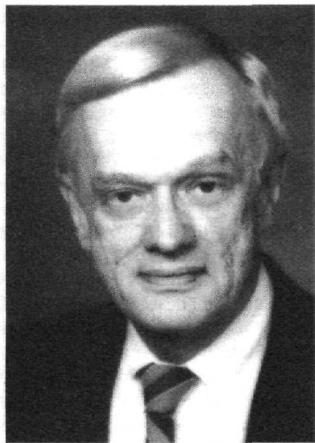*The 1996 SCA Presidential Address*

# Unity in Diversity: Multiculturalism, Guilt/Victimage, and a New Scholarly Orientation

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**James W. Chesebro**

SCA presidential addresses exist within a context not totally under the control of an SCA President. I know of no SCA president who felt she or he had constructed the system we call SCA. Nor do I know of an SCA president who felt he or she could control this system. An SCA president enters an ongoing dialogue created by all of the members of the discipline of communication. The origins of this ongoing dialogue may not be known with confidence. Certainly, one SCA president does not resolve or terminate the dialogue. At best, an SCA presidential address makes one contribution to this ongoing dialogue.

Accordingly, I have examined how other SCA presidents have approached this address. In part, my remarks stem from four topics that other SCA presidents have explored. One of these topics was raised by SCA President Glenn N. Merry,[1] in his 1922 presidential address, when he suggested that the "way of growth" for the discipline required "specialization," and he specifically suggested the formal recognition and creation of seven specializations within the field. More recently, in his 1993 presidential address in Miami, David Zarefsky's analysis was particularly important to me because it focused so closely on community, a topic I will be dealing with in this presentation. And, Bruce Gronbeck's 1994 address in New Orleans was critical, because it examined issues minority groups are confronting. And, Sharon Ratliffe's 1995 address in San Antonio was equally relevant, for I also believe that we must create a "web" and sense "of inclusion" for all SCA members.

These four topics—specialization, community, minority and marginalized groups, and inclusion—govern a significant part of my remarks this afternoon.

But, this listing of topics misses the mark. The essence of my meanings today are reflected in seven conversations I have had this year. These are personal conversations, but the personal can be very political.

One of these conversation was with Bonnie Ritter who recounted the origins of the Women's Caucus in 1971 and 1972 with the charm and warmth that has always characterized her conversations. Another conversation was with Jack Daniel who urged me to read *Changing the Players and the Game*, a volume which ends on Jack's belief that, "Our challenge is not to 'build our dynasties' by using the Eurocentric models that have oppressed and silenced us, but to . . . build foundations upon which the next generations can build."[2] I also chatted with Sally Gearhart, herself a "Hill Woman,"[3] and an enduring wonder and joy to all who are fortunate enough to know her. And, at the 1995 SCA convention, I chatted with Fred Jandt on a convention program which allowed Fred and I to shamelessly reminisce in public. And, in March, I chatted with my dear friend of twenty-five years, Joe Ferri, who died in July of this year. Finally, chats with Gordon Nakagawa and Tom Nakayama revealed, as always, their extraordinary sensibilities and their sensitivities.

While apparently unrelated, these seven conversations were held with the founders, respectively, of the SCA Women's Caucus, the Black Caucus, the Gay/Lesbian Caucus, La Raza Caucus, and the Asian Pacific American Caucus.

My meanings today arise from the power and essence of these caucuses and from what they mean to SCA. But, more broadly and pointedly, I want to deal today with how multiculturalism affects SCA and all of its members. Particularly, I want to focus on how multiculturalism affects each of us as individual scholars within the discipline of communication, how multiculturalism affects our sense of organization and the sense of unity and division that goes with such organizational schemes, how multiculturalism affects the policies and actions of SCA, and finally how multiculturalism affects the definition of SCA as a moral, ethical, and political professional education association. Of all of these specific objectives, if I were to articulate one overall and governing thesis statement for this presentation, it would be that multiculturalism should be treated as a scholarly, not a political, issue in SCA.

