Exploring Ethics with Contemporary Communications

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On April 28th, 2015, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A. was engulfed in flames, due to looting and rioting, which was ostensibly linked to the death of Freddie Grey, a 25 year old African American man who was taken into police custody and while in custody on April 12th, sustained injuries to his neck and spine and, subsequently, died on April 19, 2015.(Associated Press, 5/22/2015)1. The community was outraged and looters used this event as an excuse to burn, steal and pillage, leaving the community in shambles. This is not an isolated incident. The United States has been plagued by violence taking the form of school shootings, mall shootings, theatre shootings and senseless, repeated acts of violence against unsuspecting citizens for decades.

Usually we think tragedy happens to someone else—people we don't know. This isn't always true. On September 2, 2006, on a beautiful autumn day, when almost everyone in town had gathered for a college football game, Douglas Pennington (49) had driven two hours from his home in Scherr to Shepherdstown, West Virginia where he called his sons to come down from their dorm room to join him in the Parking Lot by Thatcher Hall. Both brothers, Logan (26) and Benjamin (24) Pennington, attended Shepherd University. When they came down to see their Father, they were met, not with a greeting but, with gunfire. Douglas Pennington shot his eldest son first and then turned the gun on the youngest, who was trying to get away, before killing himself. Three years earlier, Logan had been a student in my Public Speaking Class and when the students were asked to complete a speech introducing themselves to the class with the directions to talk about your family, your pets, what you like to do or anything which will help the class to get to know you better, Logan's speech included the comment, "I could talk about my family, but I won't because my family is crazy." No one in the class questioned that and the speech continued on with what Logan did choose to share with us. Later, we were to fully understand what he meant and tragically it was at the expense of both him and his brother. Later, it was explained that the Father did not like or agree with the directions the boys' lives were taking. This was an extreme and final act in an effort to control and end what could have been very promising futures. The Media's explanation for the event was mental illness. (Stoptheshootings.org, last accessed, May 27, 2015). 2.

These events clearly indicate that there is something wrong and this violence has reached a point near critical mass. Random violence is not just unique to the United States but it has become a global problem as well. One might ask, what is the underlying cause of this inherently, significant problem. To answer this question, we need to look at a trend that has been developing over time and is even more relevant today. If we were paying attention in the 1990's, we would have seen the following quotation which was printed on tee shirts and appeared in greeting cards.

Welcome to the 90's
Don't drink the water; don't breathe the air
Don't eat the fish, vegetables, or meat
Don't ever have sex again,
Oh, by the way, have a nice day!!!

At the time, this quotation implied a tremendous sense of change. It indicated where we, as a society, thought we were going. The tone of the message, as well as the content, did not represent improvement in our lifestyle or in the way we related to each other. This was not a message we would have seen printed in earlier decades. So the message we were sending to our *youth was:* **Don't trust anyone. Don't expect the truth (either to fully receive it or tell it ever again) and above all watch out for yourself because no one else will. Strive for what benefits you because you are most important. Love and accept**

yourself because you cannot depend on others to do it. Anything you think or feel is valid because you believe it is. In the content of this message there was an implied sense of hopelessness. In the attitude of our youth was a feeling of depression. Repeatedly, we heard from "the X Generation" that there was little to look forward to, they were suffering from a lack of direction, and there was nowhere to go. Moving forward to the millennial generation, in 2015, we find there is even more depression and despair. "There is an intense economic anxiety. . .that filters from parents to kids and has a whole generation of kids worried about what their future is going to hold."(Bruni, N.Y. Times Columnist, Where You Go Is Not Who You Will Be: An Anecdote To College Admissions Mania, March 17, 2015, 3. "College administrators overwhelmingly describe today's students as "fragile." They're seeing less resilience and adaptability in student's today than those even a decade earlier. Some blame overinvolved parenting styles that put intense pressure on students to succeed. And then you have this kind of parenting and this kind of atmosphere that often exists in certain communities right now where kids are following this exacting script through high school that their parents have written for them and they get to college and they are on their own, in a very real way, for the first time and the script is not there for them." (Bruni, 2015). 4.

