

Ethica

The Newsletter of the National Communication Association's Communication Ethics Division

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The 99th Annual Convention of the National Communication Association

Thursday, November 21-
Sunday, November 24, 2013
Washington, DC

Message from Vice Chair: Submit to the 2013 NCA Communication Ethics Division on "Connections"

Bert Ballard
Pepperdine University

As I write this, sequester cuts are going into effect, the struggle over gun control looms, passionate viewpoints about same sex marriage dominate headlines, and there is a sense that we are more politically and socially divided as a nation than we have been in a long time. Given this cultural, political, and historical backdrop, the National Communication Association Annual Convention is headed to Washington, DC to explore the *CONNECTIONS* of our discipline this coming November.

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Editor for this issue of Ethica:
Michelle Leavitt

Written contributions for Ethica REQUESTED and ENCOURAGED!

Send articles, notes, news, requests to the Editor. The next edition is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2013. **Deadline is August 1, 2013.**

Michelle Leavitt
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Connections as a convention theme enables us to explore our commonalities and linkages, those that have been made, those that have not, and those that should be made. This theme gives us a chance to reflect on the benefits of those connections and what connections ought to be made between peoples, communities, governments, and nations.

But exploring these questions and connections in our discipline requires an engagement in communication ethics. This includes examining the foundations of ethics in communication, how we treat others, the communicative spaces we cultivate, create, and inhabit, the moral and ethical values associated with both the content and means by which we send and receive messages, and much more. There is no better place to explore, analyze, and pronounce the importance of communication ethics in our discipline than in the Communication Ethics Division.

I invite you to submit to the Communication Ethics Division at this year's NCA in Washington, DC to explore the *CONNECTIONS* between communication and ethics. We are accepting individual papers, paper sessions, and panel discussions. A full call for papers is found in this newsletter. The deadline to submit to the division is Wednesday, March 27th, 2013, so act quickly if you have not yet submitted!

Additionally, NCA is hosting three special programs based on the theme of connections: *DC Connections*, which allows scholars to take advantage of the connections between our host community and communication; *Connections to the Community*, which encourages us to leave our conference venue and contribute knowledge and time directly to the local community; and *Connections within Communication*, which invites us to consider the commonalities in our discipline.

These three special programs are in addition to the annual programs of short courses, preconferences, seminars, Great Ideas for Teaching Students (GIFTS), scholar-to-scholar, teachers on teaching, and roundtables on research in progress. For more on all of these, visit <http://www.natcom.org/programinfo/>

Finally, in anticipation of the 100th year of NCA in 2014, they have issued a call for submissions to help celebrate. They are asking for short submissions that summarize and assess the impact of a communication concept, theory, or research discovery targeted to lay, non-scholarly audiences. These summaries will be posted on the NCA website starting in November. For more information about these submissions, contact myself (bert.ballard@pepperdine.edu) or Zac Gershberg, chair of the NCA Centennial Committee (zgershberg@csustan.edu).

Our nation and our world face problems in need of *CONNECTIONS*. Importantly, they are in need of ethical connections that seek to engage others, that consider the impacts of our words and messages, and that seek solutions over ideologies. We can be an integral part of exploring these connections at NCA this year in Washington, DC. I hope to see you this coming November!

More Information and our Division's 2013 Convention "Call"

**Bert Ballard, Vice Chair and Program Planner
Pepperdine University**

The Communication Ethics Division encourages submission of scholarly research for presentation during the 99th NCA annual convention in Washington, DC, November 21-24, 2013. The Communication Ethics Division works to promote research and teaching related to ethical issues and standards in all aspects of human communication. We also work to encourage educational programs that examine communication ethics. Our members come from across the discipline and have a wide variety of methodological perspectives. We share the belief that communication ethics plays a significant role in the process of communicating, in democratic processes, and in human development.

