

NCA Credo for Ethical Communication

Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore, we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication.

We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.

We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.

We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.

We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.

We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.

We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.

We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.

We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.

We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences for our own communication and expect the same of others.

**Developments in
Communication Ethics:
The Ethics Commission, Code of Professional Responsibilities,
Credo for Ethical Communication**

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Ethics has always been a dimension of communication theory and practice. But the definition of its role and the awareness of and emphasis given to it varies from communication theorist to theorist and practitioner to practitioner. These variations can be traced from the rhetorical theories and practices of ancient Greece to the present. Similarly, the approach to and emphasis given ethics as an element in communication has varied in the communication field's teaching and research.

The academic units historically identified as speech, speech communication, communication arts or by similar rubrics typically are not preparing individuals to enter a specific profession. Teachers and students in these units working within the prevailing standards of the culture rarely identified ethical issues for detailed specific treatment and emphasis. The treatment of ethical issues depended on the emphasis given by the text, the instructor and classroom events. Typically, ethical concerns dealt with violations of prevailing ethical norms related to plagiarism, appropriateness of content, and the impact of perceived ethical violations on communication effectiveness. Students taking courses in these departments often did not become fully aware of the significant role that ethical issues play in the communication process. They were not exposed to or required to know a code of ethical communication behavior.

In contrast, journalism places significant, overt emphasis on ethical practices. Journalism texts stress the ethical requirements of the profession. This emphasis appears in introductory texts and there are numerous textbooks devoted to journalism ethics. Newspapers and magazines provide ethical codes that govern the work of reporters, photographers and editors. Violations of the code requirements result in censure and in some recent prominent cases firing of the individual.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has an extensive Code of Ethics that includes both a set of ethical principles with corollaries for their implementation and

a set of proscriptions barring behavior that conflicts with those principles. Procedures are established for investigation of violations of the code and the range of sanctions includes revocation of an individual's certification.

Recently, communication ethics has played an increasingly prominent role in the Speech Communication Association, SCA, now the National Communication Association. NCA. As the field has matured and the Association included a much greater range and variety of research and teaching interests, ethics has become a specific focus of interest for a growing number of individuals. The increase in convention programs and journal articles related to communication ethics and greater classroom emphasis on ethical issues is indicative of the recent surge of interest in ethical issues in communication. The issue has become more prominent in society generally and in many professions.

Those interested in communication ethics have become a part of the organizational structure of the SCA/NCA. The Association approved the formation of a Communication Ethics Commission in 1984. The Commission developed convention programs, established a newsletter and sponsors a biannual conference on communication ethics. In the 1990s the SCA undertook development of "A Code of Professional Responsibility" to guide its boards and members. In July 1999, a conference formulated a draft Credo for Ethical Communication. The Credo for Ethical Communication was adopted by the National Communication Association Legislative Assembly on November 6, 1999.

This article briefly traces some aspects of the evolution of interest in ethical issues by the Association, the contribution of the SCA/NCA Communication Ethics Commission, the effort to develop a Professional Code and the development of the Credo for Communication Ethics. As previously noted, various disciplines within the communication field have been active to a greater degree and/or in different ways than the SCA/NCA and its membership. This review does not chronicle the activity of those disciplines.

THE CLASSICAL ROOTS

Classical Greece and Rome laid the groundwork for the evolution of much of contemporary communication theory. The work of Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian directly and as transmitted and altered in the work of a variety of Western European and English sources was the basis for much of the theory and practice in the United States from the early colonies to the present. For the classical authors, the relationship between one's "character" and communication effectiveness was clear and direct.

Who does not know that words carry greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who live under a cloud. and that the argument which is made by a man's life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words? (Isocrates. 1929, p. 239)

The character (ethos) of the speaker is a cause of persuasion when the speech is so uttered as to make him more worthy of belief; for as a rule we trust men of probity more, and more quickly, about things in general, while on points outside the realm of exact knowledge, where opinion is divided we trust them absolutely. This trust, however, should be created by the speech itself, and not left to depend upon an antecedent impression that the speaker is this or that kind of man. It is not true, as some writers on the art maintain, that the probity of the speaker contributes nothing to his persuasiveness, on the contrary. we might almost affirm that his character (ethos) is the most potent of all the means to persuasion. (Cooper, 1932, pp. 8-9)