 Therefore we have a generation of individuals who are not used to solving their own problems and simply do not, in many cases, have the coping skills and adaptability to be able to survive on their own. With social media playing such a big part of the lives of the millennial generation, one would think they that would be able to reach out to others more easily and depend on their friends for guidance and support. This does not seem to be the case. According to Schwartz, "The technology is meant to connect people, but it might not actually increase the feelings of intimacy and closeness that can help a young person survive a crisis. There is data, that in fact, students feel less connected to their friends than they did 10 and 20 years ago." (Students In Crisis: Mental Health and Suicide On College Campuses, Katie Couric, May 15, 2015). 5. In the same article, Margaret Kramer, a University of South Carolina graduating senior points out that "social media creates a tremendous pressure to present oneself as perfect. . . constantly online, establishing different personas for ourselves in the classroom, for professional life. There's a perfection expected. I've been definitely affected by that." 6.

Actually, university interpersonal communications classes teach that perfection is a fallacy which many times we impose on ourselves and try to live up to when in fact we should understand that we are not perfect and no one should expect us to be. This type of teaching is teaching survival skills which include coping strategies which are not taught to those who never reach the class either because they didn't get to college or they chose not to enroll. Students should be taught these types of survival skills earlier than college and the study of ethics and developing a personal set of ethics should be a life-long quest. Perhaps then, we could come closer to treating each other better and with more respect.

In the Eight Most Memorable Commencement Speeches of 2015, Madeleine Albright was quoted as saying, "We are living in a time more unsettled, that is more complicated, in more need of a new generation of leaders, than any that I can recall." 7. (Tufts University, May 17, 2015). While Michelle Obama, First Lady of the United States told the graduates of Tuskegee University on May 9th, 20015"The World won't always see you in those caps and gowns. They won't know how hard you worked and how much you sacrificed to make it to this day. They don't know that part of you. Instead, they will make assumptions about who they think you are based on their limited notion of the world."8. Katie Couric told the graduates of The University of Wisconsin, on May 16, 20015 to "Keep asking questions. Keep demanding change but remember activism can't truly lead to lasting, meaningful change without dialogue even with those with whom you may disagree."9. Finally Stephen Colbert advised the Wake Forest Graduates on May 18, 2015, "This may seem counter intuitive now, but when you leave here, you may miss being graded on all your work… When you're out of school, there are no objective criteria for achievement, anymore. People my age will say, Hey that work you did; that thing you said; that cause you championed—it's not good. Having your own standards will allow you to weather moments like that. Having your own standards allows you to perceive success where others see failure." 10. Clearly all these commencement speakers were appealing to our youth to become the new generation of leaders; to understand that others will only perceive them

through the assumptions they make because of their limited idea of the world; that the world needs change but that will only happen if we keep the channels of communication open, even though we may disagree; and finally that you have to develop your own standards because the development of those standards will help you survive. The development of ethical standards is most important to that survival. Yet, we do not stress the development of personal ethical standards to our children at an early age. The need and challenge to do so is greater than it has ever been in the past. The responsibility of the educator has increased because the role of educator has changed to include, not only teacher and role model, but advisor and parental substitute as well. We are now living in an age where more families are spending less time together and relying more on the institutions of learning to teach basic ethical and moral values. As educators, we continue to be surprised when our students do not grasp basic ethical principles and have not developed a personal code of ethics. Much of what renders the teaching of interpersonal relations ineffective is the lack of ethical foundation upon which the theories of interpersonal communication can be built.

The improvement of our interpersonal relations requires the study of theories which help us understand and guide our own behavior and gives us an awareness and understanding of the behavior of others. We examine our relationships in an effort to improve and enrich our lives and enhance the lives of those around us. By dealing honestly and ethically with others, our chances of elevating our own circumstances and improving the environment around us is much greater. Without the presence of an ethical foundation upon which to place our interpersonal theories, we are doing little more than masking our interpersonal problems, instead of creating an awareness of how to solve them.

