

Communication Research Bulletin

School of Communication Western Michigan University

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—School of Communication Visiting Scholars Program

LEADERSHIP EXPERT TO PRESENT “LEADING IN 24/7”

Sally Helgesen, an internationally acclaimed author, speaker, and leadership consultant, will present “Leading in 24/7: Six Key Trends Transforming Organizations” from noon to 1 p.m. on Wed., March 25, 2009.

In her talk, Helgesen will explore five trends that are transforming organizations and show what these trends will mean for leaders in the years ahead. The presentation is open to the public and free of charge, with location announced closer to the speaking date.



Sally Helgesen

“My research has convinced me that radical social change is reshaping work and opportunity in today’s global 24/7 environment.

To achieve success, leaders must understand the causes, impact, and implications of this revolution,” states Helgesen on her website, Sally.Helgesen.com. “My aim is to help leaders reach this understanding and translate it into a strategic agenda that moves their organization powerfully forward.”

Helgesen has authored five books on leadership and related topics, including *The Web of Inclusion: A New Architecture for Building Great Organizations*, which was cited in The Wall Street Journal as one of the best books on leadership of all time.

She is perhaps best known for authoring, *The*

Female Advantage: Women’s Ways of Leadership, a book hailed as “the classic work” on women’s leadership styles. *The Female Advantage* has been continually in print for 18 years and translated into 12 languages.

In addition to her writing, Helgesen remains active in leadership consulting. She has developed and delivered programs for hundreds of the world’s leading corporations, partnership firms, universities, and non-profits. Clients include Microsoft, Johnson & Johnson, Ernst & Young, Sun Microsystems, KPMG, US Army College of War, and The World Bank, She also works privately with senior executives and owners of small but highly successful businesses as a strategic communications coach.

“My research has convinced me that radical social change is reshaping work and opportunity in today’s global 24/7 environment.

Helgesen has taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Smith College and has worked with The United Nations in Africa and Asia. Articles about her work have been featured in *Fortune*, *Business Week*, and *Fast Company*, and

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Leadership expert, continued from page 1 she has appeared on hundreds of television and radio shows. She is a contributing editor to *Strategy + Business* magazine, an editorial consultant for Booz Allen Hamilton, and served on the board of Air War University, a federal advisory position.

The WMU School of Communication has a

The WMU School of Communication has a unique connection with Helgesen.

unique connection with Helgesen. She is the daughter of Charles Helgesen, a former

Communication professor who coached debate and taught public address, argumentation, and persuasion for more than 35 years in what was then called the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences.

UNDERSTANDING NEWSROOM CULTURE FROM MEDIA COVERAGE OF JOURNALISTIC SCANDALS

While corporate and political scandals reported in the media tend to capture public attention, the media itself is no stranger to ethical missteps or dishonesty. Plagiarism and fraudulent reporting, especially by high-profile journalists working for reputable news outlets, are also

topics that command news headlines.



Sarah Ling Wei Lee

According to Sarah Ling Wei Lee, a graduate student in the School of Communication, examining the media's coverage of its own scandals provides useful insights into newsroom culture.

Lee conducted a pilot study of the discourse describing newsroom culture at the *USA Today* as portrayed by news

stories about the 2004 Jack Kelley media scandal. Kelley, a star reporter and long-time journalist at the *USA Today*, resigned from the newspaper after it was revealed that he had fabricated stories and plagiarized news material. Experts who conducted the *USA Today*'s internal investigation found that an organizational culture of fear pervaded the newsroom and contributed to the newspaper's failure to catch Kelley's ethical transgressions.

Lee analyzed the content of 16 popular press articles about the scandal—specifically the use of “culture” and “fear” as metaphors—to identify how journalists made sense of the fiasco and framed it in their news stories. “Metaphors are aspects of language that people use to understand their experiences,” said Lee. “In an organizational culture context, metaphors reveal the assumptions, values, and practices that dominate an organization. I wanted to know how the culture and fear metaphors figured into the media's interpretations of the

scandal.”

Her study findings showed that the culture metaphor was used in all 16 articles to describe the *USA Today*'s newsroom environment and 11 of the 16 articles used the fear metaphor, often in conjunction with the term culture. Further, the news stories often reported specific events and behaviors to support the presence of a culture of fear in the newsroom. For example, some accounts suggested that the power of celebrity journalism made *USA Today* newsroom staffers reluctant to question Kelley's suspicious behaviors because of fear of embarrassment and negative retribution.

“The study results indicate that culture is an important metaphor when it comes to explaining the newsroom environment and how it contributes to the way news is created and disseminated,” said Lee. “Newsroom culture plays a role in shaping the behaviors and perceptions of reporters, editors, and other news workers. By first completely understanding the organizational culture, media employees and managers may be better

Newsroom culture plays a role in shaping the behaviors and perceptions of reporters, editors, and other news workers

able to bring about positive change.”

