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Editor's statement: Ten years of JIIC, looking back, looking ahead

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EDITORIAL

Editor's statement: Ten years of JIIC, looking back, looking ahead

The *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* (JIIC)—successor to *The International and Intercultural Communication Annual*—first appeared in 2008. This year, 2017, marks JIIC's tenth year of publication. It is my honor to serve as editor, following in the footsteps of my predecessors, Tom Nakayama, Shiv Ganesh, and Rona Halualani. Each has made a mark on the journal by shepherding to publication top quality, cutting edge work. It is my hope that as JIIC's fourth editor I can successfully follow in their footsteps

One of the main strengths of this journal is that it is open to all methodologies and perspectives. This diversity is articulated in the aims and scope of this journal: JIIC “showcases diverse perspectives and methods, including qualitative, quantitative, critical and textual approaches.” The composition of JIIC's editorial board reflects a commitment to geographic diversity, as board members are drawn from five different continents and 18 countries and regions across the world. Just as the name of this journal implies, JIIC is committed to “international” and “intercultural” approaches to the study of communication. Yet this begs the question: Given such diversity, what does it mean to study international and intercultural communication? And, is it possible to map out an agenda for study?

One way to answer these questions is to reflect on two recent events that, coincidentally, both happened on November 9th. The first was the day in 1989 when people in the city of Berlin began to take down a wall that divided their city between governments of East and West. The second was the day in 2016 when a man, Donald J. Trump, who campaigned on a pledge to “build a wall” to keep people out, was declared President-elect of the United States of America. The former can be seen as marking the beginning of a movement to erase borders that divided people. It heralded not only a political realignment, but also an economic realignment—the rise of neoliberal economies that allowed (some) individuals to succeed regardless of place of birth or citizenship—and a realignment of communication technologies and communicative practices, evident in the rise of the Internet, mobile phones, and social media. The latter event can be understood as a response to some of the problems resulting from the former. Fearing a world where migrants moved from troubled lands—impacted by violence, economic dislocation, and climate change—to those offering better opportunities, agitated by the flow of news and information from new, unknown and untrusted sources, displaced by neoliberal economics, that, for example, moved shoe factories from the U.S., to Taiwan, to China, and—as I recently learned—to Albania, because wages in China were too high, they wanted to “take back” their country and build higher walls. Therefore, one of the aims of this journal is to understand the arc of both events: How and why did people in one context want to take down walls, and in another want to put them up? Are we as a community of scholars asking the right questions, and studying the appropriate groups of people, to better understand how globalization is impacting people and cultures worldwide?

A second way to address the above questions is to take stock of both what has been studied in this journal, and what has not. Based upon an analysis of key terms associated with all

articles published in JIIC since its inception, the following is a list of those cited frequently (at least five times) with the number of times cited given in parentheses, and related terms grouped together (e.g., China and Chinese): China (9), Community (5), Critical (14), Cross-Cultural (7), Cultural and/or Culture (39), Dialogue (10), Difference (6), Discourse (5), Ethnography (7), Face (8), Global/Globalization (8), Hybridity (5), Identity (17), Immigrants/Immigration/Migration (9), Intercultural (23), International (7), Media (8), Neoliberal (6), Race (24), Social Media (5), Space (6), Transnational (8), and Whiteness (11). If we group these terms by type, we see that one, China, refers to a place and/or people; another, Immigrants, references a type of person(s); others reference a concept (e.g., culture), perspective (e.g., critical), medium (e.g., social media), or dimension (e.g., space). The longer list (available online) shows a range of other terms, with many more narrowly associated with a topic or context of study, such as “Afghan Reconstruction” and “Capoeira,” to name but two. I leave it to you as readers of this journal to unpack how these terms are addressed in each article.