Therefore, the focus of this paper will address the way in which we should go about introducing ethics into the study of our interpersonal relations in the hope of formulating a foundation upon which to base our theories and analyze our behavior. We should ask ourselves whether there should be different criteria for interpersonal ethics than for ethics in other areas of communication. Is it possible to carry one consistent set of ethical standards into situations which are intrapersonal, interpersonal or public in nature? Does our personal ethical criterion have to change when we cross business, political or religious boundaries? Do we include ethics in our communication curriculum to the extent we should in order to create a basis for developing personal ethical standards? Are we incorporating ethics into the interpersonal relations classroom to the extent that such inclusion would affect our interpersonal communication and decision making?

The answers to these questions will determine how well those who follow us in future generations learn to interact with each other and whether ethical priorities, guidelines, and boundaries will be developed. The extent to which we are able to incorporate ethical ideas, philosophies, and guidelines in connection to our interpersonal communication theories will influence and determine the strength of our relationships. It is with these thoughts in mind that we turn to the exploration of the connection of ethics to interpersonal communication.

What do we generally mean when we speak of ethics? Or, to what are we referring when we label someone as being unethical or acting in an unethical manner? Richard L. Johannesen refers to ethics as "the general and systematic study of what ought to be the grounds and principles for right and wrong human behavior." While ethical judgements are those which "focus more on precisely on degrees of rightness and wrongness of human behavior."11 Finally, according to Johannesen, "Ethical issues may arise in human behavior whenever that behavior could have significant impact on other persons, when behavior involves conscious choice of means and ends, and whether the behavior can be judged by the standards of right and wrong." 12. (Johannesen, 1990, p.1). When teaching the theory of interpersonal relations we tend to emphasize that all feelings are valid because they belong to the individual. Many times, students misunderstand and expand this idea into the notion that all ideas and behaviors are valid and appropriate, regardless of the ethical implications. It is true that we all have a right to our feelings, even though those feelings may be irrational and may seem inappropriate to others. The best we can hope for, with regards to our emotions, is to be able

to communicate how we feel to others and in some cases to try to explain why we think we feel the way we do. However, our ideas and behaviors are quite different from our feelings. There are ideas which are correct, incorrect, ethical, or unethical. There is an element of right and wrong attached to behavior and ideas.

As part of a test which dealt with ethics, students were asked to describe their personal set of ethical standards and justify their answer. From a teacher's viewpoint, this seemed a reasonable request and was meant to serve as a review for the student and to help stimulate thought regarding personal ethics. The answers to the questions ranged from "I've never thought about my personal ethics" to "my ethics need no explanation or justification." One answer included honesty and understanding as the only ethical standard. The explanation was "As long as I truly believe in what I say and do it honestly, it is ethical, but this does not mean I can close my mind to the beliefs of others. I must remain open-minded, because the truth always changes with the addition of new ideas."

These statements indicate that little thought has been given to ethics as a personal standard. In most cases, the students do not know what ethics are. In the last quotation, the reference to truth changing when new ideas are added, further supports the notion that we have generations of individuals who expect the truth to fluctuate in relationship to the information being presented. In this case there is no right or wrong associated with the concept of truth.

Richard L. Weaver II, in his book, Understanding Interpersonal Communication, supports the teaching of ethics in association with the study of interpersonal relations. "Because our interpersonal communication may have impact on others, because it involves choices about communicative means and specific ends (things we want or desire from others), and because it can be judged by standards of right and wrong, it involves ethical issues. . . The problem with ethics is there is a number of approaches to it, numerous values and perspectives involved in it, and many potential exceptions to ethical standards but this should not deter us from striving to be ethical." (Weaver. 1993, p. 6-7). Weaver offers the following guidelines as a way to approach ethics in interpersonal communication.

1. *Strive to create and maintain an atmosphere of openness, freedom, and responsibility.*
2. *Reveal an appreciation for individual differences and uniqueness.*
3. *Seek both sincerity and honesty in our attitudes toward communication.*
4. *Treat others as human beings who are unique, have feelings, and inherent worth (as opposed to treating others as objects).*
5. *Strive for accuracy in our communication with others.*
6. *Eliminate intentional deception, ambiguity and obscurity from our communication.*
7. *Reveal candidness and frankness as we share our personal beliefs and feelings with others.*
8. *Make every possible attempt to understand the perceptual world of others.*
9. *Help others make free choices based on accurate bases for those choices.*
10. *Strive to communicate with others as we would want others to communicate with us.* (Weaver,1993, p.7). 13.

