

Benoit's Strategies for Attacking Actions/Behaviors

Increasing Perceived Responsibility for the Act

Strategy	Definition	Example
Accused committed the act before	Suggests the accused has a pattern of wrongdoing; this act is not an isolated event.	Mel Gibson: After his 2006 DUI arrest and anti-Semitic outburst, critics recalled earlier accusations of anti-Semitic themes in <i>The Passion of the Christ</i> , implying repeated offense.
Accused planned the act	Argues the act was premeditated or deliberate rather than accidental.	Brett Kavanaugh: Christine Blasey Ford testified that Kavanaugh and a friend locked a room and turned up music, <u>implying the assault was planned</u> .
Accused knew the likely consequences	Claims the accused knew harm would occur but proceeded anyway.	Tobacco companies: UCLA researchers found internal memos showing executives knew cigarette smoke was radioactive and hid the danger.
Accused benefited from the act	Shows the accused personally gained from the wrongful behavior, establishing motive.	James Scott: During the 1993 Mississippi flood, he sabotaged a levee to trap his wife so he could throw a party, benefiting from the harm.

Increasing the Perceived Offensiveness of the Act

Strategy	Definition	Example
Extent of the damage	Emphasizes the scope or magnitude of the harm done.	Exxon Valdez oil spill: Coverage highlighted an oil slick the size of Rhode Island, magnifying perceived harm.
Persistence of negative effects	Stresses that the harm continues over time, not a one-time event.	Lance Armstrong: The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency concluded Armstrong's cheating persisted throughout much of his career.
Effects on the audience	Connects the harm directly to the public or a valued group to make it personal.	Prescription drug pricing: GAO report showed U.S. seniors pay 60% more for drugs, turning policy critique into human impact.
Inconsistency (Hypocrisy)	Exposes contradictions between the accused's values and behavior.	Kamala Harris meme: When you're the first female Vice President but your party doesn't recognize genders. Highlights perceived hypocrisy.
Victims are innocent/helpless	Portrays victims as vulnerable, undeserving, or powerless, increasing outrage.	Adam Raine case: Parents allege their 16-year-old son's suicide was influenced by ChatGPT self-harm instructions, <u>portraying him as innocent</u> .
Obligation to protect victims	Highlights that the accused had a duty to protect but failed to act.	Scot Peterson (Parkland shooting): Criticized for staying outside during the attack, neglecting duty to defend students.

Benoit's Strategies for Attacking Character

Strategy	Example
<i>Enhancing Perceptions that Accused Possesses Trait</i>	
Accused has Performed Acts Consistent with Trait	"I always thought Kevin Spacey was a little too good at acting creepy. He wasn't acting all along" (Barton, Stein, & Church, 2020).
Accused has Made Statements Consistent with Trait	"Kanye west is a raging f***ing anti-Semite. His mental illness is not an excuse for his Neo-Nazi propaganda. I have friends who are bipolar. They don't suffer from vile bigotry and hate" (Thompson, 2022).
Accused Associates with People Who Share this Trait	"Liberal profs like Melissa Click are everywhere, imagine the things they tell students behind closed doors!" (Stein, Barton, & Paul, 2017).
Accused is Contrasted with People Who Do Not Share this Trait	"Mr. Kavanaugh and Mr. Judge were extremely inebriated; they had clearly been drinking prior. And the other people at the party were not" (Benoit & Stein, 2021).
<i>Enhancing Perceptions that Trait is Offensive</i>	
Exemplify Trait with Offensive Example	"There is a type of film so bad that it is actually scary, like seeing those mawkish photographs of sweet little children in Victorian Britain dressed up as angels and realising after a few moments that they are corpses. Adam Sandler's new comedy <i>Jack and Jill</i> is such a film" (Bradshaw, 2012).
The Audience, or People They Care About, Can Be Hurt by this Trait	"[Odera] Odabi and his co-conspirators callously abused the trust of an elderly victim to line their pockets with millions in stolen cash. This office and our partners will work tirelessly to ensure that those who prey upon some of the most vulnerable members of our community are called to account for their crimes" (US Attorneys Office, Eastern District of NY, 2023)
Source (categories): Benoit (2020); Benoit & Glantz (2017)	