The classical sources focused upon the key situations and settings of their era: decisions in the legislative (decision-making) bodies, judicial proceedings, and speeches on celebratory occasions. Isocrates saw himself as preparing his students to fulfill their civic leadership duties. Aristotle differentiated the requirements of the three settings for his students. Students needed to have a very broad base: they needed to master the trinity of politics, ethics, and rhetoric (with occasional references to his poetics as well). The rhetor was specifically referred to the Nicomachean Ethics (Aristotle, 1947) for example. Plato's (1928) true speaker required a philosopher/logician/psychologist "able to discern the nature of the soul and discover the different modes of discourse which are adapted to different natures." (p. 326)

The focus of classical thinking about communication was largely restricted to persuasion in a very few settings and audiences. Relatively few individuals in the society—a very elite group of men in all but the rarest of circumstances—mattered in the sense of making decisions in the polis (community). Speakers were generally known by their hearers on a personal basis given a long history of interaction that typically would continue for their entire lives. Thus, one's reputation as a "good" person was a significant concern. Quintilian's famous dictum of rhetoric calling for "the good man speaking well" summarizes a common viewpoint. This narrow focus on a relatively small range of communication settings and audiences contrasts with the vast range of channels, settings and audiences covered by various communication theorists today. A communication ethics credo written in the classical period would have had a very different focus than the NCA credo adopted in November. The most obvious contrasts, perhaps, would be the classical omission of the concern for access to communication by all individuals, the focus on the climate of the communicative interaction and the sharing of ethical responsibility by all participants.

PREPARING THE FIELD: 1950-1980

College departments of speech changed markedly from 1950 to 1980. In 1950 the department might include such areas as public address (general speech, public speaking, debate, discussion, speech criticism, rhetoric), theater, oral interpretation, radio and television (perhaps later film), speech correction and speech education. Programs, whether for undergraduates preparing to teach or Ph.D. candidates, generally required work in several to most of the areas.

By 1980, theater and speech correction were likely to be separate curricular units, speech education to receive less attention and speech communication to be the departmental name. Radio, television, and film at many colleges was linked to journalism or an independent unit. The public address area added emphases such as interpersonal communication, group processes, persuasion, intercultural communication and research methods. Undergraduate majors were likely preparing for a career other than teaching. Ph.D. candidates developed intensive specialties within the area itself and were no longer responsible for the broad coverage of the area. The move was to much greater specialization given the rapid growth of research and scholarship and trend and need for greater specialization in a limited area for research and teaching.

Some individuals began to focus on communication ethics, a focus that evolved for a variety of reasons and drew upon a variety of sources.

In the 1950s and 1960s, introductory textbooks in the field typically stressed the value of speech training as preparation for life in a democratic society. Although they did not devote extensive attention to ethical issues, ethical behavior in accordance with the societal norms was an implicit assumption. With the focus largely upon the speaker in a public speaking setting, such ethical standards as were enunciated tended to be speaker-focused

and to stress the violation of ethical norms rather than advancing positive ethical goals to be achieved.

Mary Andersen's (1979) analysis of sixteen leading fundamentals texts identified seven main unethical behaviors:

1. Failing to prepare adequately.
2. Sacrificing convictions in adapting to an audience.
3. Appearing to be what one is not; insincerity.
4. Withholding information; suppression.
5. Relaying false information.
6. Using motivational appeals to hinder truth.
7. Failing to employ critical-evaluative listening. (pp. 244-47)

Only the final item involved the listener. Unethical behaviors identified ranged from acts of commission to acts of omission, from conscious acts to unintentional acts.

Argumentation texts featured extensive treatment of logical and evidential fallacies, violations of the standards of good reasoning and evidence that had an implicit if not explicit tone of violation of ethical norms.

The increasing array of persuasion texts brought increased attention to ethics. Following the publication of the Brembeck and Howell (1952) persuasion text, a chapter on ethical issues became the norm. In stressing the importance of persuasion to and in society, authors typically gave persuasion a strong ethical valence. Indeed, Andersen (1978) contrasted the ethical requirements of a persuasion theory in a democratic setting with those of a totalitarian society in addition to a chapter on ethics.