Guidelines such as these and those for group consideration, suggested by Johanneson in Ethics In Human Communication, help to give a basic idea of what an individual can do to improve their personal ethical situation. For individuals who have never considered formulating a personal standard of ethics, these guidelines provide an excellent place to begin a consideration of ethics.

1. *Avoid the "illusion of invulnerability" which fosters "excessive optimism and encourages taking extreme risks."*

2. *Avoid rationalizations that hinder members from reassessing their basic assumptions before reaffirming commitment to previous decisions.*

3. *Avoid "an unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality," a belief that inclines members to "ignore the ethical and moral consequences of their decisions."*

4. *Avoid stereotyping adversaries' views as "too evil to warrant genuine attempts to negotiate, or as too weak and stupid" to thwart your efforts against them.*

5. *Avoid pressure that makes members feel disloyal if they express "strong arguments against any of the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments."*

6. *Avoid individual self- censorship that minimizes for each person the importance of his or her own doubts or counterarguments.*

7. *Avoid a "shared illusion of unanimity concerning judgments conforming to a majority view." This illusion results both from "self-censorship of deviations" and from the "false assumption that silence means consent."*

8. *Avoid the emergence of "self-appointed mind guards." These are members "who protect the group from adverse information that might shatter their complacency about the effectiveness and morality of their decisions."* (Johannenson, 1990, p. 149).

14.

We need to ask ourselves if the brief mention of some guidelines which skim the surface are enough to formulate a foundation which will enable the student of interpersonal relations to create a personal ethics system. A review of the texts available in the area of interpersonal relations reveals that usually ethics is mentioned in passing if it is, in fact, mentioned at all. Most of the books which do mention ethics tell the reader to be ethical but there is no indication of how an individual is supposed to create an ethical system. There is no motivation which helps to stimulate thought in the directions of ethics or a personal ethical system. Therefore, most individuals have never thought to explore ethics in order to determine how they should behave in their relationships with others.

With these thoughts in mind, let us turn our attention to the interpersonal classroom and determine what could be done to incorporate ethics into the curriculum. Most interpersonal courses begin with an explanation of the communication process. Many use a model to illustrate what happens when we communicate. Berlo's factors of communication are classic, listing the variables involved in a communication process. By considering the factors of sender, receiver, message, channel, feedback, noise, and environment one can explain how messages are transmitted and the impact of verbal and nonverbal communication on the process. Barriers to communication are emphasized and the importance of effective feedback are stressed. After the general communication model is introduced and while there is still discussion about the sender and receiver, as well as the communication process, there should be some discussion introducing ethics into the process.

There are ethics which should be observed as a sender and ethics which should be considered from the vantage point of the receiver. Whether ethics are, and to what extent they should be situational could be explored by teacher and students, together. Most importantly, the student should be asked to read and study ethical philosophies of the classic ethicists like Plato and Aristotle, as well as reviewing ethical philosophies from a variety of cultures. Asian cultures have their own way of comprehending and addressing ethical situations. Looking into the pre-literate societies, such as the American Indians, could be another way of not only teaching ethics but approaching cultural diversity within the classroom.

Intrapersonal communication, or the act of communicating with oneself (Devito, 1992, p. 4), is where the individual needs to develop an additional awareness of ethical considerations. "Developing the ability to act toward a person's own set of roles as the person acts towards the roles of others marks an extremely critical point in the development of communication process. It is only after an individual develops the ability to act toward the self with a set of expectations of the self that the individual can engage in

intrapersonal communication. Almost every adult experiences intrapersonal communication. We seem to be able to communicate with ourselves. We conduct dialogues with ourselves; we debate with ourselves; we sometimes talk aloud to ourselves—and answer ourselves. When we carefully analyze this intrapersonal communication behavior, we discover that the communication occurs between roles, is a complex form of interpersonal communication transactions. In intrapersonal communication a persona not only acts toward the self as a person would act toward others, but also imagines how he or she would act toward the self if he or she assumed other roles."15.

