturing processes are carried out. I am also able to show that I understand how the climate of Andrew's organization creates interpersonal barriers to upward communication by reacting negatively to those who report potential problems to their superiors.

Later, in the "solutions" section of the case study, I am able to illustrate that I not only know about the sorts of hierarchical problems that occur in traditionally managed organizations, I also know something about how such problems can be solved or at least reduced. My suggestions for additional management training speak to the need for a more open and supportive communication climate in Andrew's company. My ideas for creating alternative communication channels for reporting problems further illustrate my knowledge of organizational communication problems and solutions.
Reflection Example – Application (Persuasive Campaign)

A good example of my ability to apply the knowledge I have gained through courses in the Communication major is found in my term project paper for Persuasion class describing the local persuasive campaign I developed (and later actually used) called “Be a Big.” The campaign plan (linked on the right) outlines the approach I used to build support for the “Big Brother/ Big Sister” organization on campus and to recruit additional students to volunteer to work with a local child in need. One feature of the campaign plan that shows my ability to apply communication knowledge is that the campaign is organized using the standard professional phases of campaign planning: developing a concept (rhetorical situation) and setting goals, conducting an audience analysis (segments), developing persuasive appeals and implementing theories that linked to my target audience (promotion), and constructing an activation plan for how to pull it all off. For example, in the audience analysis section I discovered that the segment, education majors, has a special motivation to work with kids since it can help them in their chosen careers, an appeal I used in letters I sent to Ed majors as described in the Activation section. I also researched both the audience’s attitude toward the “topic” (Big Brother/Sister programs) and attitude toward the desired “behavior” (volunteering time). This shows that I know how and when to apply the Theory of Reasoned Action. You can see in the promotion section of my paper that I discuss how I will reinforce the audience’s positive view of the organization (topic) while reassuring them that being a “Big” will not require too much of their time. In the promotion section I also demonstrate that I understand and can apply other sorts of professional persuasion concepts such as identification, dissonance, and Hovland’s Learning Theory, and appeals such as reciprocity and “ask for a mile.”

Reflection Example – Application (Rhetorical Situation Speech)

In my first speech for Advanced Public Speaking, I applied Bitzer’s theory of the Rhetorical Situation. To apply the theory of the Rhetorical Situation to a speech, I first needed to identify the exigence, or the problem. I began to research my topic by scanning the headlines of online newspapers.

I discovered that, according to the Center for Disease Control, most adults are eating less than 3 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Fruits and vegetables provide necessary vitamins, minerals, and fiber that keep us healthy by reducing our risk for cancer, diabetes, and other diseases. So, by not eating enough fruits and vegetables, adults are at a higher risk of getting cancer, diabetes and other diseases. This was the problem, or exigence, that I felt compelled to respond to in my speech.

In order to develop my solution, I had to evaluate my audience. My audience must be affected by my exigence in order to be persuaded to act. They must also be able to enact the solution I recommend. Because my audience was college age students who live on campus and eat most of their meals in the dining hall, I decided to convince my audience to advocate for “vegetarian day” at Stockdale. On vegetarian day, the Stockdale Center would serve only vegetarian dishes. After eating more vegetables on a regular basis, the students would develop a habit of eating vegetables at every meal.

I felt this solution was fitting because it responded to the constraints of the situation and would resolve the exigence. Because my audience members were college students who lived on campus, I had to consider where students ate as much as what they ate. Because the students at MC eat at least one meal a day at Stockdale, changing the meal options at Stockdale would have a direct effect on what the students ate.
Reflection Example- Skills (Professional Media Message)

The video documentary, “Hidden Homeless”, is an example of a skillful professional level mediated message. The piece was filmed, written, and edited using professional techniques. First, the filming style was contemporary with the handheld camera work following the subject. Interview subjects were placed properly with correct lighting and proper sound recording. Second, the collection of the interview bytes mixed with on screen graphics of statistics creates a professional documentary style. This style allows the people directly involved to do all of the talking and uses the facts and statistics to serve as chapter headings for the individual segments. This is a fairly common style used in documentaries with the reality programming feel. Finally, the editing is technically and emotionally proficient. Technically, it is a clean edit with correct sound balance. Emotionally, the choice and placement of imagery creates an emotional involvement in the audience. For example, the last shot as the subject Brandy is talking about her future is a shot of her walking away from the camera down a street. This visually established her moving on to the future. Overall this is a skillful professional level mediated message.