Another dimension of the interest in ethics was the growing attention to empirical research related to the classical concept of ethos. The "Summary of Experimental Research in Ethos" (Andersen and Clevenger, 1963) analyzed a highly diverse set of previous studies and set the framework for a significant expansion of research in that area. The analysis of the research validated the classical view that the "character" of the source as perceived by the auditor/reader affects persuasiveness and added the dimensions of perception and information transmission as well. The review noted various efforts to develop measures of "character" and the multidimensional nature of "source credibility:"

The first modern textbook wholly devoted to ethics of speech communication was that of Thomas Nilsen (1966), a 100 page paperback, part of a series designed to let professors choose from an array of texts to cover the topics they wished to emphasize. This book was followed by Richard Johannesen's (1967) *Ethics and Persuasion: Selected Readings* comprised of thirteen articles and chapters dealing with communication ethics. This was followed in 1975 by his first edition of *Ethics in Human Communication*, now in its fourth edition (1996). Thus, materials became available to enable professors to teach a course in communication ethics or to treat that topic as part of a course.

The Speech Communication Association gave attention to ethical issues. For example, it published a series of bibliographies on ethics compiled by Richard Johannesen. Robert Jeffrey's Presidential Address raised a series of important ethical issues. Jeffrey (memorandum, May 29, 1973) appointed a committee—Donald Bryant, chair; Franklyn Haiman; Steven Shiffrin; and Ronald Bassett—"to explore the need for the development of a code of ethics for the profession, and to write such a document if it is determined that present available statements from such organizations as the American Association of University Professors are judged inadequate." Bryant (report, June 28, 1974) wrote on behalf of the committee that it assumed such a code would apply to members only in their professional roles—teaching, research, and administration. "The members of the committee found themselves initially convinced that an explicit code of ethics for SCA is not only unnecessary

but undesirable.” They did recommend that a standing committee on Professional Ethics and Conduct be appointed by the SCA President.

Such a committee was appointed for some period of time but dissatisfaction arose among its members about its responsibilities. The SCA Administrative Committee typically handled allegations of plagiarism and such ethical issues as came to their attention. For example, in one instance they approved issuing a notice in a journal that a previous article on the subject had been withdrawn due to plagiarism. The failure to utilize the Professional Ethics and Conduct Committee was the subject of complaint by at least one chair and the committee soon ceased to exist.

Various forces combined to produce the 1972 policy document on freedom of speech which had a clear ethical import as suggested by the title, “Credo for Free and Responsible Communication in a Democratic Society.” Protests against the war in Viet Nam led to extended public debate over ethical issues—a debate often focused more on the methods of the protesters and responses to the protests as on the war itself. Ethical issues were central to “free speech” debates. Discussing free speech issues and the Credo was often the basis for introducing ethical topics into classrooms. The Credo is replete with ethical imperatives.

CREDO FOR FREE AND RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATION INA DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

(Adopted December 1972)

Recognizing the essential place of free and responsible communication in a democratic society, and recognizing the distinction between the freedoms our legal system should respect and the responsibilities our educational system should cultivate, we members of the Speech Communication Association endorse the following Statement of principles:

WE BELIEVE that freedom of speech and assembly must hold a central position among American constitutional principles, and we express our determined support for the right of peaceful expression by any communicative means available to man.

WE SUPPORT the proposition that a free society can absorb with equanimity speech which exceeds the boundaries of generally accepted beliefs and mores; that much good and little harm can ensue if we err on the side of freedom, whereas much harm and little good may follow if we err on the side of suppression.

WE CRITICIZE as misguided those who believe that the justice of their cause confers license to interfere physically and coercively with the speech of others, and we condemn intimidation, whether by powerful majorities or strident minorities, which attempts to restrict free expression.

WE ACCEPT the responsibility of cultivating by precept and example, in our classrooms and in our communities, enlightened uses of communication; of developing in our students a respect for precision and accuracy in communication, and for reasoning based upon evidence and a judicious discrimination among values.

WE ENCOURAGE our students to accept the role of well-informed and articulate citizens, to defend the communication rights of those with whom they may disagree, and to expose abuses of the communication process.

WE DEDICATE ourselves fully to these principles, confident in the belief that reason will ultimately prevail in a free market place of ideas.

THE FLOWERING OF COMMUNICATION ETHICS 1980.2000

The 1982 SCA convention in Louisville, Kentucky, was given the theme of "Communication Ethics and Values:" by Ken Andersen, First Vice-President and planner. A significant number of programs and papers addressed the theme, which stimulated response in divisions, interest groups, and caucuses that normally had not dealt with ethical issues in their Convention programs. Not only did the theme spark interest in ethical issues at the convention, but also regional convention programs in the years that followed showed a marked rise in papers and programs tied to ethical issues. SCA President Frank Dance (1982) utilized the convention theme in his presidential address, tying ethics to the previous year's convention theme, "The Centrality of the Spoken Word." One year later Andersen's presidential address (1984a) offered "A Code of Ethics for Speech Communication."

