Annotated Bibliography for (Intercultural) Communication Ethics Pedagogy
by
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Because of a dearth of pedagogy-oriented sources on intercultural communication (IC), this bibliography includes general and mass communication ethics sources that offer possible foundations for developing intercultural ethics curricula. It is still very much a work in progress.

**Intercultural Communication Ethics**


This longest-published, leading intercultural communication reader contains five essays under the topic of Part 8, “Ethical Considerations: Prospects for the Future” (p. 430-71). Harland Cleveland’s “The Limits to Cultural Diversity” proposes civilization (respect for and compromise between differences) as a counterweight to the exploding, fragmenting forces of cultural diversity. In “Intercultural Personhood: An Integration of Eastern and Western Perspectives,” Young Yun Kim proposes intercultural personhood – “a way of life in which an individual develops an identity and a definition of self that integrates, rather than separates, humanity” – as an ethical ideal. (This amounts to a character/virtue ethic.) Robert Shuter (“Ethics, Culture, and Communication: An Intercultural Perspective”) expands the cultural ground for intercultural ethics by providing synopses of Confucian and Hindu communication ethics. “Peace as an Ethic for Intercultural Communication by David W. Kales proposes to root universal ethics in the concept of the human spirit. Kale sets forth peace as the fundamental human value, distinguishes three levels of peace, and sets forth four principles for intercultural communication. Finally, Martha C. Nussbaum’s “Citizens of the World” makes a compelling argument for multicultural awareness and a “world citizenship” mentality from the classical Greek tradition (which is usually pitted against multiculturalism).


Part 10 of this undergraduate reader, “Ethics and Intercultural Communication,” includes four readings on the subject. Reading 38, “Ethical Issues in Intercultural Communication,” provides a foundation for discussing IC ethics in class, including four different theoretical approaches to IC (with their implicit ethical standards), three principles for ethical intercultural communicators, and some examples of ethical dilemmas in everyday intercultural interaction. The principles are humanness and its values, the dialogic principle, and the principle of speaking “with” and “to” (rather than “for”) others.

This appears to be the only intercultural communication textbook (as versus reader) with a whole chapter devoted to ethics (ch. 11, p. 329-68). Hall provides the most comprehensive undergraduate-level overview of intercultural communication ethics I’ve found. It reaches back to classical philosophical foundations cast in terms of five “Golden Approaches” (i.e., Golden Rule, Aristotle’s golden mean, etc.), which probably renders them more memorable for students. Hall applies each of these to a case introduced at the start of the chapter. He then characterizes communication ethics as a combination of constraints and empowerment (the latter often being overlooked, and particularly germane to considerations of character as virtue). Next, Hall deftly handles the controversy between universalism and relativism in intercultural ethics, arguing that “[a]ll ethical systems involve a tension between what is universal and what is relative. It is this tension that both enables and constrains creativity and stability in human societies. Like the tree limb that can bend in the wind, together they are both flexible and strong, but in isolation they are both rigid and weak.” After discussing two efforts to identify universal ethics amid cultural relativity, Hall sets forth three ethical principles for intercultural relations, each applying to one of the three commonly identified levels of intercultural competence (thought, action, and feeling). The three principles – effort to understand, peaceful disagreement, and loving relationships – subsume other commonly identified principles such as dialogue, truth, nonviolence, and mutual legitimacy. As such, Hall offers a coherent ethical framework for students to consider, one that includes the spiritual dimension.


This collection of scholarly essays is generally more suitable for graduate students. However, two of the essays deal with in-depth cases that could be fruitfully introduced into the undergraduate IC class: Deni Elliott’s “The Great Hanshin Earthquake and the Ethics of Intervention” (p. 43-58) and Linda Steiner’s “A Feminist Schema for Analysis of Ethical Dilemmas (p. 59-85).

Elliott’s essay examines the cross-cultural ethical tensions presented by the 1995 earthquake in Japan, when the international community offered assistance and the Japanese government was slow to receive it, if at all – resulting in disbelief and criticism from the U.S. media. Elliott unpacks the cultural assumptions that underlay the Japanese response (such as collective self-sufficiency, emphasis on local-first action and bottom-up decision-making, and lack of emphasis on individual volunteerism) and interrogates the ethics of gift-giving, paternalism, and pluralism. If combined with a major news magazine article on the Kobe earthquake, this reading could stimulate fruitful ethical analysis.

Steiner’s essay is less accessible for undergraduates, since it contains a lengthy exposition of feminist ethics and the particular approach she is proposing. However, this approach is then applied to a hypothetical case of whether or not to book a gangsta rap group for a Saturday night variety entertainment show on a major cable television
channel. It provides an example of sophisticated moral reasoning on a topic likely to be of interest to students.


Vernon surveys ancient religious scriptures from East and West as well as contemporary scholarship to support the proposition that truth and trust are central and enduring human values across the globe.