## The Centrality of Cultural Diversity

Certainly, we need to recognize the emergence of cultural diversity in the United States and in SCA. What we mean by cultural diversity is itself an object of study within our journals.[5] However, the National Multicultural Institute[6] informs us that the task of "building personal and professional competence in a multicultural society" requires that we recognize five sources and origins of this multicultural society, specifically: race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age.[7] Proactive and dynamic, in Rosteck's terms, a multicultural system is a "culture" in "process—shifting, unequal, endless contention and conflict among traditional and emerging voices, institutions, and ideologies." Coming of age in 1972,[8] multiculturalism positions itself in opposition to anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism.[9] I view anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism as independent prejudices. While they can be treated as related, I find it more useful to view each as a discrete prejudice, each possessing its own independent logic system, each positing an alternative conception and structure of reality, and each employing a distinct symbol system.[10]

In SCA, multiculturalism has been institutionalized in the Association's caucuses. The oldest caucuses have been active in SCA for over twenty-five years. During the last five years, the caucuses have been among the fasting growing units in SCA, growing at annual rates of 9 to 31 percent. By January of this year, in 1996, almost half of the membership of SCA, some 42% of SCA members, had affiliated with a caucus.[11] While not their primary responsibility, the caucuses have also been active at SCA conventions, and this year, they sponsored over 110 convention programs.[12]

## Multiculturalism as Diversity

But, these five multicultural factors are affecting more than the demographic profile of the United States and SCA. These multicultural factors are also transforming the cultures of both the United States and SCA. These cultural transformations are generating dramatic changes in the nature of communication. Our symbol-using represents but is also creating these cultural transformations. In all, multiculturalism has changed who communicates, when they communicate, where they communication, how they communicate, and, perhaps more profoundly, what is said. More people, of different voices, of different cultures, and of different orientations, are speaking today than ever before. They speak with intensity. They speak with conviction. They speak with insight.

## Multiculturalism as Divisive

As communication specialists, we should also note that these voices are goaded by different objectives and purposes. Their strategies differ. Their styles vary radically and in kind. And, they each speak for different issues, different policies, different platforms, different programs of action, and

different moral principles. In all, a single sociopolitical context is generating a tremendous variety of different meanings of what exists, how we are to understand it, and how we are to respond to it.

Moreover, even among the advocates of multiculturalism, a "politically correct" voice is difficult, if not impossible, to hear. A charge of sexism can easily carry racial and homophobic overtones. An accusation of racism may support a sexist and homophobic context. And, an allegation of homophobic behavior can carry sexist and racial intonations. No one is immune any longer from the moral and political implications created in a multicultural environment. There is no "politically correct" rhetoric. We simply cannot find an "safe" discourse, for we are dealing with profound forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism that exists within each of us.

### Objectives in a Multicultural Environment

While important observations, I am equally convinced that we need to address these observations in other terms or other ways. Particularly, I think we need to determine how we can achieve two objectives. First, because we are only at the inception of a profound sociocultural change, we need to sustain the quest for diversity and incorporate it into the discipline. But, we must be motivated by an equally important second objective. We must guarantee that this multiculturalism is accompanied by a healing metaphor. As a rhetorical system, multiculturalism must unify, allow members of the discipline to mobilize and to act in concert as a community of scholars. In all, multiculturalism should function paradoxically. It will create both unity and division, or community and cultural diversity. These dual goals of community and cultural diversity must both our simultaneous—although sometimes oxymoronic and contradictory—objectives as a professional education association.

To realize both of these objectives, we need to begin with the realization that multiculturalism is growing in SCA, and it can be of tremendous benefit to the individual members of SCA, to SCA as an organization, and to the discipline of communication.

### The Value of Multiculturalism to the Discipline of Communication

In my view, multiculturalism will be beneficial to us in five ways.

First, multiculturalism alters the research foundation or data base of the discipline of communication. Increasingly, all audiences are becoming multicultural in direct face-to-face communication and through mediated communication systems. As audiences change, they are becoming more multicultural. Accordingly, the research foundation for the discipline must also undergo transformations. We need, as a result, to reconsider the evidence we have used. The subjects for our research have predominantly been based upon the culture of Caucasian European subjects. These subjects are losing their status as the majority, and within a relatively short period of time, they will no longer constitute 51 percent of the population in the United States. Accordingly, our most basic research claims about what persuades, what is logical, what makes a speaker credible, and what is emotionally appealing and satisfying, all need to be re-examined and reconsidered as multicultural audiences increasingly dominate speaker-audience interactions.

Second, multiculturalism constitutes a foundation for testing the reliability and validity of generalizations or theories within the discipline of communication. By definition, generalizations and theories within the discipline of communication are formulate to account for different situations and even different cultures. We may be confident that our generalizations and theories will "pass the mustard" when tested. But, as multiculturalism emerges, the testing of the reliability and validity of generalizations and theories will become more reasonable, if not urgent.