An intrapersonal communication experience is a transaction in which one role in the situation is the experienced self and the other role is the self- projected into a different imagined role. "The dialogue that a person carries on with himself or herself is a dialogue between two imagined roles"16. (Smith/Williamson, Interpersonal Communication, 1985,p.147-8). The question we should ask revolves around whether there is an ethic attached to the way we regard and present ourselves? We have all heard the phrase, *To thine own self be true.* With regards to ethics, where does the self, end and where should our consideration of ethics begin? Is self-deception an ethical consideration? Think of all the drama queens who live in their own world or the narcissistic people who are so overly concerned with themselves that they can discuss little else. They definitely affect interpersonal relationships and the problem lies in their intrapersonal communication. Few books have been written on the subject of intrapersonal communication. What To Say When You Talk To Yourself,(Helmstetter, 1987, 1990), is one of the few books which discusses, in depth, the way we should regard and approach our communication with ourselves. There is virtually nothing included in the discussion of intrapersonal communication which includes a complete treatment of ethics. Some researchers point to value theory when addressing the issue of self-concept. "Each of us has an identity we try to live up to. For Rokeach, the clearest reflection of people's identities is their values . . . Not only do we need to be true to private images of self, most of us also need to present favorable public images." 17.(Trenholm and Jensen, Interpersonal Communication 1992, p. 156-8). In short, individuals possess a need for self-respect. The need for a discussion of ethics is essential when learning how to interact with others in any type of relationship. Most would agree that we have an individual responsibility when we communicate interpersonally with others. All the theories which are considered to be interpersonal in nature from those dealing with trust, lying, conversations, language usage, ambiguity, unfair treatment of others during conflict situations, self-disclosure, nonverbal communication, listening, to influencing others in our relationships, have a potential connection to ethics. When we are told to treat others as we would like to be treated, we are assuming an implied ethic. After creating an awareness that most people value standards in relating to one another, it is important for the student to be able to explore issues which are directly related to ethics. The views of pluralism, relativism, absolutism, subjectivism, objectivism as well monasticism subject the student to different philosophical treatments of ethics. Exposure to these different views could stimulate thinking with regards to ethical principles. This could result in the student learning not only an appropriate behavior in relating to others, but it could also be the reason it is important to understand the principles underlying the motivation to act.

Like intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, small group communication could easily provide a vehicle for discussing ethical applications. Considerations for ethics in small group decisions are included in Gouran's summary:
1) Did we show proper respect for those who will be affected by the process?
2) Did we explore the discussion question as responsibly as we are capable of doing?
3) Did we misrepresent any position or misuse any source of information?
4) Did we say or do anything that might have unnecessarily diminished any participant's self-worth?
5) Was everyone in the group shown the respect due him or her?
   (Johannesen, 1990, p. 148) 18.

All these suggestions indicate a method of addressing ethics in our dealing with others and in our problem solving. Through role playing, the classroom can provide the opportunity to discover and analyze our ethical choices.

For a few moments, visualize a classroom situation where a small group of students have created a hypothetical scenario which contains several ethical considerations and which calls for individual input into a group decision which will potentially affect all individuals in the group. The scenario takes place in the workplace. The group consists of individuals who are responsible for keeping track of the books for an organization. The group's boss has been known to take money out of the organization's accounts in order to take important clients to lunch or to encourage involvement in various expensive endeavors all aimed at impressing the client. The intention of the boss is to "wine and dine" the client, eventually landing the account then, returning the money to the appropriate organizational account. In the meantime, the organization has not missed the initial outlay of money, the entire department gains credibility for securing such a large additional account and everyone in the department prospers as a result. In the past, department members have received raises when new accounts have been obtained by the boss .The problem is that on this particular day, the auditors are visiting and there is not time for the boss to put the money back. The groups' decision revolves around whether the group should cover for their boss by covering up the missing money, altering the books, and helping their boss and themselves as a department, in the process. The group members spent a long time discussing what should be done and what their individual responsibilities should be. Questions of how loyal they should be to the boss; how much trouble the entire department could have as a result of the actions of the boss; how much would the group stand to lose if they turned the boss into the auditors; and what individuals in the group would forfeit if the problem was discovered. All the individuals knew of the boss's past activities with regards to tampering with the accounts and none of the department members had ever said anything because they were sure the boss's intentions were good and he meant to return the money. They had all profited from the risk the boss had taken and this had made the members feel they had all played a part in the activities.