We strongly urge you to consider submitting your individual research papers, paper sessions created around a particular theme, panel discussions, or scholar-to-scholar research [posters], for presentation at the upcoming annual convention. Presentation of your research in communication ethics as it relates to the convention theme "Connections" is encouraged, as we look to explore our commonalities and linkages – those that have been made as well as those that haven't been made, those that should be made as well as those that should not. Given the prominence of ethics in the NCA mission and the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, we suggest that

ethics is a highly important connection that runs through our diverse and rich discipline.

All submissions must be made via NCA Submission Central. For a definition of submission types, please refer to the step-by-step “How to Submit” Instructions (<http://www.natcom.org/uploadedFiles/howtosubmit2013.pdf>) provided in the Convention Resource Library (<http://www.natcom.org/conventionresources/>).

1. Individual Paper Requirements: Paper submissions must include no more than a 25-page [excluding references], double-spaced uploaded copy of the paper. These papers are stand-alone and are not associated with any other paper sessions or panels. Copies must be uploaded into NCA Submission Central and must NOT include identifying information. Instructions on how to prepare a blind copy are provided in the Convention Resource Library (<http://www.natcom.org/conventionresources/>). **PAPERS THAT ARE NOT BLIND WILL BE RETURNED TO THE AUTHOR FOR PROPER PREPARATION.** Based on the results of the blind reviews, the Division’s 2013 convention planner will use these submitted papers for the creation of a few panels, including the top paper panel. **EXTENDED ABSTRACTS** with bibliography will be considered, but completed papers will carry more weight in final decision-making.

2. Paper Session Requirements: This session is comprised of approximately 3-5 papers presented together, based on a particular theme. Paper sessions are evaluated as a whole. A respondent for these sessions is highly desirable while a chair is required. Submissions must include:

- a) a session title
- b) a rationale for the session (no more than 250 words), outlining the importance of the submission as it relates to the

convention theme and communication ethics research

- c) a title and description (no more than 75 words) for each individual paper and author’s contact information
- d) the name and contact information of the session’s chair (chair may also be a session presenter)
- e) the name and contact information of the session’s respondent (if you have one).
- f) an overall session description

3. Panel Discussions: This type of session is a group of approximately 3-6 people, creating a theme around which to discuss their particular ideas and/or expertise regarding communication ethics. Papers are not presented during a panel discussion. Submissions must include:

- a) a panel title
- b) a general description of the panel discussion topic (no more than 75 words)
- c) a rationale for the panel discussion’s importance as it relates to the convention theme and communications ethics interests (no more than 250 words)
- d) the name and contact information for each individual on the panel
- e) the name and contact information of the session’s chair (chair may also be a panel participant).

4. Scholar-to-Scholar (S2S): This type of work is typically presented in a poster format. If your work lends itself better to visual presentation, one-on-one discussion, or is interactive in nature rather than a typical oral presentation, check the Scholar-to-Scholar (S2S) agreement box in NCA Submission Central. At the convention, division/caucus leaders, journal editors and other experts, known as Wandering Scholars, will circulate at S2S and interact with participants and their work, seeking to

energize, enhance, and expand collective thinking as they make connections with your presented work.

Please indicate if your submission is a Student paper on the electronic submission form. If your paper is a debut paper, please indicate in the header in all caps with "DEBUT." Be sure to note audio-visual or other special requests where indicated as well.

The Communication Ethics Division recognizes excellence in communication ethics scholarship with an annual award for top conference papers. Based on reviewers' responses, a top papers panel will be created by the Division's convention planner. A top paper by a scholar(s) and a top paper by a graduate or undergraduate student will be presented. The top paper by a scholar(s) will receive a certificate of achievement, and the top student paper will receive small cash award and certificate during the panel presentation and both are recognized during our business meeting.

All submitters are encouraged to review the Professional Standards for Convention Participants, located in the Convention Resource Library, prior to submission. Helpful resources, including live and recorded step-by-step instructions on how to submit, are also available in the Convention Resource Library (<http://www.natcom.org/conventionresources/>).