Third, multiculturalism will make certain issues far more important in terms of the future of the discipline of communication. For example, within a multicultural context, we will increasingly be concerned with determining how polysemic message are. In other words, we will be increasingly concerned with determining the conditions under which audience members attribute diverse meanings to the same symbols. Some of the scholars within our discipline have already argued that the mass media are stimulating the development of polysemic tendencies among audiences.[13] Other scholars believe that, under certain circumstances, a message can be constructed to constrain and inhibit the tendency of audiences to attribute different meanings to the same message.[14] This issue has yet to be resolved. More important, from my perspective here, is that the issue is a product of the emergence of multicultural audiences. And, as multicultural audiences

are increasingly recognized, an increasing number of issues will be generated by these new audiences, displacing other issues that had previously occupied our attention.

Fourth, as multiculturalism becomes more central to the discipline of communication, we will be more prepared, as scholars, to view communication within an international perspective and to engage in research undertakings within an international context. Of course, we are already aware that communication flows and patterns are now international. The global village is a product of the development of international media and communication systems. Newer communication systems—including all computerized and Internet systems—are global in nature. Multiculturalism prepares us for the cultural differences encountered when studying international communication systems.

Fifth and finally, multiculturalism provides us with an opportunity to re-examine our system of communication ethics. In his 1995 SCA Keynote Address, Molefi Asanti argued boldly and simply that we need to eliminate meanness in our interactions. Cultural intolerance, he maintained, has no place within an academic community.[15] Dr. Asanti's analysis suggests a direction relevant for the development of an ethic for a multicultural professional communication association.[16]

In greater detail, traditionally, the discipline has prescribed that it is ethical for communicators intentionally to change the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of audiences for their own ends. These persuasive encounters might, it was recognized, mean that resources were reallocated at the expense of different groups as well as create a hierarchy among different groups. Within a monocultural system, it has been reasoned, communicators could accept the responsibility of trying to change the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of others, because, as participants with lived-experiences within the same culture, the sociopolitical meanings of changes could be anticipated and predicted.

However, a multicultural context alters the ability of communicators to predict the impact of any change in attitude, belief, and action. In many respects, the decision to propose a change in attitudes, beliefs, and actions has always constituted a form of social engineering. In a multicultural context, social engineering can be viewed as presuming that one culture's preferences should dominate other cultural systems. Until we are more confident of how a change affects another cultural system, the system of communication ethics that our discipline promotes should probably avoid any metaphor involving social engineering.

In the meantime, we can reasonably propose—as a system of communication ethics—that communication can and should be viewed as personally expressive, frequently as a reflection of a cultural orientation, and that all changes generated by communication must be understood within these contexts. Indeed, as I have thought about it for some time now, Dr. Asanti may have fashioned a short-hand ethic for us: *A communication system should discourage meanness.*

In these five ways, I believe that the discipline of communication can benefit by exploring and incorporating multiculturalism into its orientation. That's my view. But, I am also convinced that we make our own future as a discipline. We could decide that multiculturalism isolates and divides us. Or, we can decide that multiculturalism will be a cause of celebration, an opportunity to renew, a moment to reconsider and create exciting new links among ourselves.

### Communication Strategies to Realize a Multicultural Association

At this point it is appropriate to identify the strategies that can be used to transform SCA into a multicultural professional education association. I wish that I could isolate three or four clear and explicit strategies that would facilitate the transition to an multicultural association. I cannot. I doubt that anyone can. Multiculturalism deals with some of the most sensitive issues, questions of basic identity, respect for differences, the meaning of minimum rights, and how profound cultural differences can be integrated into a seamless system.

I am, however, sure that the strategies we use to deal with multiculturalism will depend upon our orientation toward change, how much we care about others, how much we are willing to explore what others feel and know, even when all of these variables differ dramatically from our own experiences and understandings. And, I firmly believe that we can begin to foster conceptions that will allow us work together toward the creation of a multicultural association.

# Chesebro gives 1996 SCA Presidential Address

These communication strategies are, for me, most effectively organized in terms of two basic clusters of motivations and actions. The first of these strategies I identify as a *guilt* cluster. The second cluster of strategies deals with *victimage*. In my view, these two frames of reference do not exhaust all of the strategic options, but these two clusters are complementary and account for vocal and significant voices affected by cultural transformations. In this regard, one of these clusters—the *guilt* frame—deals with some of those who have inhibited the development of a multicultural association, most frequently—I believe—by inaction rather than explicit discriminatory practices. The second cluster—the *victim* cluster—deals with the symbol-using of some minorities and marginalized groups who have sought to transform SCA into a more completely multicultural association. Let me deal with the guilt cluster first.