After careful deliberation and much discussion, the group decided that it would not tell the auditors about the missing money. The group thought the entire group had too much to lose and they should be loyal to the boss who had actually helped their department and the individual members through his actions. After all, they reasoned, the boss did not hurt anyone and it would be a shame for the boss to lose his job when his intentions were essentially good. Even though a couple of group members (a definite minority) thought the boss's actions were wrong, no one individual was able to influence anyone in the group to speak to the auditors. The group decided to remain silent and if the auditors discovered the problem, the entire group would cover for the boss.

As the description of the problem ensued, and the players became clear, and all the possible ways of solving the problem began to unfold, one had to pause to evaluate the process. There was very little, if any, discussion regarding the rightness or wrongness of the situation. Members did not visibly display periods of being uncomfortable due to cognitive dissonance or agonize over what to do in the situation. The discussion was relatively short and fairly clear-cut. The final decision was surprising. The rest of the class was asked to comment, in writing, regarding the group discussion and the final group outcome was even more of a surprise when the entire class agreed that the group had reached the appropriate decision. As group members, they, too, would have agreed with the group decision. Only one or two individuals out of the entire class thought what had been done was unethical and that the decision tended to go against their individual ethical standards.
 It is possible that the decision which was rendered in connection with the above mentioned scenario was a product of a "Groupthink" ethic? According to Johannesen, "Groupthink" is the collective label used by social psychologist Irving Janis to describe characteristics of small groups whose processes of problem-solving and policy determination typically result in ineffectiveness, low quality decisions and a failure to attain objectives (Johannesen, 1990, p. 148). 19. Individuals usually feel safer in a group situation and many