Although the two assignments are designed for business students, the concepts behind them could be applied to an intercultural communication class. (1) To develop moral imagination beyond their own cultural assumptions, student groups are assigned to investigate a multinational corporation’s problems in a developing country (e.g., General Motors’ treatment of workers and the environment in Mexico). They then write two reports: one from the corporation’s perspective, the other from the perspective of a watchdog group. These reports are presented orally as well, requiring them to shift from corporate spokesperson to human rights or environmental activist. (2) The second assignment is a service learning project that exposes students to culturally different others.

**Communication Ethics Books**


This is the most popular and enduring general communication ethics textbook on the market. Unfortunately, its encyclopedic approach makes it a rather dry read. Chapter 12 focuses on ethics of intercultural and multicultural communication – a good resource for the instructor and possibly for students as well. However, I would probably choose Hall’s ethics chapter (above) over this one for readability, coherence, and inclusion of cases.


This is a collection of academic essays relating communication ethics with various dimensions of diversity.


This collection of essays is divided into three parts: I. Foundations and Framework, II. Protonorms Across Cultures, and III. Applications. Parts II and III are of particular interest to intercultural communication ethics/pedagogy.

This is one of the few general communication (as versus media) ethics texts published in the last 15 years. Unfortunately, it is out of print.

**Communication Ethics Journal Articles**


Though somewhat dated, this article is foundational and still quite useful. Jensen provides an excellent framework for constructing a communication ethics course and also offers several helpful tools for ethics lessons within any communication course. These include an *ethical quality (EQ) scale* for assessing degrees of ethical quality (rather than falling into the simplistic ethical/unethical dichotomy) and Jensen’s suggestion to recast the dichotomy of *absolute vs. relative* ethics as *primary vs. secondary* ethics (recognizing the combination of absolutes and relativity in any ethical analysis).


The four standards set forth by Richardson are applicable to teaching any aspect of communication ethics: (1) *be affirmative* (emphasize the shoulds over the shouldn’ts), (2) *be systematic* (offer a well-reasoned, coherent process for making ethical decisions in the heat of the professional moment), (3) *be integrative* (treat ethics as integral to competence in a given communication practice), and (4) *be definitive* (convey that there are rights and wrongs amid the complexity and ambiguity of cases).


Again, here is a tool that is applicable to any area of communication ethics. Kidder’s checklist is akin to Holmes’ schema for ethical analysis and decision making in *Shaping Character* (p. 51) but more definitively sequenced. Kidder’s primary contribution is his distinction between *moral temptations* (when the right action is evident but contrary to some lesser interest) and *ethical dilemmas* (when the right action is not evident), as applied in two separate steps: *Test for right-versus-wrong issues* (moral temptation) before looking for *right-versus-right dilemma paradigms*. Another contribution is the call to investigate for “trilemma” options (possible third way/middle ground/compromise). To Kidder’s checklist, Baker adds the post-decision step of justifying one’s decision to the public.


Brislin creatively adapts Robert Monaghan’s systematic approach for creating TV programs to the creation of communication ethics case studies. The students themselves work in groups to create these case studies, thus developing their moral imaginations and
yielding cases that may hold more relevance and interest to them. Monaghan’s basic idea was to come up with a matrix of program variables and a limited set of values for each variable. Following this idea, Brislin sets forth a matrix of ethical values (for journalists) and a several ethical quality levels on each variable communication. The student groups are then given one combination of the paradigm and charged to create a case that would exemplify that configuration. Later, individuals from different groups are combined and each is tasked to explain their group’s case with the values that are present, absent, and conflicting, and the overriding principles for resolution. This exercise would only work in a full-blown ethics course (or one in which several weeks are devoted to ethics).


Borden suggests two ethics course activities that utilize the case study approach while avoiding its common pitfalls (students’ lack of theoretical background and/or a case’s lack of sufficient detail). The first activity takes place within the first session or two of the course. The instructor tells of a professional experience that made her morally uneasy (one that could happen frequently within that profession) and outlines the facts. She then asks the students to come up with a similar personal experience in which they faced a moral dilemma. For the rest of the activity, she walks them through a parallel ethical analysis of her own case and their cases. The class analysis of her case serves as the model for their individual analyses, step by step. The goal is to affirm the students’ moral agency at the outset and give them practice using reasoning skills that they will extend and refine during the course. The second activity is using a feature film in which the plot revolves around ethical questions (such as *Quiz Show*) as a common thread through 5-6 weeks of instruction. Each week, the next segment of the film is shown, and students are given questions to ponder as they follow the characters through the plot. The function of this activity is to develop moral imagination within the context of a highly detailed, believable, and engaging story.


I cite this article for one compelling conclusion: communication ethics cases should not be limited to situations faced by managers/leaders, but should include many situations involving entry-level professionals, thereby increasing the likelihood that the moral reasoning learned will actually become integrated into students’ professional lives.


I include this because the program, though dated, would be relevant particularly to *intercultural* communication ethics.