The 1982 convention brought into focus the work of a number of individuals who were active in areas linked to communication ethics. Faculties at a few institutions were introducing units dealing with communication ethics in their courses and in a few instances creating courses on communication ethics. This awareness of growing interest in communication ethics led to the formation of the SCA Communication Ethics Commission.

The Communication Ethics commission of the Speech Communication Association

James Jaksa spearheaded the drive to establish the Communication Ethics Commission. Utilizing a list of individuals he knew to be interested in communication ethics, he circulated a petition asking them to gather signatures in support of establishing the Commission. Over 130 signatures supported the proposal forwarded to the SCA Legislative Council on September 6, 1984. (Jaksa petition, 1984) The proposal described the rationale for the Commission, cited the recent surge of interest in ethical issues in terms of convention programming and the need for an on-going structure to facilitate interaction and thus enhance teaching and research in communication ethics. The Legislative Council approved the petition at the November 1984 convention. Elected to a one year term for 1984- 85, the Commission's first officers were: James iaksa, Chair; Ken Andersen, Vice-Chair; Richard Johannesen, Vice-Chair Elect; J. Vernon Jensen, Secretary; and Ronald Arnett, Newsletter Editor.

The first Newsletter (later to be titled *Ethica*) was published in September 1985. (The Commission's newsletter should not be confused with *Ethically Speaking*, the newsletter of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics.) *Ethica* updated members on relevant programming at the regional conventions (facilitating paper exchanges), requests for proposals, calls for papers, and material on various activities, programs and innovations. *Ethica* is an important information source and communication link for members. (Although available electronically starting in 2000, it will still be available as a printed copy for that year at least.)

The greatest impact of the Commission in its initial years was in facilitating interaction among active members. The Commission sponsored or endorsed a variety of activities including seminars and courses on communication ethics at national and regional conventions. SCA/NCA convention programming ~was assured for the Commission. Commission business meetings provide the basis for developing additional possibilities for interaction and exchange of ideas.

The first major new initiative was the development of a three-day National Ethics Conference held in May of even-numbered years at Gull Lake, Michigan. The conference is sponsored by the Commission and units at Western Michigan University and recently Duqucsnt University. Planners for the first Conference held in 1990 were Ronald Arnett, Clifford Christians, James Jaksa, Richard Johannesen, Michael Pritchard and Lea Stewart, many of whom continued to be involved in planning succeeding conferences. Papers for

presentation are largely selected competitively. Some programs, however, are commissioned to fulfill a particular need, such as covering a topic area or advancing an interest of the Commission. The last several conferences have featured a “scholar in residence:” giving a major “address” and interacting throughout the conference. The “scholar” may be a Commission member but as in the case of Franklyn Haiman (1981), invited because of his expertise in free speech, may not be. The conference site ensures extended interaction during the conference with only one presentation at a given time. Thus, participants share the same body of material and a range of emergent themes develop as a result.

Proceedings of the first four conferences were published, distributed to participants and sold by the Speech Communication Association. Issues of copyright protection for projects, possible publication in other sources, and other issues such as the effort and cost involved led to discontinuation of published proceedings after the 4th Conference in 1996. However, many presenters make papers available to conference attendees.

Although attendance has varied somewhat, the event attracts more than fifty individuals who are in residence at the site and a few commute from nearby locations. Conferees see the conference as of great value for the material presented, the forum periods permitting an exchange of views at each of the programs and the extended opportunity to network and to explore common interests.

The Commission through its membership had an impact on the 1995 Association for Communication Administration Summer Conference Defining the Field of Communication. The idea for the conference had its genesis during the tenure of Commission member Ken Andersen’s term as president of the ACA. The Conference developed the following definition: “The field of communication focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels and media. The field promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication.”

Many in the Commission believe that the inclusion of the term “ethical practice” in the definition is the result of its focus on ethics and the efforts of its members who attended. One Commission member, Julie Belle White-Newman, served on the final drafting committee.

The activities of the Commission and those of its members were part of a growing awareness and interest in ethical issues in the field. In part, this interest was sparked by a larger interest in ethics in the society generally and the effort to integrate ethics into a number of curricula including law, business, and other professional schools. The interest in ethical issues is not obviously limited to the Commission. For example Johannesen (1997) developed an extended analysis of current trends and issues in communication ethics as part of the “Share the Wealth Series” at the 1997 NCA Convention.