### Guilt

As I mentioned earlier, I think the primary way in which we inhibit the development of a multicultural association is by inaction. Let me share a personal experience. Earlier this year, I participated in a workshop on multiculturalism on our campus. These workshops promote self-disclosures. One of the participant's revelations are relevant here. As a mother raising her children, she reported that she had never used a racial slur with her children. She carefully monitored incoming information to ensure that her children were never exposed to racial discriminations. But, she also never talked to her children about racial discrimination, its power, and its hateful implications. When her family had to deal with racial integration personally, she discovered, to her shock and amazement, that her children were racial bigots. Her conclusion: When dealing with discrimination, it is not enough to be passive: respect for differences is acquired only through active participation, interaction, and experiences with those from other cultures. As Harlan Lane has succinctly put it, "diversity isn't something that you should tolerate. It's something you should promote."[17]

More explicitly, multiculturalism can also create, for each of us, a sense of guilt or responsibility. Indeed, at one time or another, by our thoughts, by our language, by our behavior, each of us has been racist, sexist, and homophobic. It is never easy to admit that we have psychologically or physically abused another, dominated another, oppressed another. In part, our guilt is a measure of the pains and sufferings of others.

### Guilt and Remission

Insofar as guilt is to be transformed into remission, several actions should be taken.

First, multiculturalism needs to be examined as a scholarly communication issue. For those of Caucasian European descent, this exploration needs to be self-reflexive. Within the context of multiculturalism, Caucasian Europeans need to reflect on the origins and evolution of their own symbol system. Few explorations of Caucasian European symbol-using have been undertaken in the discipline of communication.[18] Martin, Krizek, Nakayama, and Bradford[19] have explored why "white Americans" resist self-labeling, and they have reported that this resistance is governed by a strong "sense [of] the power of ideology" because being "white" has traditionally been related to having a tremendous range of choices in all areas of life. In another context, Oliver[20] has reported that "Caucasian" television viewers enjoyed "reality-based crime dramas" more if their favorite characters were "authoritarian" and if negative evaluations were offered of "African-American criminal suspects." Mumby has appropriately concluded that, "whiteness" itself is not "neutral and naturally given" but "rather is socially constructed through various discursive practices; representations of 'whiteness' thus can be deconstructed to unpack the processes of privileging and marginalization that are at work in such discourse."[21]

While provocative, such a view suggests that a host of issues might usefully be examined. I am increasingly convinced, for example, that we need to re-examine the origins of rhetoric in terms of its Greco-Roman heritage. Such an historical exploration might provide us with a way of asking if Caucasian European symbol-using, as a class, has a tendency toward excessive violence, oppression, and hierarchy. R. H. Barrow[22] has noted that 26 to 54 percent of the population of ancient Rome were slaves. In this context, we need to determine why the Caucasian European symbol system has fostered and sustained some of the most extensive systems of slavery.

Second, beyond a scholarly exploration of Caucasian European communication systems, as professionals, we need to explore and monitor more carefully alternative cultural communication systems. We need to actively seek out the SCA convention programs sponsored by SCA's various caucuses. Specifically, we need to be able to identify how symbol-using in different cultures fosters alternative ways of structuring reality and how these diverse structures call for different actions than we might normally have anticipated.

Third, we need to celebrate in the new intellectual breakthroughs and new discoveries generated by all cultural groupings. As respondents, our symbol system should certainly involve, in part, a deliberative reaction in which the potential or future usefulness of a scheme is assessed. Likewise, as respondents, our symbol system should certainly involve, in part, a forensic reaction in which cultural breakthroughs are viewed as historical reconstructions of the past. But, equally important, as respondents to the development of new cultural constructions in communication, we need to invoke the epideictic. Within our symbolic responses, we need to appreciate, in a child-like wonderment, the marvels of alternative ways of understanding.

Fourth, we need to avoid excessive senses of guilt. Our motives for understanding can be as important as what we learn. Guilt can motivate. But, it can also limit and inhibit learning. We have simply overworked guilt as a way of responding to cultural diversity. Shielding ourselves with politically correct discourse has prevented us from exploring new forms of symbol-using. We need to go beyond guilt. We need to adopt an alternative frame of reference. As we examine alternative cultural symbol systems, we need to approach what we study as the acts of friends. Our sense of responsibility should allow us to presume—at least initially—that alternative cultures have generated positive, supportive, and intriguing symbol systems.

Related to guilt are equally important questions of victimage. Victims should have as many options as the guilty.