NCA Submission Central opened Monday, January 14, 2013 and will close at 11:59 PM Pacific time on Wednesday, March 27, 2013. Notification of acceptance will occur in June 2013.

If submitters are interested in co-sponsored panels with other divisions, they are encouraged to contact the Communication Ethics Division 2013 convention program planner, Bert Ballard (bert.ballard@pepperdine.edu).

Any questions about this call or process may be directed to the Communication Ethics Division 2013 convention program planner, Bert Ballard (bert.ballard@pepperdine.edu).

2012 Communication Ethics Division Scholarship Awards

Lisbeth Lipari
Denison University

At the 2012 division business meeting the NCA Communication Ethics Division presented an award for scholarship to David J. Gunkel for his single-authored university press book *The Machine Question: Critical Perspectives on AI, Robots, and Ethics* (MIT Press, 2012). Please join us in congratulating Professor Gunkel as the recipient of the Communication Ethics Division *Top Book Award of 2012*, and in thanking Annette Holba and Pat Arneson for their work on the nominating committee.

The new call for awards is also out so please consider nominees for the 2013 awards. There are four categories of awards; top single authored book, top edited book, top journal article, and top teaching in communication ethics. The complete call is available in this issue of *Ethica*, so please consider nominating a worthy book, article, or teacher of communication ethics. The award committee chair this year is immediate past chair of the Ethics Division, Lisbeth A. Lipari, (lipari@denison.edu), at Denison University.

Call for 2013 Scholarship Award Nominations

Lisbeth Lipari
Denison University

The Communication Ethics Division of the National Communication Association invites nominations for awards to be presented at the 2013 division business meeting at the NCA Convention in Washington D.C. We will recognize academic excellence in publications with a strong communication ethics focus in: single author book of the year, edited book of

the year, and journal article of the year. Award winners are encouraged but not required to be division members. Publication must have occurred between August 2012 and July 2013 to be considered for the 2013 awards. In addition, we will present a top communication ethics teaching award to recognize achievement in pedagogy specifically related to teaching communication ethics.

To make a nomination, including self-nominations, submit a cover letter outlining the merits and impact of the nominated work or teacher. For the teaching award, include evidence of teaching effectiveness as based on student evaluation scores and comments, as well as peer review(s) and a candidate statement of teaching philosophy.

For book nominations, please send two copies to: Lisbeth A. Lipari, Department of Communication, Denison University, 100 W. College St., Granville, Ohio, 43023, U.S.A.

For journal articles, please submit a PDF file copy to lipari@denison.edu. If a PDF copy is not available, send three paper copies to the address above.

For teaching awards, please submit three complete packets of requested materials to lipari@denison.edu.

Nominations will be accepted until September 1, 2013. For more information, contact the immediate past chair of the Communication Ethics Division, Lisbeth A. Lipari at lipari@denison.edu.

**Communication Ethics Division
2012 Business Meeting Minutes
NCA Convention, Orlando, FL
Friday, November 16, 2012 3:30 p.m.**

The Division of Communication Ethics business meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. on November 16, 2012 in Orlando, Florida with Chair Lisbeth Lipari presiding. Lipari moved to table approval of the minutes from

the previous business meeting. The motion carried.

Melissa Cook, Vice Chair, reported on this year's convention. Cook addressed the low number of submissions. Members discussed how to increase them. A suggestion was made to reach out to Interpersonal Division members.

Melba Hoffer, Secretary/Treasurer, reported that the bank balance is \$314.95 and that the non-profit status was renewed.

Chair's Report— Lisbeth Lipari shared observations from her participation in Legislative Assembly. Members discussed proposal to require statement on domestic partnerships on job ads.

Christy McDowell Marinchak, *Ethica* Editor, reported that the call for submissions to the Spring 2013 edition of *Ethica* will be January 1, 2013. Members must sign up for listserv to receive copy.