In the last two decades, publications on communication ethics have expanded both in the sense of more books and chapters on the subject) Ethics in Human Communication, 2nd edition, was published in 1983, the 3rd in 1990 and the 4th in 1996, growing in size and comprehensiveness of coverage and citations. Jaksa and Pritchard (1994) published a second edition of Communication Ethics: Methods of Analysis. i. Vernon Jensen (1997) in Ethical Issues in the Communication Process analyzed the ethical issues from the perspective of source, message, mediums, audience and situation. Ken Andersen (1999) wrote the first chapter in a speech pedagogy book focused on ethical issues confronting a teacher. Andersen (1984b) argued for shifting the focus from sources — and for some — the receiver and holding non-participants to an ethical responsibility in communication as well. Seeger’s (1997) book, Ethics and Organizational communication, tied ethics to business as well as communication. Greenberg’s (1991) Conversations on Communication Ethics featured nine scholars ranging over the history of communication ethics and 70 years of journal articles on ethics to ethical issues in persuasion and

political communication. Makau and Arnett (1997) published a set of essays on Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity. Other books such as Arnett's (1986) Southern Illinois Press book *Communication and Community: implications of Martin Buber's Dialogue* placed ethical concerns at the center of the analysis.

These sources made a variety of philosophical approaches available. Brembeck and Howell emphasized social utility, Johannesen stressed a dialogical focus, Jaksa and Pritchard drew upon Sisala Bok's *Lying* (1978), a book utilized as a text in some communication ethics courses. Somewhat surprisingly no text has fully utilized the work of John Rawls (1971). Aristotle's (1947) ethics of virtue and his stress upon striking a mean between excesses, whether of too much or too little, continues implicitly in several chapters and texts.

Certainly, a richer array of material within the field and of value to those outside the field has become available during the last two decades. While not a result of the Communication Ethics Commission directly, the existence of the Commission contributed to some of this work coming into being and assuring a market for it.

A CODE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE COMMUNICATION SCHOLAR/TEACHER

Starting in the mid-1990s, SCA sought to develop an Association statement setting a standard on ethical practices for the field. The exact nature and function of such a statement was the subject of disagreement and confusion. There was concern whether the goal was a general statement of principles or a detailed code of ethics with highly specific standards. There was concern about whether the statement should have an enforcement mechanism. If so, what should be its nature? Ultimately the Administrative Committee moved to a procedure by which three Association Boards—educational policy, publications and research—were asked to develop a statement reflective of standards relevant to their area of expertise. The national office staff, notably Bill Eadie and Sherry Morreale, working with the boards and with material provided by the boards drafted an introductory section and edited and reedited the document. The document has been through several iterations with input from a variety of sources including the Communication Ethics Commission as a whole. Two members of the Commission, Richard Johannesen and to a lesser degree Kenneth Andersen, were asked to edit and polish drafts of the document.

As one step in the development of the Code, a series of "ethics" focus groups met at the 1997 National Convention to discuss ethical issues linked to research, publication, teaching and professional activity. Most participants were not Commission members. At least seven of the discussions were summarized by the focus group leaders and contributed to the thinking of those drafting the Professional Code.

The document is undergoing still another editing with the presumption of its being submitted to the Administrative Committee and then to the Legislative Council in November 2000.

The term "ethics" has been removed from the working title although the document still has an ethical focus in its introduction, in much of its content, and in its conclusion. This is clear in citations of the introductory and conclusion sections (NCA Draft Code) as of summer 1999:

"Introduction: The National Communication Association believes that responsible behavior is a hallmark of professionalism in communication. We believe that responsible behavior is guided by values such as integrity, fairness, ethical and social responsibility, equality of opportunity, confidentiality, honesty and openness, respect for self and others, freedom and safety.

“The guidelines that follow offer means by which these values can be manifest in our teaching, research, publications, and professional relationships with colleagues, students, member of the community, and in society as a whole.