### Victimage

Just as those experiencing guilt need to redefine themselves, victims of discrimination also need to reconsider their self-conception if we are to create a multicultural association. In my view, three strategies are particularly relevant to victims as a multicultural association is constructed.

First, and perhaps most important, the victim must be ready to use confrontation as a communication strategy. I am an optimist. I believe that there will be fewer justified uses of confrontations, for the targets themselves are less clear. Indeed, there is growing evidence that most "white males are unhappy," "have little power over anybody, and are simply struggling to get by."[23]

Nonetheless, it is critical to admit that victims are different than the guilty. We need to recognize the special conditions of those who have experienced discrimination and the pain that goes with discrimination. Accordingly, despite my optimism, I am certain that the confrontation strategy should *not* be dropped from the repertoire of available strategies. As far as I can tell, confrontation must remain a viable and ever-ready strategy for the foreseeable future for virtually every minority and marginalized group.

At the same time, confrontation is a strategy of limited value in a multicultural context. The strategy presumes and reinforces polarization, involves the use of some form of symbolic (psychological or physical) abuse, is a zero-sum power struggle, with short-term impact that in the long run ultimately precludes consensus as a mode of conflict resolution.[24] Moreover, for the individual confronting, the strategy is totalistic, creating a definition of the self solely as a victim.[25] Additionally, confrontations can confuse, for it is often difficult to determine if a confrontation has been initiated to correct an injustice or for revenge.

Yet, confrontation can be justified. Confrontation may be the only mode of self-defense available, and it is a necessary response to prior violence especially when no other mode of response exists.[26] In other words, some

people intentionally and knowingly cause others to suffer. In such situations, confrontation is required, and it requires a sense of self-strength, a genuine sensibility about the moral stance from which confrontation emerges, and the strength (power) and conviction (confidence) to employ a rhetoric of confrontation. In these situations, confrontations should be immediate, unqualified, and equal in intensity to the initial act of hate.

Despite the need to retain confrontation as an option, I am also convinced that victims can decide that they possess a range of strategies and options for creating a multicultural association. Assuming that confrontation can be bypassed, I think that two additional strategic options need to be considered.

As a second strategy, victims need to ask if the label *victim* has become all-consuming, an excessive rhetorical definition of the self, a form of maudlin self-indulgence.[27] In some respects, the word *victim* is like any other self-description. No single self-description can or should be viewed as complete and totalistic. Each of us is more than any one word can capture. In a broader sense, a single self-description can restrict choices rather than increase options. Accordingly, we need to assess self-identification as we would any other rhetorical effort. Our test is clear: *Does our rhetoric of self-definition increase—rather than decrease—the range of choices for describing, interpreting, and evaluating the self, others, and environment?* In other words, we need self-descriptions that keep the self open to change, open to variety and diversity labels, so that the responses of others can also influence our own sense of the self.

Beyond these notes on self-labeling, we should also report that the concept of a *victim* may be losing its rhetorical impact. In the popular media, the label *victim* is frequently perceived as overused. As John Stossel has noted, "We've created systems that encourage people to wallow in victimhood."[28] For others, the language of victimization is now equivalent to a kind of religion. Daphne Merkin has suggested that, "In our secular age, of course, issues of blame and moral judgment have yielded to a more lax form of discourse, which focuses on victimization to the exclusion of other factors." In more serious analyses, Wendy Kaminer has used the term *victimism* to reflect the personal or used the term *victimology* when employed as a political ideology. For Kaminer, these forms of victimism "demoralized men," "exaggerated resistance to equality," made "feminist appear to be man-haters" as well as "elevated ideology over scholarship" and therapy over teaching in the classroom.[29] In all, I am confident that the language of victimization simply lacks the rhetorical impact it once had. Indeed, the language of victimization may be inhibiting positive responses, and it has lead many to recommend that, if we are to act with responsibility, we must get "past the language of victimization."

### Victimage and Forgiveness

Beyond this strategy of redefinition, a third strategy may also be useful. It may now be necessary to forgive those who have previously inhibited the development of multiculturalism. Of course, forgiveness is never easy. Admittedly, nothing can be done to eliminate the pain and suffering that an act of discrimination can create. In this sense, forgiveness is difficult—if not impossible—to rationalize. It must be an act of trust, a form of risk-taking, that can occur only if a leap of faith is made. We need to forgive if we are to forge new relationships and create new opportunities for ourselves and our colleagues to experience cultural alternatives.