2013 Convention Preview (Vice Chair-Elect Bert Ballard, in absentia, report by Lisbeth Lipari). Chair reminded members that the call for NCA's 2013 Convention is "Connections." Members discussed the favorability of submissions related to the convention's location in Washington, DC, including an invitation to incorporate landmarks and themes into panels and individual submissions. There are 39 slots for submissions linked to DC. Individual applicants will first vie for a spot and if accepted, NCA will inform the division and that particular division becomes a co-sponsor.

Melissa Cook, Vice Chair, acknowledged and congratulated 2012 award winners.

- Top Student Paper: "Toward an Ethical Model of Effective Crisis Communication" by Young Kim, Louisiana State University
- Top Scholar Paper: "Conflict in an Age of Ethical Dispute" by Ronald Arnett,

Duquesne University; LeeAnne Bell McManus, Stevenson University, Amanda Grace McKendree, University of Notre Dame

Annette Holba, Immediate Past-Chair, acknowledged and congratulated award winners for division scholarship. Top Book Award of 2012 was awarded to David J. Gunkel for his single-authored university press book *The Machine Question: Critical Perspectives on AI, Robots, and Ethics* (MIT Press, 2012).

The new call for the 2013 awards was also announced and nominees were invited. The call will be posted to CRTNET, sent to Communication Ethics Listserv, published in *Ethica*, and posted to commethics.org. There are four categories of awards: top single authored book, top edited book, top journal article, and top teaching in communication ethics. The complete call is available in this issue of *Ethica*.

Annette Holba, Immediate Past-Chair, discussed elections and appointments. Michelle Leavitt was nominated for Editor of *Ethica*, Amanda McKendree was nominated for Secretary/Treasurer, and Melba Hoffer was nominated for Vice Chair. Members discussed the merits of the nominees and slate was approved. Michael Hyde moved to approve slate. Motion carried.

Reviewers for the 2012 convention were thanked for their valued contributions and an appeal was made for volunteer reviewers for 2013 to add their names to the sign-up sheet. New members in attendance were introduced and welcomed to the division.

The division leadership exhorted members to increase the number of multimedia presentations for next year's convention. Melba Hoffer addressed the creation of an ED blog site. Members discussed hosting the site through NCA's Interest Group web space as

well as our website (www.commethics.org) maintained by Pat Gehrke. Lisbeth Lipari and Paul Turpin expressed interest and will spearhead this effort.

Chair Lisbeth Lipari discussed attendance and representation at Legislative Assembly. Additional discussion took place regarding motion to eradicate the Legislative Assembly (180 member body with proportional representation from all divisions, groups, caucuses, units, regionals, governance committees, etc.). Motion failed but it is likely to return. Members discussed the motivation, need, and logistics pertaining to this motion. Members felt lack of involvement with the organization may well reflect power being taken away from its constituents and thus a reduction of the ownership of membership in the institution. Members commented on the impact of these practices on the organization's reach. Members expressed that NCA feels increasingly impersonal and authoritative. Ken Chase offered insightful comments into the role and importance of the legislature.

Michael Hyde announced the forum: "After the Genome: A Conference on the Language of our Biotechnological Future" to be held at Wake Forest University, April 11-13, 2013.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.
Respectfully submitted by Melba Hoffer,
Secretary/Treasurer, Grand Valley State
University.

**Report from Past Vice Chair and
2012 Convention Planner for
Communication Ethics Division**
Melissa A. Cook
St. Vincent College

Thanks to all members of the Communication Ethics Division and NCA members who made this year's Orlando convention panels a great success. The division sponsored nine panels including a top papers panel. We also hosted

round tables on the ethics of civil discourse; the PSU child abuse scandal; and student engagement with communication ethics, as well as research paper panels on feminine responsiveness in vocational community, and academic integrity of scholars.