times allow the group to impose standards and take risks which the individual, on his own, would not normally take. The small group situation is an excellent place to discuss individual verses the small group ethic.
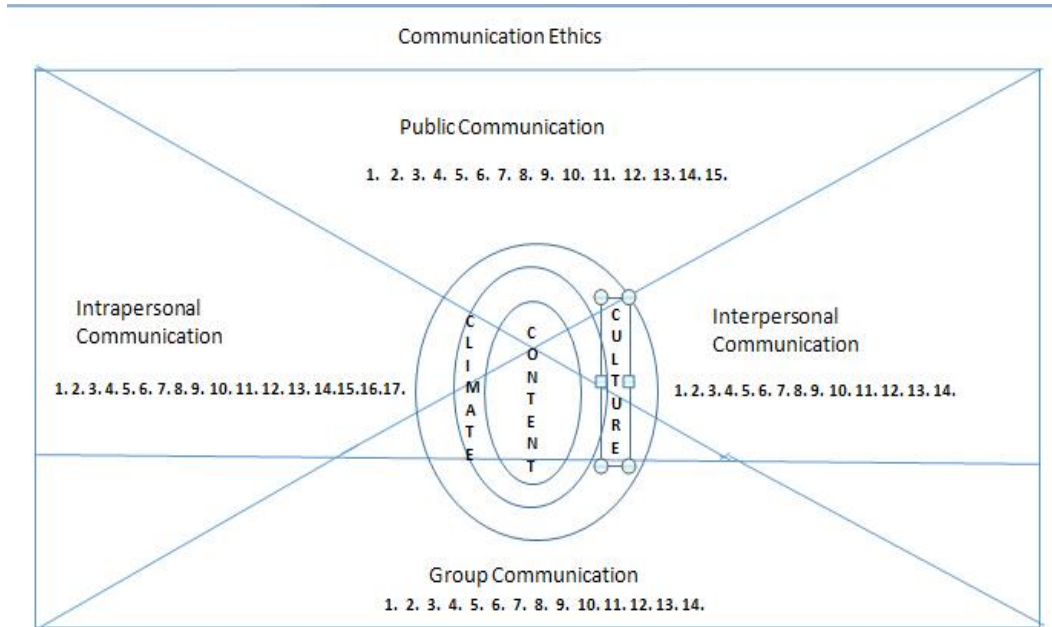
Public Communication, which includes public speaking and the media as well as social media and advertising, certainly is a place where ethics should be observed and closely scrutinized. "Ethics is the branch of philosophy that deals with issues of right and wrong in human affairs. Questions of ethics arise whenever we ask whether a course of action is moral or immoral, fair or unfair, just or unjust, honest or dishonest."20 (Lucas, The Art of Public Speaking, 11th edition, 2012, p. 30). As parents, is it ethical to do your child's homework for him or her? Should you fight your child's battles in conflict situations or would it be better to let him handle the situation himself, even at the risk of failure? In college, should you, as parent, show up to fill out your child's class schedule and complete the interview with your child's advisor or would it be better to let your child voice his own opinions and concerns. Parents who go to these lengths to do everything for their children are referred to as *helicopter parents*, always hovering over the child so that failure is not an issue. One may not think of completing registration for your college student as an ethical issue but the more you do for your child when the child should be doing the task himself, the more you insure ultimate dependence on you, the parent, and the inability for the child to function in society as a normal, decision-making adult. No wonder so many children are remaining at home into their twenties, thirties and beyond. It may not just be a matter of economic despair but a matter of losing the ability to survive on one's own and be responsible. It is no wonder that employers are neglecting to hire children who bring their parents to their job interview. It is even more surprising when those same parents return to the employer to demand to know why their child did not get the job. When parental involvement reaches this level, it is not only damaging to the child's ability to develop self-confidence but eliminates the "voice" of the child completely. The child ceases to have an opinion, stops participating in conversations, and eventually feels as if he or she has nothing to contribute. Instead of helping the child avoid failure by never letting the child experience and deal with it, the parent is ensuring a lifetime of complete failure for their offspring by eliminating coping mechanisms. The children will not be able to solve problems or deal with conflict, effectively, when it comes their way because they have been robbed of the experience of trial and error. This doesn't just happen when students go to college but it goes back to childhood when parents neglect to correct and discipline their children. This lack of correction causes the boundaries which should be clear in childhood to never be established and the result is the child's feelings of exceptionalism continues to be the dominant, operational variable. When an individual grows up thinking, I can do anything I want to, without exception, it leads to unethical acts and random acts of violence by that individual. When this becomes a universal way of life in a society, it leads to the ultimate breakdown of that society.

Therefore, the teaching of ethics and ethical principles should be taught in childhood. The philosophy of the classical ethicists such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Protagoras, Pythagoras, Zeno, Parmenides, and Heraclitus, to name a few, should provide a basis for our ethical framework. The importance of later philosophers such as John Stuart Mill, Martin Buber, and Immanuel Kant cannot be underestimated. When teaching children, we used to have Aesop's Fables and stories which taught moral lessons and ways to behave. The stories had lessons which taught children the difference between right and wrong. These teachings began in the home and persisted throughout the school years. Now, there is not a comparable set of lessons and little to no teaching at home. Some might argue that there are those who are home schooled and so they learn everything at home. However, the regulations governing home schooling vary widely and there is no question that the lack of socialization of home- schooled students is paralyzing to their growth into adulthood. Again, the student is learning what is outlined by the parent and little else. What is being passed down through the generations are the narrow views of the parents on religion, politics and world view. When we engage in public communication we should consider managing information accurately, avoiding plagiarism, and understanding our audience.

Perhaps we should consider a model of ethics for use in contemporary communication. The following model depicts **intrapersonal communication** (communication with the self); **interpersonal communication** (communication with another person or persons); **small group communication**(communication with 5-7 people, ideally); and **public communication** (communication with an audience, including media, social media, and advertising.)

Model of Ethics with Contemporary Communications
Webb, 2015

Communication Ethics

Public Communication

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15.

Intrapersonal Communication

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17.

CLIMATE   CONTENT   CULTURE

Interpersonal Communication

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14.

Group Communication

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14.