The only remaining issue is to determine if the time is right to forgive. All I can say at this point is that I think this is the time to forgive. Perhaps we begin the process by forgiving others for relatively minor offenses, to see how that feels. If forgiveness seems appropriate, constructive, and useful, we might decide to forgive far more significant abuses. There are a host of contingencies here, but I am convinced that we cannot, as a discipline, move toward a multicultural association until we are willing to forgive.

### SCA as a Multicultural Professional Association

Let me move into my conclusion by suggesting a potential vision that can exist for us. There is no question, in my mind, that the membership of SCA will become multicultural. The only issue is whether or not SCA will systematically and as a matter of policy encourage the study of communication within a multicultural context. If we do so, we can anticipate and work toward the ways in which SCA itself—in philosophy, policy, administration, and programs—will become a multicultural professional association. As we move into the twenty-first century, I think that transforming SCA into this kind of a multicultural professional association will mean that seven changes are undertaken:

First, multiculturalism must be treated, not as a political issue, but as a scholarly and academic issue. Multiculturalism exists as a fact in the United States and in SCA. It is important because of its scholarly implications. At the outset of this presentation, I suggested how multiculturalism functions as a scholarly issue for the discipline of communication: It is altering the research foundation or data base of the discipline; it constitutes a foundation for testing the reliability and validity of generalizations or theories within the discipline; and, it is creating new issues in the discipline, encouraging the study of international communication, and providing us with an opportunity to re-examine our system of communication ethics. SCA will become a multicultural professional association only when multiculturalism itself is recognized as a central, pervasive, and definitional element of the study of communication.

Second, multiculturalism must be understood as challenging an existing concept of reality with an alternative but more viable view of reality. Multiculturalism can be cast as a reality-based issue. The Census Bureau is seriously considering the use of a "multiracial" category which would affect some 5 million Americans.[30] But, more profoundly, multiculturalism is a symbolic issue, a question of how we understand ourselves, how we understanding our heritages, and what we understand our futures to be. David S. Reynolds has aptly captured the point, "there is no single type that can be identified as American. There are instead Americans. Likewise, there is no single American history; there is a 'collision of histories.'"[31] In all, from a multicultural perspective, multiple conceptions of reality exist which coincide with the diverse, often contradictory, rhetorics that create and maintain these diverse social realities. Overall, of course, our mode of scholarship should reflect the most reasonable understanding of what we understand our reality to be.

Third, we need to realize that SCA is not immune to all of the different forms of discrimination, such as anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism. As an organization, SCA is a reflection of the society and culture from which it has developed. At the same time, last year SCA reaffirmed and extended the power of its Affirmative Action Statement. At a time when other associations have abandoned their concern for cultural diversity, SCA has assumed a profound moral and ethical responsibility. Certainly, SCA can do more. In my view, one unresolved issue remains overwhelmingly important right now. SCA needs to place the Chair of the Affirmative Action and Intercaucus Committee on the Administrative Committee and on the Legislative Council, ideally as a speaking and voting member, but at least as an *ex officio* and nonvoting members with the right and obligation to speak. Much will always remain to be done. But, I also think it is extremely important to recognize when SCA acts with responsibility in terms of ongoing societal issues.

Fourth, as professionals, we need to protect all scholars from the rhetorical excesses that the multicultural conflict can generate. We need to be skeptical whenever we hear that someone has been "playing the race card." I think we need to be skeptical whenever we hear that someone is an "out and out racist." Likewise, in our journals, we need to be skeptical whenever authors move toward stereotyping. A recent issue of *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* provides an example. In one article, the authors claim that a male-centered system of logic is based on universal principles and abstract laws of objectivity. Credible evidence for such a claim would be difficult, if not impossible, to find. Indeed, the authors fully recognize this problem when they report that, "We recognize that the possibility of different temporal rhythms in the research activities of female and male scholars in speech communication has not been systematically researched." Nonetheless, the authors continue: "We note with interest that the descriptions of gender-linked patterns 'ring true' for the three of us, based upon our own career paths to date." In a multicultural era, we need to insist on better evidence for claims about any entire class of people. Solely personal set of experiences should not be the foundation for a description of a entire class of people. If we tolerate such claims, we encourage stereotyping. In all, if we are to move toward the development of an association that respects differences, we will have to decide to protect all scholars—even white males—from the rhetorical excesses and stereotyping that sociopolitical cultural conflicts can generated.