A highlight for our division included recognizing the top paper authored by Ronald C. Arnett, Duquesne University, Leanne Bell McManus, Stevenson University and Amanda Grace McKendree, University of Notre Dame entitled, "Conflict in an Age of Ethical Dispute." The authors received a certificate of achievement following the top paper panel presentation.



Amanda McKendree, Ronald Arnett, Leanne Bell McManus with Lisbeth Lipari, Immediate Past Chair

The top student paper was authored by Young Kim, Louisiana State University, entitled, "Toward an Ethical Model of Effective Crisis Communication." The student received a cash award and a certificate as well.



Past Vice Chair, Melissa Cook, and Young Kim

As the deadline approaches, please consider sending your work to NCA so that our incoming Vice Chair and 2013 program planner, Bert Ballard, has great scholarship to empanel and showcase when we gather in Washington, DC. It was a wonderful professional experience to read all of the submissions and utilize the work of our colleagues who volunteered to review the submissions. We appreciate the work of our 2012 reviewers including Ron Arnett, Robert Ballard, Annette Holba, Michael Hyde, Spoma Jovanovic, Lisbeth Lipari, Bala Musa, Tammy Swenson Lepper, Paul Turpin, and Cem Zeytinoglu.

Review of *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* by Christian Smith, Kari Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson, & Patricia Snell Herzog. Oxford UP (2011)

**Paula S. Tompkins
St. Cloud State University**

Research is confirming what many faculty suspect, that today's undergraduate students are different. While their use of digital technology explains some of this difference, another explanation is that undergraduates are in a new developmental stage of extended adolescence, what Jeffrey Arnett calls "emerging adulthood." Several factors cultivate this new stage--increased participation in higher education, delay of marriage, an unstable economy that promotes maximizing options and postponing commitments, and more parents financially supporting children into their 20s. Sociologist Christian Smith and his research team have created a profile of emerging adulthood, building upon two previous studies in 2001 and 2005 of 3,290 adolescents aged 13-17 in 45 states. In 2007 and 2008, the team collected a third wave of survey and interview data. The book *Lost in Transition* is based on 230 in-depth personal interviews from this third study (16-17).

Lost in Transition presents a picture of how emerging adults conceptualize what is *good* in life. This is not moral¹ philosophy, but whether emerging adults can "think coherently about moral beliefs and problems, and to explain why they believe whatever they do believe" (8). The results indicate that emerging adults lack the ability to discern ethically relevant issues, think coherently about those issues, or articulate a thoughtful and cogent explanation for their choices. Using a metaphor of light, Smith and his team present an outline of the shadows where emerging adults live. These shadows are

characterized by a sense of being in limbo or transition, confusion, anxiety, self-obsession, melodrama, conflict, disappointments, and sometimes emotional devastation (15). A significant portion of emerging adults ignore ethical issues. They focus on materialistic consumption, financial security, and/or seeking intoxication. Although many say relationships are important to them, this was not necessarily evident to the researchers. These findings may be familiar to those acquainted with scholarship on the dark side of interpersonal communication. While *Lost in Transition* focuses more broadly than Spitzberg and Cupach, presenting findings on consumerism, intoxication, sexual activity, and civic and political *dis*engagement, ethics conceptually organizes this research. *Lost in Transition* presents a profile of how emerging adults discern the proper weight to place on their individual self-interest relative to the self-interest of Others, a weight that is *good* according to some standard.

A key idea in *Lost in Transition* is that how emerging adults understand what is good or bad often makes the ethical features of their lives invisible (65). This is due, in part, to a lack of preparation in thinking and communicating about difficult issues, combined with a desire to avoid what they see as coercive absolutism (20-21). While the greatest proportion of emerging adults (60%) articulated a form of moral individualism and another 30% were classified as moral relativists who saw ethics as a social construction or as subjective, 34% of respondents stated that that "they simply did not know what makes anything morally right or wrong" (64). About half of those who disagreed with moral relativism could not explain why they thought it was wrong (28). About 40% defined what is ethically right or wrong by "what other people would think about someone" (37-38). Another 17% defined ethics as karma, but could not explain what karma is. A female interviewee's explanation is illustrative—"Mostly karma. I really do believe

¹ For simplicity, I use "ethics" to refer to both ethics and morals, unless "morals" is in a direct quotation, title or the name of a concept, such as "moral" philosophy.

in karma, a what you give a what you do really does come back to you, whether you realize it or not. It's just, I don't know" (46).