“This code and its guidelines are intended to remind those in the discipline of accepted standards of professional conduct... (p. 2)”

“Conclusion: Members of the communication discipline have a special responsibility to model ethical communication practices. Communication scholars are particularly concerned with free and responsible communication among all members of society. Ethical communication should begin with ourselves and govern our interactions with others. The principles set forth in this document represent general agreements on principles and procedures at the time this code was adopted and as agreements are subject to later modification. There will certainly be disagreements about whether and how these principles will apply to specific cases. But our obligation to behave as ethical communicators and to model ethical communication behavior endures as long as we call ourselves members of the communication discipline. (p.11)”

THE CREDO FOR ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

The Communication Ethics Commission discussed an earlier draft document of the proposed NCA Code of Professional Responsibility at its business meeting in 1997 and at the 1998 National Ethics Conference. The Commission had several concerns: perhaps the most important was that the document was too specific to the inner workings of the National Communication Association. Additionally, it had too much detail, some sections described standard operating procedures rather than providing an ethical standard. The Commission felt that a separate statement was needed: an overarching statement of the goal and nature of ethical communication. The exemplar invoked was the 1972 Credo on Free and Responsible Communication.

A recommendation for a summer conference to write a credo for ethical communication followed. A proposal to the NCA Administrative Committee for a 1999 summer conference was approved. Through an exchange of letters and meetings at the November 1998 SCA Convention and joint Southern and Central Communication Associations Convention in April 1999 a planning committee was initially formed, then enlarged, and materials and a schedule developed for the Conference.

Conference planners were Ken Andersen, chair, Lawrence Frey, Matthew Secgcr, Pamela Shockley-Zalabak, Dolores Tanno, Paula Tompkins, Julie Belle White-Newman and Sherwin Morreale, National Office Project Officer. (Bill Eadie had a major role in the initial planning leading to the conference.) Those planners attending the summer conference (Andersen, Morreale, Seeger, Shockley-Zalabak, Tompkins, and White-Newman) and Conference facilitators Isa Engleberg and Diana Wynn functioned during the Conference to integrate the results of the initial sessions and provide the draft documents for the plenary session. This group was given the responsibility for final polishing and editing of the material forwarded to the Legislative Council.

The planning committee decided that the Credo would take the form of a short (three or four sentence) prologue to provide a context for understanding and using the guiding principles, a maximum of ten robust generalizations that would serve as anchors or moorings for understanding ethical communication. It was agreed that the Credo must be significantly shorter than a page in length; that as a credo it would be a statement of belief, aspirational in nature, and apply broadly to all forms and settings of communication rather than being specific to any one setting or role. It was recognized that the credo would function optimally in a democratic society as a social contract and that specific enforcement mechanisms were not to be included. The principles were not to be listed in a hierarchical

order. It was acknowledged that the guiding principles would come into conflict in actual practice: the Credo could not lift the necessity for an individual to engage in a process of moral reasoning to determine an optimal response. Finally, the Credo must pass the "airplane test:" that is, it must use terms and phrasing intelligible to the general public and be free of arcane terms or "terms of art" that carry a specific meaning to individuals sharing a certain paradigm or philosophical view.

The planners wanted as broad a base of participation as possible. Thus, sections, divisions, caucuses and commissions were specifically invited to send participants. The planners knew that many individuals would have schedule conflicts or could not justify the registration fees and expenses of attending the summer conference despite an interest in the subject. Therefore, an effort was made to reach as many individuals as possible for input into the deliberations. A questionnaire was developed and made available through the NCA web site. The NCA CRTNET, Spectra and publicity directed to the Commission urged individuals to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire asked respondents to: (1) Identify typical situations involving ethical communication that you believe are typically encountered by people as they go about their daily lives; (2) Describe one or two difficult ethical communication dilemmas, for any identified in question one— junctures or ethical decision points related to the situation that you think people may face involving ethical communication; (3) Identify the values that are important components of ethical communication. Respondents could add to a list of 32 terms and categorize the concepts (limit of 8 per category) in one of 4 categories ranging from essential, to valuable, optional, not a major consideration; (4) Write a definition of ethical communication; (5) Write a definition of unethical communication; and (6) Describe possible uses or applications for the Credo for Communication Ethics. What functions do you see it serving and how might individuals, organizations, and/or society use it?

A summary of the surveys was distributed to the conference participants in advance of the conference. In addition, they received criteria for developing the Credo statements, the "Credo for Free and Responsible Communication," the "Statement on Professional Ethics" of the American Association of University Professors, copies of the presidential addresses of Dance and Andersen, the 1994 "Credo for Free and Responsible Use of Electronic Communication Networks," the 1995 "Definition of the Field of Communication," and a short bibliography.