Beginning with **Intrapersonal Communication**, the numbers in the model correspond to the following factors:

1. Develop Self-Honesty
2. Take Responsibility for Self
3. Develop Accurate Self- Perception
4. Develop Self-Respect
5. Improve Self-Awareness
6. Distinguish Between Right and Wrong
7. Manage Information Accurately
8. Avoid Pre-judgements
9. Manage Disclosures Appropriately
10. Use Language Accurately
11. Respect Time
12. Listen Ethically
13. Learn To Like Self
14. Be Kind in Self Talk
15. Manage Technology (Social Media, Gaming) Accurately and Responsibly
16. Develop Self-Discipline
17. Be Aware of Cultural Influences

Interpersonal Communication:
1. Treat others with Honesty and Kindness
2. See Others Point of View

3. Distinguish Between Right and Wrong
4. Manage Disclosures Appropriately
5. Respect Time
6. Use Language Accurately
7. Manage Information Accurately
8. Create and Observe Boundaries
9. Manage Technology (Social Media, Gaming) Accurately and Responsibly
10. Listen Ethically
11. Create a Positive Climate with Others
12. Manage Conflict Effectively
13. Be Aware of Cultural Influences
14. Avoid Pre-judgment.

Small Group Communication:
l. Be a Responsible Group Leader
2. Be a Responsible Group Member
3. Be an Ethical Listener
4. Manage Conflict Effectively
5. Manage Disclosures Appropriately
6. Manage Information Accurately
7. Manage Technology (Social Media, Gaming) Accurately and Responsibly
8. Distinguish Between Right and Wrong
9. Avoid "Group Think"
10. Be responsible in Commitment to Group
11. Create a positive Group Climate
12. Manage Language Accurately and Appropriately
13. Be Aware of Cultural Influences
14. Avoid Plagiarism

Public Communication
l. Manage Public Image Accurately
2. Distinguish Between Right and Wrong
3. Manage Technology (Social Media, Gaming) Accurately and Responsibly
4. Manage Language Accurately and Appropriately
5. Be an Ethical Listener
6. Avoid Plagiarism
7. Select Goals that are Ethically Sound
8. Manage Information Accurately
9. Manage Disclosures Appropriately
10. Respect your Audience
11. Avoid Pre-judgment
12. Respect Time
13. Manage Conflict Effectively
14. Create a positive Communication Climate
15. Be Aware of Cultural Influences

Regarding the case of Freddie Grey and the six police officers who have been indicted in connection to his death, the ethical quotation, "With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility,"21. should come to mind. (Voltaire, French Philospher,Vol. 48, Lefeure, 1832   ). Did the group's actions and decisions out- weigh and override any individual, ethical choice? Did "groupthink" prevail where individual ethical decisions failed to dominate the situation? Regarding the shooting of his own sons on a college campus, Douglas Pennington could have followed the sentiments of the quotation found in the Bible in Luke 12:48 when it expresses the idea "from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one

who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."22. He had been entrusted with the well-being and care of his sons. Did he have the right to end their lives because he didn't agree with their individual choices?

The importance of attaching ethics to our interpersonal theories to provide a foundation for the development of a personal ethical system is evident. If we truly want future generations to behave responsibly toward one another and to consider the greater good of the whole society, then we must help them understand what the study of ethics has to offer. It must be demonstrated that there is a need for each individual to be aware of his or her own system of ethics and to understand that we are not always on even playing fields in intrapersonal, interpersonal, public or group situations. Awareness of the ethics of others will help us understand how to proceed more effectively in our relationships. The criterion for interpersonal ethics should not be substantially different when we move from intrapersonal, to interpersonal, small group to public communication. We may be in a different role but our ethical foundation does not need to be compromised because we cross over into business, politics, or religion.

We are living in a time when we cannot afford to jeopardize our futures because of inferior relationships and low quality decisions. The lack of ethical knowledge and ethical application in our lives, has already taken its toll. The results can be seen in the way we regard each other, in our attitudes, and actions toward others. It is no wonder we are cynical in our approach to life. Our societies are suffering. Our global relations are ineffective. These are critical public issues. A continued and successful future depends on what we create, today. The answer to better relationships may be in the creation and development of a sound ethical foundation.

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