The invisibility of ethics described in *Lost in Transition* is similar to the image Brummett offers of the communicative impotence of traditional ethical relativism, in contrast to a rhetorical grounding of ethical relativism, what I have called *almost perpetual listening* (Tompkins 102). The profile of emerging adults in *Lost in Transition* goes further, indicating that there may be *no internal dialogue* about what is right or wrong, because many emerging adults either do not think about ethical issues, or do not see possible ethical issues with their behavior because they are not "terrible" people (66-67). If they do think about ethical issues, it is likely they cannot explain their thoughts clearly so Others understand. For the social worlds emerging adults co-construct with their communication, the presence of ethics is "thin and spotty" (65).

Lost in Transition argues that the social worlds of emerging adults are also shaped by the unintended consequences of actions taken by adults, particularly those responsible for socializing youth. Many interviewees attended public schools where teachers sidestepped discussions of difficult issues or controversies, in a manner more typical of dysfunctional families (62). While avoidance or repression of potential conflict is an understandable, though problematic strategic response to the pressures to teach academically, socially, and racially diverse student populations to perform well on standardized tests, this strategy does not provide a good model for thinking and communicating. This pedagogy does not teach skills needed to recognize and think critically about difficult or divisive issues, to articulate thoughts and have them examined by others in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in ideas or reasoning, or to develop the ability to distinguish between rationalizations and ethical justifications. Moreover, emerging adults'

facile and fragmented understanding of postmodernism discourages them from communicating with Others in their social, in contrast to their immediate personal relationships. They look at Others and see only differences. There are no commonalities that would justify communicating with those who are different (219-220). Such thinking promotes withdrawal from social relationships in their communities and the public sphere in order to focus on self, family, or perhaps small enclaves of like-minded individuals.

Lost in Transition presents a glimpse, which many of us seldom see, into the lives of undergraduate students. Its findings prompt us to pause and check how we perceive our students as *persons*, to imagine them as more than undergraduates listening to our lectures or participating in class discussions. Despite methodological limitations and possible disagreement with specific conclusions, *Lost in Transition* presents evidence of the importance of clear, focused and sustained teaching about communication ethics for undergraduate students at this historical moment. Our discipline is recognizing the importance of the increasingly robust scholarly exploration of communication ethics in our discipline. We need to do the same for our teaching. How we teach communication ethics matters, not only to our students but also to the communities in which they live and work now and in the future. The profile of emerging adults in *Lost in Transition* helps us identify some of the challenges we face in our teaching. It simultaneously raises questions about our responsiveness to the call of our students at this historical moment.

References

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Spitzberg, Brian H. and William R. Cupach, eds. *The Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2007.

Tompkins, Paula. *Practicing Communication Ethics: Development, Discernment and Decision Making*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2011.

To become a user in the Communication Ethics Division LISTSERV

Follow these guidelines:

- To start sending messages to members of our group, send an e-mail to comethics@yahoogroups.com
- To reply to a message, simply answer the message and your reply will be sent to all members.
- To become a new subscriber to our listserv, send an e-mail to comethics-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
- To communicate with the moderator, send an e-mail to comethics-owner@yahoogroups.com
- If you do not wish to belong to our Communication Ethics group, you can unsubscribe by sending an e-mail to comethics-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

If you wish to receive a private response from our group members, enclose your own e-mail address in your note and encourage people to send you a note using that address, rather than the group address.

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