Fifth, we need to become increasing conscious of the SCA governance structure as an historical and cultural construct. Specifically, the caucus structure has become paradoxical. The caucuses contribute new understandings to the discipline. But, the system denies the caucuses representation and a vote on the governing body of SCA, the Legislative

Council. We need to incorporate the caucuses into the governance structure of SCA.[32]

Sixth, every person needs to understand how he or she is multicultural. We each represent, constitute, and speak from multiple cultural systems. Rhetorically, we are all oxymoronic. We have multiple and contradictory self-definitions. We each are complex individuals affected by a host of variables. We need to celebrate in our individual multicultural personality.

Seventh, we need to participate actively in a new dialogue regarding SCA as a multicultural professional association. Everyone needs to talk to these issues, not just those defining themselves as minorities. In a larger sense, as anthropology has done.[33] SCA needs to re-examine its basic credo. SCA needs to commit itself to the preservation of diverse culture-based communication systems. SCA needs to recognize, as a matter of public record, that ignoring any single cultural communication system means that a storehouse of ideas is lost and a different way of looking at the world has not been recognized. The discipline of communication needs to provide comprehensive descriptions, interpretations, and evaluations of all culture-based communication systems. If we fail to do this, we diminish our freedom as communicators as well as the meaningfulness and power of the discipline of communication.

In all, our dialogue needs to encourage and to respect the voices of all SCA members, not in spite of their cultural orientation, but because of their cultural identities. The mix of diverse cultures in SCA, the respect SCA members show for these diverse cultures, and the rich scholarship and research that SCA sponsors in understanding these culture-based communication system, all can constitute the foundation for the unity that makes SCA a community of scholars. I end this presentation on the summarizing words provided by Kenneth Burke:

*And may we have neither the mania of the One*
*Nor the delirium of the Many—*
*But both the Union and the Diversity—* [34]

### Endnotes

[1] Glenn N. Merry, "The Way of Growth," The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education, 9 (April 1923), pp. 123-128, esp. 125. By the way, the seven areas of specialization were: (1) "Psychology in its broader meaning." (2) "Physiology," (3) "Physics," (4) "Phonetics," (5) "Rhetoric," (6) "Dramatics," and (7) "Literature." Rather than divide the discipline into content subareas, as was proposed by Merry in 1922, the specialization of the discipline of communication under exploration today focuses on how culture affects what is studied, domains, audiences, technologies, meanings, and effects.

[2] Jack L. Daniel, Changing the Players and the Game: A Personal Account of the Speech Communication Association Black Caucus Origins (Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1995), p. 52.

[3] Sally Miller Gearhart, The Wanderground: Stories of the Hill Women (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1979).

[4] I have not included any mention of the Emeritus/Retired Members Caucus within this discussion, because this unit has thus far initiated actions more consistent with the activities of a section rather than a caucus.

[5] See, e.g., Carol J. Cumber and Dawn O. Braithwaite, "A Comparative Study of Perceptions and Understandings of Multiculturalism," The Howard Journal of Communication, 7 (1996), pp. 271-282.

[6] National Multicultural Institute, Building Personal and Professional Competence in a Multicultural Society (Washington, D.C.: November 14-17, 1996).

[7] Thomas Rosteck, "Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 81 (August 1995), pp. 386-421, esp. p. 387.

[8] For details regarding the date formally assigned to the inception of "Multicultural America," see: Christopher Hitchen, "One Nation After All" [Review of Michael Lind, The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution (New York: The Free Press, 1995)], The New York Times Book Review, June 25, 1995, Section 7, p. 7.

[9] While SCA has not yet provided a caucus for the disabled, and while it is not a popular topic among multicultural advocates, I believe that multiculturalism should also position itself against acts and statements that discriminate against the disabled.

[10] For details regarding this view, see: Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, The Anatomy of Prejudices (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[11] There is no completely reliable figure that can be used to measure the pervasiveness of the caucuses among SCA members. For example, the 42% figure includes some people who had identified with more than one caucus. At the same time, this 42% figure also ignores many people who attend caucus activities (or who have considered joining a caucus) but have not formally identified with a caucus in terms of the SCA National Office form.

[12] Given the context considered here, it is appropriate to include in this number the program offerings of the Affirmative Action and Intercaucus Committee, the African American Communication and Culture Division, and the Feminist and Women Studies Division.

[13] See, e.g., John Fiske, "Television: Polysemy and Popularity," Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 3 (December 1986), pp. 391-408; and, Tamar Liebes, "Cultural Differences in the Retelling of Television Fiction," Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 6 (June 1989), pp. 103-122.