Given the above list of key terms, I would like to point to issues that are understudied. One is religion. When doing field research in Asia, religion is not universally treated as a private, hidden matter, like it often is in the West. In Indonesia, a person’s religion is indicated on a national identity card; in Taiwan, the first and fifteenth day of each lunar month are “worship days” when people place offerings and incense to the gods and spirits, on a bench placed outside the door of the home or place of business. Discussions of religion are often treated matter-of-factly, as people are interested in learning if by worshiping at a certain Taoist temple their wealth will increase, or if by becoming a Christian they can have better interpersonal relationships. Yet too often, scholars avoid studying the topic of religion, perhaps reflecting an agnostic bias, or fear of “offending” someone. We as scholars should study the issues that are important to participants, from the ground up; and one that deserves further treatment is religion.

A second understudied topic is the impact of new communication technologies on individuals, cultures, and nations. When studying brokered, for-profit marriages arranged between women in Indonesia and men in Taiwan, I learned that when mobile phones became readily available, the public narrative changed. Before there were such phones, stories of “bad marriages” were hidden, and young women were often pressured to marry men from Taiwan. But once a woman could send a text or message to her younger sister in Indonesia, Taiwanese men became narrated as “cheats” who would “drink and beat their wives.” These devices empowered women, and the framing and interpretation of the practice changed.

Yet we also know that mobile phones, and the social media platforms (e.g., Facebook) afforded by these devices can be problematic. Early reporting on the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign has uncovered how sensationalist, “fake news”—some produced by enterprising teens in Macedonia—played a role in amplifying claims that “mainstream media” were wrong, and that the world “outside” was a terrible menace that only Trump could defeat. As argued by Latour (2016), this was not an isolated event. All across Europe, nations that created and embraced the global market are now voluntarily withdrawing (e.g., Brexit). Scholars failed to hear, understand, and even imagine the voices of “the uneducated” and those that “globalization left behind,” as too many scholars live in an intellectual bubble.

This perhaps can be understood from what Roy (2004) wrote over a decade ago in a book, *Globalized Islam*. He explored how second-generation, disaffected Algerian and Moroccan youth living in France were drawn to websites that taught how to be a “good Muslim.” New forms of global communication allowed for the development of a “deterritorialized” secular version of Islam that was boiled down to a list of dos and don’ts. The same process was evident among disaffected, white Americans who felt the “elite” did not speak to them; they distrusted mainstream media and were drawn to news shared on social media, even though

it was sensationalist. In both instances, what counted as “true,” as rightly claimed by Stuart Hall, was not fixed, but depended upon how an event was represented and classified via a person’s and/or group’s language and culture. It may be time to both reflect on these processes, and stress-test the ways that we have done research in the past, and identify new methods, perspectives, and practices better suited to a communicative environment that has shifted so rapidly and profoundly. I propose this as a task for readers and contributors to this journal.

A last concern is to avoid the tendency to see the world from a single point of view. Perhaps one positive outcome of recent events may be that it causes people to avoid seeing any single culture as normative. It should call into question the common practice of relying on a sample of undergraduate students at a university in the U.S., to then generalize these findings to make universal claims about communication. The readership of JIIC understands this. And thankfully much of the work published in this journal comes from contexts and/or people who are from outside the U.S. mainstream. But more can and should be done. Perhaps it is now more important than ever before that we embrace a multicultural perspective in terms of scholarship that looks elsewhere, in places and among people not normally studied, to seek and find solutions to problems associated with globalization, neoliberal economies, and a warming climate. This can serve as an agenda for the study of international and intercultural communication.

In closing, I would first like to thank members of the editorial board of JIIC for their service. Without their assistance as reviewers this journal could not function. Second, I would like to highlight the work that appears in this first issue. The first is a discourse analysis of news reports and online reader responses to coverage of a wave of young migrants across the U.S. border with Mexico. The second is a uses and gratifications study of WeChat use among Chinese college students. The third uses cultural discourse analysis to unpack discourses of privacy in a Japanese workplace. The fourth is a critical rhetorical analysis of social media contributions by U.S., white mothers to a blog, WeAreNotTrayvonMartin. The last is a cultural, auto-ethnographic examination of the patterned naming practices of four generations of Chinese Indonesians. Each piece employs a different research method; three work with data collected online; and three examine data collected outside the U.S. Collectively they display a commitment to publishing work from diverse contexts, methodologies, and perspectives. I hope that you as readers find their work engaging and enlightening.

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