The conference brought together twenty-five participants ranging from faculty at community colleges to research universities, including a faculty member from a school of hotel administration as well as a practicing attorney. The majority were not active members of the Communication Ethics Commission. The conference opened with a keynote outlining the parameters of the task and then conference facilitators Isa Engleberg and Diana Wynn took charge.

Respondents to the earlier survey had identified eighteen value terms as particularly central to ethical communication: accountability, accuracy, authenticity, caring, diversity, empathy, fairness, freedom of expression, honesty, integrity, listening, openness, reasonableness, respect, responsibility, trustworthy, truthfulness and voice. At the conference, three additional value terms that had not previously received high rankings were added by vote of the conferees: tolerance, courage of conviction, justice. Participants then identified the values seen as most important to serve as underpinning for developing the prologue and guiding principles of the Credo.

The process yielded seventeen values, listed here in the order of importance represented by number of participant votes: fairness-14; respect-13; responsibility-13; integrity- 10; freedom of expression-8; truthfulness-8; accountability-7; caring-7, accuracy-6; courage of conviction-6; honesty-6; tolerance-6; diversity-4; justice-4; reasonableness-4; empathy-3; trustworthy-3.

The draft prologue was developed using a process in which each individual made a first draft, individuals then met in groups of three and then in groups of six to reach agreement on a statement. These were then refined by the entire group resulting in a draft of the prologue. A similar pattern was employed to develop the statements of general principles. The groups of six initially yielded 15 principles that were reworked to yield a total of nine.

To check on Comprehensiveness and inclusion of key values, the group identified nine themes in the guiding principles: (1) the other/tolerance/diversity; (2) caring; (3) accuracy (test ideas]; (4) honesty (truthfulness]; (5) consequences (taking responsibility]; (6) freedom of speech; (7) trust; (8) hate (violence]; and (9) advocate communication ethics. Four themes were represented in the prologue: justice, fairness, integrity and self respect/respect for others.

The prologue and principles were reworked by the planning committee and resubmitted for further revision and a vote on acceptance by the entire conference. After further revision the draft document was adopted with only one dissenting vote, a dissent based in part on the view that the statements of principle did not reflect adherence to a single consistent philosophical view.

Following some minor wording changes by the conference planners, the draft Credo was published via the NCA web site and the availability of the draft credo for study and comment announced in Spectra and on the CRTNET. Only one extended comment was received which focused on a concern about the potential conflict between the Credo on Free and Responsible Communication and the Credo for Communication Ethics.

The draft was transmitted to the Legislative Council and its Resolutions Committee. That committee spent the majority of its session discussing the Credo, and it made four changes in the draft Credo. (See the Credo printed below.) A statement on the impact of unethical communication was moved from the list of guiding principles to become the penultimate statement in the prologue. The words "We believe" were replaced. In the first principle "We believe" was replaced by "We advocate" and in the fourth principle "We believe" was replaced by "We promote." A significant rewording was made in the sixth principle which had read: "We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intolerance, intimidation, coercion, hatred and violence." The rationale was that intolerance and hatred are judgment calls rather than observable phenomena. These changes were accepted since the changes retained or strengthened the essence of the Credo.

The Credo as amended by the Resolutions Committee, was adopted unanimously and without debate by the Legislative Council.

A CREDO FOR ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

(Adopted November 6, 1999)

Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication.

- We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.
- We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.
- We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well being of families, communities and society.
- We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences for our own communication and expect the same of others.

The Credo appears in *Spectra* (Jan./Feb., 2000). The Credo will remain on the NCA web site given its adoption as a policy statement. An immediate effort of the Commission will be to work through its membership to maximize awareness of the Credo within the NCA. One goal is to make the Credo available in communication classes (possibly incorporated in future textbooks) and involve students in discussions of its validity and utility. The Credo should influence the perspective of the instructor and affect the classroom atmosphere. Efforts will be needed to take the Credo beyond the classroom, e.g., using it in workshops, for training, in consulting, in criticism of discourse.

While the Credo and its adoption represent another step in the growing sensitivity to ethical issues in the field of communication, it is of particular interest and value to those

with a focus on communication ethics. At a time when the public is focused on ethical issues and raising questions of accountability of institutions and professions, the Credo for Ethical Communication may have a significant impact both within and outside the academic field of communication. Communication ethics has a long history from its classical roots to the year 2000. Ethics may again be united with and seen as central to communication as it was for classical theorists and practitioners of communication.

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