[14] See, e.g., Celeste Michelle Condit, "The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy," Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 6 (June 1989), pp. 103-122; and, Kenneth L. Hacker and Tara G. Coste, "A Political Linguistic Analysis of Network Television News Viewers' Discourse," Howard Journal of Communication, 3 (Winter-Spring 1992), pp. 299-316.

[15] Molefi Asante, The Physics of Meanness and the Rhetoric of Transformation, keynote address presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association convention, San Antonio, Texas, November 18, 1995.

[16] For a more elaboration extension of niceness as an organizational program, see: Ellis Cose, "Feeling Bad? Get Better! [Review of: Stuart Schneiderman, Saving Face: America and the Politics of Shame (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996); and, Charles Derber, The Wilding of America: How Greed and Violence Are Eroding Our Nation's Character (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996)], New York Times Book Review, February 4, 1996, p. 20.

[17] In Mary Crystal Cage, "Diversity or Quotas? Northeastern U. Will Accord Gays and Lesbians Preferential Treatment in Living," The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 8, 1994, Volume 11, No. 40, pp. A13 and A 14, esp. A13.

[18] Some analyses have approached this question indirectly, but the analyses are important to consider. See, e.g.: Susan Kray, "Orientalization of an 'Almost White' Woman: The Interlocking Effects of Race, Class, Gender, and Ethnicity in America," Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 10 (December 1993), pp. 349-366; and, Mark P. Orbe, "'Remember, It's Always Whites' Ball': Descriptions of African American Male Communication," Communication Quarterly, 42 (Summer 1994), pp. 287-300.

[19] Judith N. Martin, Robert L. Krizek, Thomas K. Nakayama, and Lisa Bradford, "Exploring Whiteness: A Study of Self Labels for White Americans," Communication Quarterly, 44 (Spring 1996), pp. 125-144.

[20] Mary Beth Oliver, "Influences of Authoritarianism and Portrayals of Race on Caucasian Viewers' Responses to Reality-Based Crime Dramas," Communication Reports, 9 (Summer 1996), pp. 141-150.

[21] Dennis K. Mumby, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Organizational Communication Studies: A Critical Reading," Management Communication Quarterly, 9 (February 1996), pp. 259-295, esp. p. 266.

[22] R. H. Barrow, Slavery in the Roman Empire (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996), pp. 20-21. Originally published in 1928.

[23] Stephen L. Carter, "Men Aren't Angry, Just Confused," [Review of Ellis Cose's A Man's World: How Real Is Male Privilege—And How High Is Its Price?, New York: HarperCollins, 1995], The New York Times Book Review, June 25, 1995, Section 7, pp. 1, 26, and 27.

[24] Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, 55 (February 1969), pp. 1-8.

[25] See Scott and Smith, pp. 5-6.

[26] Robert L. Scott, "Justifying Violence—The Rhetoric of Militant Black Power," Central States Speech Journal, 19 (Summer 1968), pp. 96-104, esp. 97.

[27] There are contradictory conceptions of how diverse and how coherent the self must be. See, e.g.: Robert Jay Lifton, The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Kenneth J. Gergen, The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life (New York: Basic Books, 1991); and, Donal Carbaugh, Situating Selves: The Communication of Social Identities in American Scenes (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

[28] John Stossel, "Don't 'Wallow in Victimhood,'" USA Weekend, June 23-25, 1995, p. 14.

[29] Wendy Kaminer, "Feminism's Third Wave: What Do Young Women Want?" The New York Times Book Review, June 4, 1995, Section 7, pp. 3, 22, and 23.

[30] See, e.g.: Linda Mathews, "More than Identity Rides On a New Racial Category," New York Times, July 6, 1996, pp. Y1 and Y7; and, Lise Funderburg, "Boxed In," New York Times, July 10, 1996, p. A15.

[31] David S. Reynolds, "American Heritages: The Often Tragic History of Ethnic Groups During Our Formative Years" [Review of Edward Countryman, Americans: A Collision of Histories (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996)], The New York Times Book Review, June 30, 1996, Section 7, p. 31.

[32] These observations about the SCA caucuses are also true of SCA's commissions, for SCA's commissions also exist without voice and vote in the SCA governance structure.

[33] David L. Wheeler, "The Death of Languages: Scholars Say Loss of Linguistic Diversity is a Human and Scientific Tragedy," The Chronicle of Higher Education, Volume 40, Number 33, April 20, 1994, pp. A8-A9, A16-A17.

[34] Kenneth Burke, "Dialectician's Prayer," in Collected Poems 1915-1967 (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 39-41, esp. p. 41.