Lee presented her work at a poster session at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference held in Washington DC in August, 2007. After graduating in June, 2008, with a master's degree in communication, Lee will pursue a doctorate in communication at Wayne State University in Detroit.

Lee, S. L. W. (2007, August). *Framing newsroom culture: A metaphor analysis of the media reporting on the Jack Kelley scandal at USA Today*. Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington DC.



Dr. Sandra L. Borden

CULTIVATING VIRTUE MAY RESTORE VIBRANCY TO JOURNALISM

Insights drawn from communication ethics can provide answers to how journalism can thrive in the 21st Century, according to School of Communication Professor Sandra L. Borden. She argues that focusing on journalism as a virtuous practice can help journalists better withstand the moral challenges posed when corporate media conglomerates commodify the news to achieve global market dominance.

In the book, *Journalism as Practice: MacIntyre, Virtue Ethics and the Press*, Borden explores how journalists are placed in an ethical bind as they try to contribute to the common good while simultaneously responding to heightened pressures to report stories that contribute to a profitable bottom line. She contends that journalists need to develop and promote *journalism as practice*—a robust group identity based on shared goals to create common civic knowledge and an informed public.

For decades, the news has increasingly become a product to be shaped according to market tastes; where advertising resources, circulation rates, and political agendas may dictate the information provided by the media. “Commodification can create

situations in which journalists’ performance may be unduly influenced by non-journalistic interests,” Borden said. “For example, reporters may avoid or soften news stories if they believe that an unspoken company rule exists that particular stories will turn off advertisers. Today’s corporate media culture supports behavior based on economic gain, rather than on journalism’s responsibilities to the common good, and that culture affects journalists’ ethical choices.”

Borden advocates that journalists turn to the idea of a practice—an established cooperative activity in which one exercises virtue by achieving shared goods—to give them a sense of moral purpose. Drawing on journalism’s tradition, Borden develops a theory of journalism that provides guidance to journalists aspiring to moral excellence in news writing and reporting. She argues that *journalism as practice* can successfully support individual journalists who resist ethically questionable business requirements.

“Multiple social, economic, and political factors in the United States endanger good journalism,” said Borden. “This book seeks to raise awareness of this climate and provide a framework, based on communication ethics theory and research, that promotes journalists’ ideals and inspires citizens to rally around good journalism.”

The book also offers suggestions to journalists to counter negative market forces. Potential alliances with non-journalists and grass-roots organizing through the Internet offer potential avenues

through which journalists may overcome institutional barriers that prevent the pursuit of journalistic goals.

Borden, who specializes in communication and media ethics, joined the School of Communication in 1996. She is the co-director of the WMU Center for the Study of Ethics in Society and the faculty sponsor of WMU’s nationally-ranked Ethics Bowl team. Borden worked as journalist for several years prior to her academic career, writing and editing for newspapers including the *Jackson (Tennessee) Sun*.

Borden, S. L., (2008). *Journalism as Practice: MacIntyre, Virtue Ethics and the Press*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing.

~~Editor’s Note:~~ *Journalism as Practice: MacIntyre, Virtue Ethics and the Press* has been awarded the **2008 Clifford G. Christians Ethics Research Award**, which “recognizes scholarship highlighting important theoretical issues in the areas of ethics, mass communication theory, and the relationship between media and technology and culture.”

The award, given annually by the Carl Couch Center for Social and Internet Research, is named after communication ethics scholar Clifford G. Christians and honors his influential work. Borden’s name will be added to the award plaque that is housed at Christian’s institution, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Information at: www.cccsir.org/award_ch.htm.

KIDS COMMUNICATING WEBSITE LAUNCHED BY COM FACULTY

Dr. Autumn Edwards and Dr. Chad Edwards have created a new program designed to reach children earlier and help them develop an interest in communication sooner.

If you look at any list of the top qualities an employer seeks in a potential employee, communication will be in the top 10. Communication is an essential skill that many elementary schools are not teaching and incorporating in their curriculums. That is where the idea of Kids Communicating came from, the need to teach communication to young students.

The goal of Kids Communicating is to facilitate the integration of communication curriculum into K-3 education. The communication curriculum for early elementary students is based upon skills and competencies identified and set forth by the National Communication Association.

More information about this program can be found at www.kidscommunicating.org or by sending an e-mail to the creators at chad.edwards@wmich.edu or autumn.edwards@wmich.edu.



"Kids Communicating has been one of the most rewarding projects I have worked on in my college career. Not only has it allowed me to apply many of the concepts that I have learned in my communication classes, it has also given me the opportunity to impact the kids in our community by preparing them to be effective communicators."

*—Katherine Linder
Organizational Communication major*

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